

## Chapter Sixteen (16:1-31)

### THE SON OF MAN ADVISING ABOUT MONEY

#### IDEAS TO INVESTIGATE:

1. What is a "stewardship" (16:1-2)?
2. Is it more acceptable to God to be prudent than to be honest (16:8)?
3. How can Jesus tell Christians to buy friends with their money (16:9)?
4. Did the coming of John the Baptist abrogate the law (16:16)?
5. Why is it "adultery" to marry a divorced woman (16:18)?
6. Where is "Hades" (16:23)?
7. Why is the "great chasm" fixed so that none may cross (16:26)?

#### SECTION 1

#### Be Shrewd (16:1-13)

16 He also said to the disciples, "There was a rich man who had a steward, and charges were brought to him that this man was wasting his goods. <sup>2</sup>And he called him and said to him, 'What is this that I hear about you? Turn in the account of your stewardship for you can no longer be steward.'<sup>3</sup> And the steward said to himself, 'What shall I do, since my master is taking the stewardship away from me? I am not strong enough to dig, and I am ashamed to beg. <sup>4</sup>I have decided what to do, so that people may receive me into their houses when I am put out of the stewardship.'<sup>5</sup> So, summoning his master's debtors one by one, he said to the first, 'How much do you owe my master?' <sup>6</sup>He said, 'A hundred measures of oil.' And he said to him, 'Take your bill, and sit down quickly and write fifty.'<sup>7</sup> Then he said to another, 'And how much do you owe?' He said, 'A hundred measures of wheat.' He said to him, 'Take your bill, and write eighty.'<sup>8</sup> The master commended the dishonest steward for his shrewdness; for the sons of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own generation than the sons of light. <sup>9</sup>And I tell you, make friends for yourselves by means of unrighteous mammon, so that when it fails they may receive you into the eternal habitations.

<sup>10</sup> "He who is faithful in a very little is faithful also in much; and he who is dishonest in a very little is dishonest also in much. <sup>11</sup>If then you have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will entrust to you the true riches? <sup>12</sup>And if you have not been faithful in that which is another's, who will give you that which is your own? <sup>13</sup>No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon."

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**16:1-3 Wastefulness:** Someone has wisely pointed out that money is merely a medium of exchange for a man's life. Man spends his time, talent and energy at a vocation and receives in exchange some medium—usually money. By spending that money a man exchanges his life for whatever he considers worthy of his life. If a man hoards his money or spends it all indulging himself it manifests a selfish, uncaring heart.

Jesus spoke the two stories of this chapter to His disciples but mainly for the benefit of the Pharisees who were lovers of money. The parables of the Lost Sheep, Lost Coin and Lost Sons struck a smarting blow to their selfishness and uncaring hearts. The two stories of this chapter continue to strike at this careless attitude the Pharisees had toward their fellowmen. The scoffing reaction of the Pharisees (16:14) shows clearly that Jesus had hit His target.

These stories were spoken in Perea, beyond the Jordan River, during the climax of Jesus' last year of public ministry. He was engaged in a great evangelistic campaign teaching the nature of the kingdom of God and discipleship, calling on all who would to become citizens of God's kingdom. It is significant that Jesus made citizenship in God's kingdom relevant to even such an everyday affair as what a man does with his money. The first story shows "how to" use your money to get to heaven or to send it on ahead in a different form; the second story shows "how to" use your money to get to hell!

A certain rich man (Gr. *plousios*, "plutocrat") had a steward (Gr. *oikonomon*, lit. "house-ruler, house-manager") who had been accused of wasting (Gr. *diaskorpizon*, squandering, same word used for Prodigal Son) his master's possessions. He could not get away with his sin—someone told on him. The master of the house called the accused steward before him and demanded an accounting. The steward was guilty and the master dismissed him from his job. This steward was: (a) extravagant—wasteful; (b) lazy—he wouldn't dig; (c) proud—he would not beg; (d) dishonest—cheated his master when later taking only partial payment for his master's debts. Apparently, before the steward left the employ of this master he would have occasion to settle outstanding accounts owed. He devised a scheme by which he could use his stewardship to make friends! A steward was a trusted care-taker of a rich man's household (cf. Gen. 43:19; Mt. 20:8; Lk. 8:3; 12:42). He was an employee-of-sorts (sometimes a slave) who often became almost like one of the family (cf. Gen. 15:1-3). But a steward was never an owner—he was always simply using his master's goods for the benefit of the master. He was held accountable to the master for the way he used whatever was temporarily put under his administration.

**16:4-9 Wisdom:** Jesus is not condoning dishonesty! He is simply holding the steward's sagacity up for emulation. There are character traits worth imitating in the worst of men and the wise will see them and copy them.

God never condoned the faults of Abraham but He holds the man up in His Word for emulation as "the father of the faithful." Jesus wants His followers to be both honest and prudent. The one good thing in this steward's nature was his shrewdness—this is the only lesson Jesus wishes to teach in this story. Jesus is not holding this man up as a believer—He is simply saying that worldly people (like this steward) are farsighted and astute in their endeavors for material ends. The Lord desires forethought, preparation and wisdom of His followers for spiritual ends. This steward was wiser than most church members (sons-of-light). There is a great lack of common sense in spiritual matters in the kingdom of God today. Some Christians do not have the courage of their convictions—they are afraid to give the self-discipline and sacrifice necessary to attain the spiritual profits promised by Christ. This parable is like a sharp thunder-clap, rousing us from our spiritual dozing. God will not let us get by with stupidity in our stewardship. He expects us to invest *everything* in our charge (money, time, talents) to produce spiritual gain as intelligently as most worldly-minded people invest their holdings to make material gain.

One of the first things we notice in this parable is the sharp division of humanity. Christ divides all humanity into "sons of this world" and "sons of light." There are only two classes of humanity in all the Bible—believers and unbelievers, obedient and disobedient, gatherers and scatterers, saved and lost, wise and foolish. Men make multiple categories of goodness and evil, but for Jesus, when the final test comes, every man gives allegiance to either Him or the devil. If you are not a son of light, you are a son of this world. There are only two destinies—heaven or hell; only two repositories for your "unrighteous mammon"—heaven or rust and destruction, and only two roads—the narrow and difficult that leads to salvation, or the broad and easy that leads to death.

The sons of this world are *not* wiser in *what* they choose! They choose what is temporal. This world and all its substance is doomed to destruction. Every dollar, every monument to fame, every work of art, every "thing" will perish. None of this world can be transferred as it is to heaven—not even the human body. "Things" must be exchanged for a different kind of "currency"—that "currency" is *people*, (I Thess. 2:19-20) transformed into the image of God's dear Son. The sons of this world choose what is vain. "Things" of the world—of the flesh—cannot satisfy the deepest and ultimate needs of the spiritual man. Men need grace, truth, forgiveness, hope, peace, love and identity. These cannot be obtained by the accumulation of things. Spiritual satisfaction comes from self-giving. Sons of this world also choose what forever must remain the Creator's. A man who is worth only the worldly goods he seems to have accumulated is poor indeed! None of these worldly goods really belong to him—they belong to God. True wealth is the spiritual investments a man has made.

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What Jesus is emphasizing is that the sons of this world may be wiser than most children of the light in *how* they conduct their business! Notice how candid this steward was in facing the facts about his situation. He did not lie to himself or fantasize—he did not hide his head in the sand like an ostrich. Business people know they must be brutally honest with themselves about their profit-loss ledgers. They must not lie to themselves about whether business is good or bad. They either learn to be realists or they “go under.” Christians are too prone to construct a “fool’s paradise” for themselves in the business of stewardship. They fantasize that their spiritual life must be good if they have an abundance of worldly possessions. They are prone to forget that not one “thing” in their charge belongs to them. Their worst fantasy is that as long as they dedicate ten percent to the Master, they may do as they please with the other ninety percent in their charge. This steward of the parable faced the reality that these things were not his; that he had them only for a short time to use; that he could use them to show mercy on people and make friends. He did not day-dream or procrastinate about the future and he did not pout about the past—he made the most of the present.

This worldly-minded steward was keen in the way he planned. He did not allow his emotions to take away his reason. He did not run away with his master’s money and waste it like the Prodigal did. He didn’t stash it away like the foolish farmer (Lk. 12). He didn’t throw up his hands in despair and mental paralysis. He logically and deliberately reasoned out a plan. He decided to invest what was in his charge in helping people in order to help himself. Shakespeare said: “All life is a preparation for death.” Jesus urges His followers to make all this life a preparation for the next life. Cold, lifeless money can be turned into a warm handshake, a smile of gratitude or a cheerful word from someone helped for Jesus’ sake. Of course, friendship cannot be bought with crass mercenarism. Money genuinely used to help others will be rewarded, if not in this life then in the next. But fair-minded people are able soon enough to discern whether an offering of help is genuine or not. If Christians only dared to believe Jesus when He says, “Inasmuch as you have done it unto the least of these, my brethren, you have done it unto me” (Mt. 25:40), they might be wiser in the use of their stewardship.

The steward of this parable was shrewd in the execution of his plan. He made straight for his goal. He allowed no obstacle to hinder him. He accepted no compromise, no alternatives. He demonstrated self-control and dedication. This steward had to sacrifice time, effort, pride and money. He paid the price without hesitation. Tragically, even athletes exhibit more dedication than most Christians! This worldly-minded house-manager evaluated worldly things as supreme and let no sacrifice stand in his way. Christians say heavenly things are most important—but too many let everything else stand in their way.

**16:10-13 Warning:** It is an incontrovertible axiom of the business world that the man who can be trusted in small things can be promoted to large responsibilities. The man who will be dishonest and steals small amounts will almost inevitably embezzle large amounts. Jesus is using the parable to illustrate this startling warning: "If you have not been faithful (wise and prudent) in the unrighteous mammon, who will entrust to you the true riches?" If Christians cannot use money and earthly possessions wisely (to prepare for the next life), how shall God entrust to them the true riches of the next life? In other words, what the Christian does here on earth as a steward, determines whether he shall ever get to be a steward in the next life or not!

No steward can obey two bosses. No man can live a life filled with contradictions. It is logically and psychologically impossible. It is unacceptable to the Lord and impossible for the Christian to endure such a dichotomy. "No soldier on service gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to satisfy the one who enlisted him" (II Tim. 2:4). Men who do not believe God keep on trying to serve the world, the flesh and the devil while also professing to serve the Creator. That is why the Christian's responsibility toward God in money matters is not completed with giving ten percent of his wages. The Christian is accountable to God for every cent. That does not mean every cent must be given into the treasury of a local congregation for disbursement. It does mean that whatever the Christian uses his money for it must in some ultimate way serve God (through providing for his family, helping those in need, assisting in personal witnessing, supporting civic governments and institutions which are promoting social order and welfare, etc.). The important point is that God must be our Master, and not Money. Our money must be *used* to serve God.

## SECTION 2

### Be Sanctified (16:14-18)

14 The Pharisees, who were lovers of money, heard all this, and they scoffed at him. <sup>15</sup>But he said to them, "You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts; for what is exalted among men is an abomination in the sight of God."

16 "The law and the prophets were until John; since then the good news of the kingdom of God is preached, and every one enters it violently. <sup>17</sup>But it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away, than for one dot of the law to become void."

18 "Every one who divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery, and he who marries a woman divorced from her husband commits adultery."

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**16:14-15 Knowledge of God:** Faithfulness to God is more important than money. The Pharisees who were lovers of money (Gr. *philarguroi*, lit. "lovers of silver") scoffed at Jesus when they heard His penetrating warning about selfishness and dishonesty in stewardship to God. The Greek word is *exemukterizon* and is from *ek*, "from" and, *mukter*, "nose" and literally means, "turned up their noses," or, "snorted." They made a haughty face toward Him and derided Him because they were servants of money. Their actions proved exactly what Jesus had just said: no man can serve both God and mammon. They pretended to serve God, but they really served worldliness, so they "hated" anyone who stood for God. The Pharisees made themselves appear just and right publicly, but God knew their hearts. God knows all men's hearts. It will do us no good to put on public demonstrations of "godliness" if in our hearts we are secretly trusting in financial success. Financial success does not equal approval of God—especially if such success becomes one's master. In fact, it is an abomination to God! The world has a twisted sense of values. The world justifies sexual immorality, dishonesty, cruelty and a multitude of other sins so long as a man has attained financial success. Multi-millionaires are almost always looked up to as good and wise in the areas of civic leadership. But what is exalted among men is an abomination to God! The world is all wrong! Few, very few, rich men are ever members of the kingdom of God (cf. Mt. 19:23-30; I Tim. 6:6-10; I Tim. 6:17-19). Disciples of Jesus must sanctify their worldly possessions in stewardship to God who knows even the heart of man. God wants men to set apart their heart's devotion to Him because He knows that stewardship of possessions will inevitably follow (cf. II Cor. 8:5).

**16:16-17 Kingdom of God:** Some think Jesus interjected two disconnected teachings (entering the kingdom and divorce, 16:16-18) into His discourse on the use of money. But they are not really disconnected: they are very relevant to the whole subject of stewardship and especially money. The phrase ". . . the law and the prophets were until John; since then the good news of the kingdom of God is preached . . ." does not mean that the Old Testament was abrogated when John the Baptist appeared on the scene. Nor does it mean that the kingdom of God (the church) was instituted, in fact, with the preaching of John the Baptist. It is plain from the Scriptures that the church was not instituted as a New Dispensation or Testament until the Day of Pentecost, A.D. 34, Acts 2:1ff. Jesus spoke of His church in the future (Mt. 16:18) during His ministry, after the death of John. What Jesus is emphasizing about John's appearance on the scene is the anticipatory nearness of the long-awaited kingdom of God. What these money-mad Pharisees had hypocritically expounded on so glowingly (the kingdom of God—the coming of the Messiah) was being heralded in their ears by John the Baptist and the Messiah Himself. It was in their very midst in the person

of the King (cf. Lk. 17:21), but it was not officially established and opened to all the world until the Day of Pentecost. The Pharisees could not, or would not, see the kingdom, even though it was so very near to establishment because they were serving mammon. The coming of John the Baptist was in fulfillment of their own prophets in the Old Testament (Isaiah 40:3-6; Malachi 3:1-2; 4:5-6) which many people were acknowledging. John's ministry did not establish the church (Lk. 7:28); it did not abrogate the law of Moses. Jesus advised those to whom He preached to keep the law of Moses until it be fulfilled (Mt. 8:4; Mk. 1:44; Lk. 5:14; Lk. 18:20, etc.). But John's ministry did prepare for the coming of the kingdom (cf. Lk. 1:76-79; 3:3-17; 7:29-30), and the Pharisees were not preparing themselves to receive the kingdom because they were not submitting to the "violence" necessary to enter it. The kingdom of God preached by Jesus (and John the Baptist) could be entered only when men "violently" trample down their human values and accept God's values. What is exalted among men is an abomination in the sight of God. Jesus is *not* saying that men were forcing their way into the kingdom of God—no one will ever be able to enter the kingdom by force. The "violence" Jesus is talking about is the spiritual "death" to self that must take place. To enter the kingdom and remain a citizen, a man must cut off his right hand or pluck out his right eye if it offends or causes him to sin (Mt. 5:29-30). Men must "violently" tear themselves away from subservience to money and fleshly indulgence if they are to enter the kingdom. It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom. Men must lay aside the sin which so easily besets them and run the race with patience and endurance if they are to be kingdom citizens. We enter the kingdom through much tribulation (cf. Acts 14:22). Kingdom citizenship requires a daily, agonizing, traumatic, "violent" struggle or war between the flesh and the spirit (cf. Rom. 7:15-25; I Cor. 9:27; Gal. 5:17). We enter by death! There must be a crucifixion of self (Gal. 2:20-21; Rom. 6:1-23) if we are to enter. The Pharisees "scoffed" at the revolutionary idea of using one's money to help the unfortunate (as Jesus had just taught in His parable). They scoffed at the idea that God would call them to account as stupid stewards. They scoffed at the idea that they could not serve both God and mammon. But Jesus' warning is that these ideas were in the law of God from the beginning and not one dot of the law of God could be made void by all their scoffing. Divine ownership and human stewardship is taught throughout the Old Testament (both the law and the prophets). Helping the less fortunate is the essence of the law; love for God and for one's neighbor are the two principle commandments of the law! So these Pharisees who boasted they were protecting the law of God are found to be in direct opposition to it. Their opposition will not keep it from being vindicated. It would be easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for any man to

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be able to get away with disobedience to God's law. God is serious about a man and his money!

**16:18 Keeping God's Commandments:** The subject of divorce is also connected to the subject of a man's money—as almost all married people will acknowledge. More marital discord ensues from troubled money matters than from almost any other problem. If financial difficulties (brought on by selfishness or poor management, usually) are not the number one agitation leading to divorce, they are a close second! In fact, in Jesus' day, marriages, divorces and remarriages were often entered into for very mercenary reasons. People even in those days tried to “marry well” in the matter of money. Men often divorced their wives and married those who had more money. Divorce laws were very liberal among many Jewish theologians in Jesus' day. A man might, according to some, divorce his wife if she “did not please him.”

This statement of Jesus must be interpreted in the light of all New Testament teaching on divorce (cf. Mt. 5:31-32; 19:1-9; Mk. 10:11-12; Rom. 7:1-3; I Cor. 7:1-40). There must also be the consideration that all the New Testament teaching on marriage, divorce and remarriage focuses on the ideal. What the N.T. teaches is intended for the citizen of the kingdom and is the highest spiritual expectation of God for Christians. We cannot, therefore, expect unbelievers to share in the absolute ethical ideals of marriage presented in the New Testament.

The whole Bible is unequivocal in its teaching that divorce is a sin against God and against man. There appears to be one or two exceptions where divorce may be acceptable as a last resort (Mt. 5:32; 19:9). First, when there is sexual unfaithfulness by one member of a marriage. Second, where one member of the marriage is an unbeliever and “puts asunder” the marriage by desertion (cf. I Cor. 7:15) (see notes in Special Study on I Corinthians 7). Divorce over trivial matters, such as money, is a serious sin according to Jesus here. Jesus plainly says here that the man who divorces his wife (the exception already stated in Mt. 5:32; 19:9) and marries another commits adultery. He also says whoever marries a woman divorced from her husband commits adultery. There must be allowance, of course, for the man who marries a woman divorced from her husband because her husband was unfaithful. The Christian will not divorce a spouse except for the cause of fornication. The Christian will not marry a person divorced unless the divorced person was a victim of an unfaithful spouse.

We shall not here discuss the statement of Jesus in Mt. 5:32 that everyone who divorces his wife, except for the cause of fornication, *makes* her an adulteress. For an excellent discussion of this matter see *The Gospel of Matthew* by Harold Fowler, College Press, pgs. 272-286, and *Learning From Jesus* by Seth Wilson, College Press, pgs. 370-380. Since there are many questions about marriage, divorce and remarriage not specifically



dealt with by Jesus, especially as they would apply to Christians who had already involved themselves in marital problems before becoming Christians, it seemed good to this author to include a special study of I Corinthians, chapter 7. We accept the writings of the apostles as Holy Spirit inspired amplifications and commentaries on the general principles taught by Jesus as recorded in the Gospels. One thing is certain: the sexual union of one man to one woman for the purpose of mutual spiritual edification and procreation of the human race is the first institution ordained of God from creation. God wishes that union to continue in mutual faithfulness until death and forbids any man (person) from putting the union "asunder." Divorce is sin. Sin is rectified by substitutionary atonement accepted by faith and repentance.

## "PROBLEMS THAT PLAGUE THE SAINTS" CELIBACY, MARRIAGE, DIVORCE, REMARRIAGE

*I Corinthians, Chapter 7*

### INTRODUCTION

Paul was not married when he wrote I Corinthians. Some people have difficulty accepting advice on marriage from a bachelor.

It is possible that Paul had previously been married. If he was a member of the Sanhedrin it is doubtful that he could have been a member unmarried. Also, this chapter does seem to be written by someone who knew by experience what marriage was all about. He might have been a widower.

No one has ever glorified marriage more than the apostle Paul (cf. Eph. 5:22-23); Paul's great tribute to Timothy's home background (II Tim. 1:5) shows something of the esteem with which he looked upon home ties.

But whether he was married or not makes no difference. What he teaches is as the apostle of Christ and therefore to be believed and obeyed.

### DISCUSSION

#### I. THE PURITY OF MARRIAGE, 7:1-9

##### A. Reason for this admonition

1. Apparently the Corinthians had written previously asking questions about marriage.
  - a. Some groups were already saying that the more "spiritual" people were the ascetics who abstained from marriage and they taught that even those Christians who were married should take a brother-sister vow and live in a platonic relationship.

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- b. Paul warned Timothy that such “denials” of the faith and demonic doctrines would appear in the church (I Tim. 4:1-5).
  2. On the other hand, Jewish Christians in Corinth would say there was no room in the church for celibacy.
    - a. The idea of not marrying was so foreign to the Jewish mentality that the O.T. does not even have a word for “bachelor.”
    - b. A godly life for the Jew meant not only marriage, but children.
  3. The loose morals of the Corinthian culture surrounding the church there with the Greek and Roman religions advocating fornication.
- B. Celibacy and marriage are both pure in the Christian community, v. 1-2
1. Celibacy is good, but so is marriage. If a person does not have a special gift for celibacy, he is much better off to marry than to be tempted to immorality or to “burn” with unfulfilled passion (7:9).
  2. Marriage is honorable (Heb. 13:4); celibacy is honorable (Mt. 19:10-12; I Cor. 7:7-9).
  3. The unmarried state is not superior in any moral sense to the married, nor vice-versa.
  4. It is wrong to consider celibacy as morally superior to marriage; it may have its advantages—but then, so does marriage.
- C. Marriage is primarily for the exercise of human sexual powers.
1. It is in marriage men and women are granted this privilege.
  2. Marriage isn't all privilege—it has its responsibilities.
    - a. Both husband and wife, in marriage, give up exclusive rights to their own bodies, agreeing to share them fully with their partner (7:4).
    - b. The happiest marriages are those characterized by complete liberty, few inhibitions, and absence of any guilt complex.
    - c. The cause of so much marital trouble today is *selfishness* not only, but certainly foremost, in the areas of sexuality.
  3. There is an exception to sexual and marital responsibilities . . . for a *limited* time one of the married partners may give full time to religious duties.
    - a. These are definite instructions that there may come times when a *personal* time for seeking the Lord comes before the dearest on earth—BUT ONLY FOR A LIMITED TIME.
    - b. Church work cannot be used as an excuse for neglecting one's marital responsibilities; what is accomplished in serving the Lord if one's marriage partner is tempted and lost?
- D. Celibacy is a *special* gift (a *charismatic* gift).
1. Paul will deal with this more specifically in 7:17-40.

2. When God made man, He saw "that it was not good for man to dwell alone" so He made a helper "fit for him" (Gen. 2:18).
3. Jesus said, "not all men can receive this . . . but only those to whom it is given . . ." (Mt. 19:11).

## II. THE PERMANENCE OF MARRIAGE, 7:10-16

- A. Apparently in Corinth, new converts were leaving their partners and breaking up their marriages.
  1. The ideal situation is that both partners in a marriage be Christians.
  2. Young people can and should choose Christian partners before marriage. Love is not something one "falls into" it is something he wills, decides and does, and does constantly in spite of emotions or circumstances!
  3. But this ideal is impossible in a world of unbelief. Sometimes in a marriage of two unbelievers, one is converted after the fact. What to do? Remain married to the unbeliever if at all possible!
- B. When it comes right down to it, there is no essential difference between a Christian marriage in a church and a pagan marriage in the living room of a justice of the peace.
  1. God's will is that marriage should be permanent, no matter who is involved.
  2. Marriage as an institution predates all other institutions. It was sanctioned by God before the Law of Moses or the Christian dispensation.
  3. Marriage is not "a sacrament of the church" performed exclusively by the church. It is for the maintenance of human social structures.
  4. It is a human institution, decreed by God, to be practiced by the entire human race.
  5. When two people sincerely agree to live with each other, and obey the social and civil norms for marriage in their community, they are husband and wife regardless of their religion!
- C. While it is possible for a marriage bond to be broken by unfaithfulness (Mt. 19:9), it is certainly not what God desires.
  2. Nor does He desire that the conversion of one of the partners precipitate the break up of a happy home.
  2. Divorce is not God's will for any marriage.
  3. There may be cases where one partner, not at all seeking to do God's will, may dissolve the marriage while the other partner may not be able to stop the dissolution.
- D. What about remarriage?
  1. Paul has already admitted the reality that there is a possibility of the dissolution of marriages even where one party does not want it to be so.

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2. The question is: Does the N.T. absolutely and unequivocally forbid remarriage after divorce? (cf. Mt. 5:31-32; 19:1-12; Mk. 10:2-12; Lk. 16:18; I Cor. 7:15, 39; Rom. 7:3-4).
3. We should also ask: Does the N.T. absolutely and unequivocally permit remarriage after divorce? The O.T. didn't (Deut. 24:1-4)! Actually, there are no absolute or unequivocal directions in this matter. What each of us believe or practice, we do so by our inferences or deductions from certain principles.
4. The following are my personal conclusions or deductions:
  - a. God made marriage for the whole human race.
  - b. Very few men or women have the "gift" to remain celibate.
  - c. Divorce is a sin; Marriage is *not* a sin.
  - d. No one can be *made* to be an adulterer or adulteress against their will simply by divorcing them. They may be stigmatized unjustly as an adulterer and whoever marries the stigmatized one may also suffer such stigma.
  - e. When there is a divorce there is no longer a marriage, neither in God's eyes nor in man's eyes—**THERE IS A SIN IN GOD'S EYES FOR WHICH SOMEONE MUST REPENT** (preferably remarriage to the same partner).

But unless there is a reconciliation of those two persons, the marriage is over. They are no longer married to the other person.
  - f. There are two circumstances which I believe God considers one partner of a marriage innocent in divorce (unfaithfulness; desertion) and the "brother or sister is not bound." Therefore, my opinion is that they are free to remarry—to be guided by their knowledge of the will of God for marriage and their own consciences.
5. I believe God and Christ are interested in producing the highest good in every person's life and in society in general and that is the spirit behind any O.T. Law or N.T. Principle (e.g. the "Sabbath" was made for man, not man for the sabbath, principle).
  - a. What practical or ultimate good is going to be served by forcing (by law, where there really is no such law) those once divorced to remain celibate the rest of their lives?

Of course, Christians should live by the highest law—Love and never need to divorce; but some "Christians" do fall! What about non-Christians? Should a minister of the gospel not also seek the highest good in every *fallen* person's life?
  - b. Many divorces involve small children. What if a husband is left with small children to rear? What if a wife is? Who shall support them financially? Are they better served to be reared without a father or without a mother?

- c. Would enforced celibacy heal the results of divorce? Will the church be able to support both materially and psychologically all broken homes? Will the taxpayers and the State?
- d. Would enforced celibacy heal the problems of temptation and incontinence (I Cor. 7:2, 5, 9, 36)?

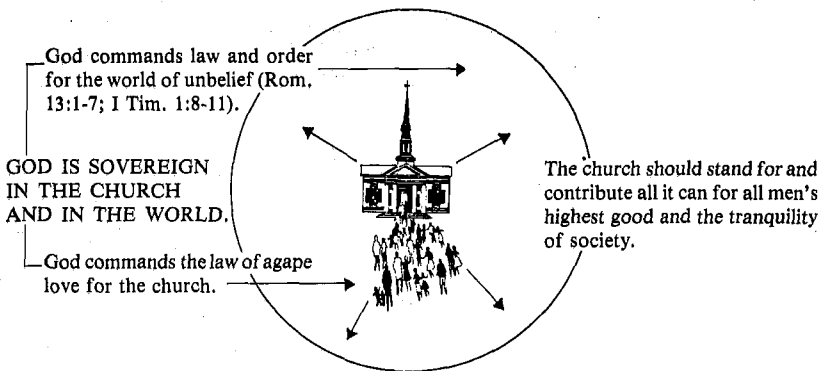
If we might paraphrase Jesus, "Is it lawful to do good through the institution of marriage or to tempt to promiscuity through enforced celibacy? Marriage was made for man, not man for marriage." Enforced celibacy in prisons intensifies sexual crime.

- e. In no sense of the word do I condone divorce. I do not even condone loveless marriages whether they remain legally and outwardly married until they die. Both are certainly less than God's ideal.
- f. But, neither do I think a minister of the gospel (since he is authorized by the civil authorities to do so) is "partaking of the sin of divorce by performing marriage vows for couples who are both unbelievers or one a believer and another an unbeliever or those who have been previously divorced.

God does not approve of divorce; I do not approve of divorce. God *does* approve of marriage—I approve of marriage. I had nothing to do with their divorce; but I can have something to do with their marriage.

And last, but not least, in every marriage I perform I may, in a positive way, be able to instruct and exemplify the Christian gospel—and in a negative sense I may not give anyone an opportunity to criticize the church for lack of compassion and understanding.

I am also standing for law and order in the lives of unbelievers who will not be controlled by the law of love.



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### III. THE POWER OF MARRIAGE, 7:12-16

- A. Paul's instruction to the Corinthian Christian married to an unbeliever is that the believer should "sanctify" the marriage by trying to win the unbeliever.
1. The unbeliever is in a "set apart" circumstance (at least that much set apart from the world) by being married to a believer.
  2. The marriage relationship is a powerful tool in the hands of God for salvation.
    - a. When a man is converted, as head of the house he should lead his family to find the Lord (the Philippian jailer and Cornelius).
    - b. When a woman is converted, she has to be content with a slower process. Peter says that wives should submit themselves to their husbands; the husbands will more readily be won to Christ this way than through their wives' nagging, "preaching" or arguing, I Peter 3:1-2.
- B. Children who have one or two Christian parents are at a great advantage over those reared in non-Christian homes. They also are "set apart" that much from complete worldliness.
1. Paul does not mean that any unbeliever or child is automatically saved by being married to a Christian or being born of Christian parents.
  2. But they will undoubtedly hear the gospel or see it being lived out more clearly and often there than anywhere else.
- C. When the unbelieving partner in a marriage has a heart so hardened by sin he/she "puts asunder" (Gr. *choridzo*, the same word used in Mt. 19:6; Mk. 10:9, and means more than "separation.") or divorces the believing partner, then the believing partner is "not bound."
1. I believe the way to remarriage is opened up, not only to the believer, but to the unbeliever.
  2. Dependent, of course, upon circumstances, needs, conscience, penitence and civil law.
  3. The unbeliever who has caused divorce has sinned. He/she must become a believer and be immersed in repentance in order to be forgiven.

But, for the benefit of society, if the unbeliever cannot be controlled from promiscuous sexual intercourse by self-control, he/she should be married according to the laws of the society in order to maintain some level of human responsibility and keep human society from degenerating into an animalistic level.
  4. The civil law is for the non-Christian (I Tim. 1:8-11; Rom. 13:1-7).

### IV. THE PRIVILEGE OF CELIBACY, 7:17-40

- A. Paul by guidance of the Holy Spirit, says that under certain circumstances it would be better to remain single.

1. That is quite startling in these days when apparently the unmarried condition is to be avoided at any cost.
2. Marriage and a family is the normal state of affairs for Christians and non-Christians alike.

But some people have been given the ability (charisma) to remain unmarried.

3. Some people tend to feel that there is something wrong with the Christian who is a "spinster" or a "bachelor"—Paul is not in agreement.
- B. Paul's advise, "seek not."
1. Consider how dangerous it would be to marry, just for the sake of appearances, someone whose idea of loyalty to Christ is not your own.
  2. God did not create us for marriage AT ANY PRICE!
  3. Paul gives 3 advantages of celibacy:
    - a. Relief from anxiety about the things of the world which must be concentrated on by a "bread winner."
    - b. Freed from distractions in order to serve the Lord more fully and intensely.
    - c. Freed from troubles due to distressing times.

Now of course these may be achieved whether married or unmarried—but with less difficulty and more time for the Lord when unmarried, if the circumstances are such as to disrupt peaceful family life (like persecution, economic distress, etc.).

God forbade Jeremiah to marry (Jer. 16:1-4) because of terrible times.

- C. If it is marriage out of the will of God, then it is better to remain single.
1. To step into any relationship outside the will of God is not only to involve oneself in tragedy, but perhaps to bring sorrow into the lives of a generation yet to be born.
  2. Entry into a marriage out of the will of God which brings children into the world may cause their whole lives to know unhappiness, misery and unbelief.

Only the very strong, who by the grace of God having emotions and drives under control, with the special gift, are able to do this. All others should marry. And the married life is the norm—in no way inferior spiritually to celibacy.

#### SOME OBSERVATIONS OR CONCLUSIONS: (especially for Christians)

1. If you have the gift of celibacy, do not seek to be married but rather use your gift as a single person for God's glory.

## THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

2. If you do not have the gift of celibacy, plan to marry. If you don't marry, you will most likely get into trouble. It is better to marry than to burn.
3. If you are getting married, be sure your husband or wife is a Christian.
4. If you are already married to an unbeliever, go to any extreme to preserve the marriage. You might well win your husband or wife to the Lord in conducting yourself in the Spirit of Christ in marriage.
5. If you want a happy marriage, do not neglect to afford your partner all the physical satisfaction desired, along with the love and spiritual aspects of marriage. The wife owns her husband's body, and the husband owns his wife's body.
6. If divorce comes in the marriages of believers or unbelievers, Christians must be involved in finding and guiding the fallen to the highest possible good for the person and for society. This will most likely involve re-marriage.
7. Most certainly, the church must emphasize in the minds of its membership (at the youngest level possible) God's will for marriage. The church must also emphasize *agape love* (love of choice, love of will-power, love of decision—not emotion only; a love for the unlovable; a love that is commanded by God) as the only security for marriage.

### SECTION 3

#### Be Sharing (16:19-31)

19 "There was a rich man, who was clothed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day. <sup>20</sup>And at his gate lay a poor man named Lazarus, full of sores, <sup>21</sup>who desired to be fed with what fell from the rich man's table; moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. <sup>22</sup>The poor man died and was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom. The rich man also died and was buried; <sup>23</sup>and in Hades, being in torment, he lifted up his eyes, and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus in his bosom. <sup>24</sup>And he called out, 'Father Abraham, have mercy upon me, and send Lazarus to dip the end of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am in anguish in this flame.' <sup>25</sup>But Abraham said, 'Son, remember that you in your lifetime received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner evil things; but now he is comforted here, and you are in anguish. <sup>26</sup>And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, in order that those who would pass from here to you may not be able, and none may cross from there to us.' <sup>27</sup>And he said, 'Then I beg you, father, to send him to my father's house, <sup>28</sup>for I have five brothers, so that he may warn them, lest they also come into this place of torment.' <sup>29</sup>But Abraham said, 'They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.' <sup>30</sup>And he said, 'No, father Abraham;



but if some one goes to them from the dead, they will repent.' <sup>31</sup>He said to him, 'If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be convinced if some one should rise from the dead.' "

**16:19-21 Selfishness:** Jesus told about a rich man who used his riches selfishly to illustrate what happens to such people after they die. Some have called this a parable—but Jesus does not call it a parable. Jesus even gives the name of the beggar. We believe it was an event that literally happened and is true to the facts in every detail. There was such a rich man; there was such a beggar; there is such a place as Hades. Even if it was a parable Jesus would not "make up" a fantasy which had no basis in fact about such a serious matter as life after death. He would not concoct a fable which was untrue just to scare someone. Besides, what He teaches here about life after death for the impenitent is substantiated by the rest of the New Testament.

Note the contrasts between the two men:

*The rich man*

1. dressed in a purple robe (Gr. *porphuran*) and fine linen (Gr. *bussan*); sign of luxury.
2. rich (Gr. *plousios*)
3. feasted sumptuously every day (Gr. *euphrainomenos lampros*, lit. "made merry flamboyantly") show of ostentation; he flaunted his riches.

*The beggar*

1. covered with open, festering sores (Gr. *eilkomenos*) licked by the dogs; destitution
2. poor (Gr. *ptochos*)
3. wished to be fed with crumbs from rich man's table (Gr. *epithumon chortasthenai apo ton piptonton apo tes trapezes*, lit. "desiring to be satisfied from the table . . .") shows humility.

The beggar, Lazarus, lay every day at the gate of the rich man. The implication is that the rich man had to be aware of the beggar's destitution. Apparently the beggar expressed his "desire" to be fed crumbs from the rich man's table but nothing was offered him. This side of the grave the scoffing Pharisees and most of the world today would have contempt for the poor beggar—if not contempt then inactive pity (if there is such a thing). The avaricious Pharisees and most of the world today would envy the rich man. That is how it is in this world—but what about after this life is over?

**16:22-25 Suffering:** Here are two men at opposite ends of the economic and social spectrum—the very rich and the utterly destitute. Both of them died, of course, for every man does! Neither riches nor poverty can circumvent death. One had a funeral (the rich man was "buried") and the body of the other was probably cast into Gehenna (Jerusalem's city-dump). The beggar was carried by the angels to Abraham's "bosom." Abraham

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died himself when he was 175 years old (Gen. 25:7) and he was "gathered to his people." Since none of his ancestors were buried in the cave of Machpelah (where he was buried) the phrase "gathered to his people" does not simply refer to Abraham's death and burial. Apparently the phrase refers to Abraham's existence after death with those who before him had died in faith (Heb. 11:1-16). This is why the location of the departed spirit of this beggar "son of Abraham" was actually called "Abraham's bosom." The rich man went to Hades and was in torment. Death comes to all but it does not end existence. The dead apparently go to some intermediate state where they are conscious, knowing and being known, as they wait the final judgment and eternal existence. This intermediate state is an actual place. Samuel was recognized by both the witch and Saul (I Sam. 28:13-19) and Samuel was conscious. There are beings in another existence all around us if we could "see" them. God adjusted the eyes of Elisha's servant to "see" the fiery chariots and horses (II Kings 6:16-17). The apostles saw Moses and Elijah and recognized them as they were transfigured with Jesus (Mt. 17:3; Mk. 9:4; Lk. 9:30-31).

There have been declarations that the Old Testament does not teach life after death. That is sheer nonsense. Job believed (Job 19:25-26); Daniel believed (Dan. 12:2ff.); David believed (II Sam. 12:23); Abraham believed (Heb. 11:19); many O.T. saints believed (Heb. 11:35); Martha believed (Jn. 11:24); many of the Pharisees believed (Acts 23:6-8). For an extensive study of the O.T. teaching on the Future Life, see *Isaiah, Vol. II* by Paul T. Butler, College Press, pgs. 287-299.

Hades (Gr. *Haidēs*) in Greek mythology was the god of the underworld, the son of Cronos and Rhea and the brother of Zeus; the word came to be used to denote the kingdom ruled over by Hades, or the abode of the dead. The Greek conception of Hades was that of a locality receiving into itself all the dead, but divided into two regions, one a place of torment, the other of blessedness. Almost without exception the Septuagint uses *hades* to translate the Hebrew word *Sheol* which is the O.T. name for the abode of the dead. Although the word itself in Greek had its origins in Greek mythology, the *concept* Jesus and the rest of the N.T. teach about the abode of the dead is from the O.T. revelation of God. Admittedly the O.T. is vague and dim about life after death, still, once one gathers all that is said and inferred about Sheol from the O.T. it appears clear there was belief in a continuity of consciousness after physical death; there was rest and blessedness for the believer and torment for the infidel (cf. Isa. 14:12ff. for example). The O.T. as well as the N.T. places emphasis on the final judgment and redemption and leaves many things connected with the intermediate state in darkness.

The clearest picture we have in all the Bible on the intermediate state of the dead is in Luke 16:19-31. The N.T. seems to teach that life *immediately* after death will be a state of:

- a. *Consciousness*: II Cor. 5:8; Phil. 1:23; Lk. 23:43; 16:24ff.; II Cor. 12:2-4; Rev. 14:13.
- b. *Disembodiment*: However, the spirit will be reunited with a new and appropriate body at the final resurrection; I Cor. 15:35ff.; Rev. 6:9.
- c. *Incompleteness*: No part of the church is complete without the whole fellowship of the saints; Eph. 3:18; Heb. 11:40.
- d. *Restfulness*: Rev. 7:13ff.; Rev. 14:13; Lk. 16:25; Jn. 11:11; I Thess. 4:13.
- e. *Presence with Christ*: II Cor. 5:8; Phil. 1:23.
- f. *Torment for Unbelievers*: Lk. 16:24; Rev. 14:9-11; 19:20.

What these passages appear to teach is that at the time of physical death, there is no break in memory, mentality or change in personality. What a man chooses to *be* in this world he apparently chooses to *be* in the next world. Of course, just like the rich man, many will cry out in anguish at the torment. But that has to do with a desire for relief from unpleasant circumstances, and has nothing to do with a willingness to repent and surrender to God's sovereign will.

The Bible seems to teach that there are four states of existence for man:

1. *The Innocent State*: Infants and young children are apparently in a state of moral innocence until they come to the point of mental and moral maturity where they clearly know the will of God and choose to disobey it; (cf. Mt. 18:1-6; 19:13-15). Only those who have the mental and moral maturity to repent are commanded to do so in the N.T. Should these innocents die before they have made an intelligent, free, moral choice to disobey God's will, they apparently go to be with Jesus (in the intermediate state; see II Sam. 12:23, etc.). There is no categorical determination in the Scriptures as to the age a person will be when he reaches moral accountability. The Hebrews arbitrarily declared young men to have reached that age at 12-13 when they were given their *Bar-Mitzva* ("Son of the commandment").
2. *The Choice, or Probationary (Proving) State*: All persons who remain alive in this world long enough to make an intelligent, free, moral choice to disobey God's will *do so!* All men sin (Rom. 3:23). But God is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance so He has declared His plan of redemption in a New and Final Testament. All who hear that and believe it by obedience to the terms become citizens of the Kingdom of Christ. Those who do not repent and obey are "sons of darkness" and servants of the devil. Every sinner is dead in sin—separated from God. Every sinner who believes the Gospel and obeys has been "resurrected" to a new life in Christ and is reconciled to God.

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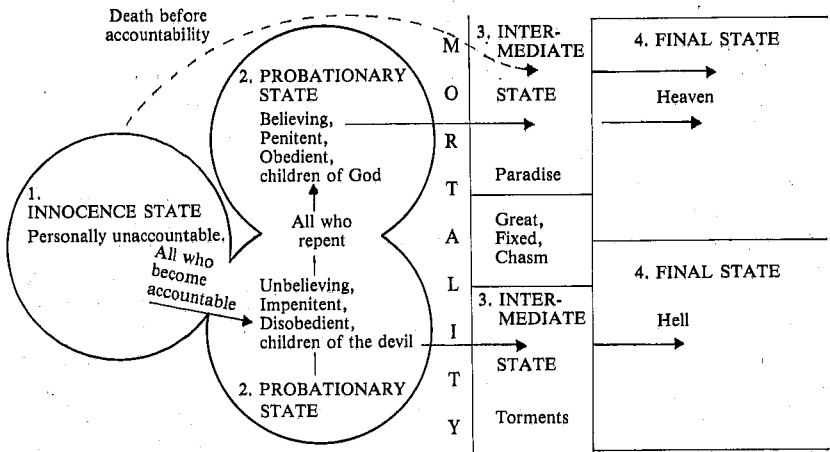
3. *The Intermediate State:* All persons die physically. All human beings must eventually be separated from this earthly body. When that occurs, the real person—the spirit of the person apparently goes to a disembodied, intermediate state of conscious existence. In the intermediate state there are two existences—Paradise (Lk. 23:43) for the saved and Torments (Lk. 16:23) for the unsaved. There is a “great gulf” or chasm separating the two realms over which mankind cannot pass (Lk. 16:26). There, all mankind awaits the Final State which will be realized at the Second Advent of Jesus Christ (I Thess. 4:13-18, etc.).
4. *The Final State:* At the Second Advent of Jesus Christ the Great White Throne Judgment and Him who sits upon it will judge all mankind (Rev. 20:11ff.). Eternal existence will be determined on the basis of what is written in the “books”—some will go to eternal blessedness and some will go to eternal separation from God in Hell (cf. Rev. 21:1—22:21). Those who by faith and obedience to the Gospel have taken part in the “first resurrection” (Romans 6:1-11; Jn. 5:24-29; Rev. 20:1-6) will be forever in the fellowship of God and will not suffer the “second death.”

Critics of the Bible have always felt rather smug about attacking this account of Jesus at the point in the story where the rich man is said to be “in anguish in this flame.” Their contention is that the Bible states an impossibility since flame consumes and it is a logical impossibility for something to be eternally consumed. We must remember, however, the Bible is written in human language, describing unseen, spiritual and supernatural things in natural terms. God must communicate to man in terms of man’s experience, so He likens eternal *torment* unto eternal *flames*. It is altogether possible, of course, for God to create a literal, eternal lake of fire and brimstone (Rev. 14:9-11; 19:20; 20:14-15; 21:8) and create a body for the impenitent spirit that will never be consumed but burned in flame forever. But the emphasis seems to be in this passage on the mental anguish and conscious moral suffering of the rich man in Hades. The Greek word *basanos* (“torment”) is sometimes translated “toil” and means primarily, “to rub on the touchstone, to put to the test, to examine by torture.” The word *odunomai* is translated “anguish” (RSV) and “tormented” (KJV) in 16:24; it is translated “pain” or “anguish” of the heart (Rom. 9:2; I Tim. 6:10). Mary uses the word of her mental anguish when she could not find the lad Jesus (Lk. 2:48) and Paul’s departure from the Ephesian elders brought deep sorrow to his heart (Acts 20:38). Every human being knows that mental and spiritual anguish is more severely tormenting than any physical torture. Men without faith in God have been able to endure excruciating physical tortures and survive—but without faith in God and His Word, mental anxiety or spiritual guilt is devastating. Unforgiven sin, unreconciled guilt and unpacified animosity forever and ever would

certainly qualify to be described as a “lake of fire and brimstone” of torment. An unrelenting, unappeased conscience burns and consumes like fire. Eternal torment consists of total and final confinement in cowardliness, untrustworthiness, pollution, murder, fornication, sorcery, idolatry, lying (Rev. 21:8; 22:15) forever and ever.

The beggar, in Abraham’s bosom, is comforted (Gr. *parakaleitai*, “strengthened”). The eternal state of the comforted is described in Rev. 21:1-4; 21:22-27; 22:1-5.

THE FOUR STATES OF MAN



See pages 309 and 310 for scripture references and explanations.

**16:26-31 Sentenced:** The report on the rich man and Lazarus parts the veil on life after death and dispels many human heresies about it. First, there is no such thing as “second probation” (called by some, purgatory). The solemn reality taught by Jesus is that all who die in unbelief pass on to a lost eternity. There are no second chances. The great chasm (Gr. *chasma*, lit. “yawning”) is impassable and immovable. The state of the wicked and righteous is fixed (Gr. *sterizo*, “established”) after physical death. There are no scriptures anywhere in the Bible which teach a second chance. The passage in I Pet. 3:18-20 refers to the preaching of the Spirit of Christ who was in the prophet Noah (cf. I Pet. 1:10-11) when Noah preached to

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the antediluvian sinners (I Pet. 3:20). The spirits of those disobedient were "in prison" when Peter was writing his epistle, *not* during the preaching of the Spirit of Christ, (see *Letters From Peter*, by Clinton Gill, College Press, pgs. 90-91). Second, there is no such thing as "soul sleep." The same soul that was alive and conscious on earth was alive and conscious after death. The essential characteristic of spirit is life. There can be no such thing as a non-living or unconcious spirit. Consciousness is that which is the essence of spirit. Death is not extinction—only separation. Physical death is the separation of spirit from mortal body; spiritual death is separation of the eternal spirit from its Creator. Some verses used by those who teach "soul-sleep" are: (Jn. 11:11-14; Mt. 9:24; Acts 7:60; I Cor. 15:51; I Thess. 4:13-14; Eccl. 9:5-6; 9:10; Psa. 13:3; 6:5; 115:17; 146:3-4; Dan. 12:2). But these simply describe the person only as he *appears* from the human viewpoint which is limited to seeing the visible, physical manifestations of life. Jesus plainly indicates that there is consciousness beyond death. Abraham and the rich man recognized one another. There was thinking and feeling (emotions, at least). Jesus knew what reality was beyond death (cf. Jn. 14:1ff.). He would not deceive His hearers about so imperative a concept.

Third, there is no such thing as spiritism. The spirits of dead men do not return (unless God permits a special case, like Samuel). Death causes a complete break with this world as far as communication is concerned (cf. Job 10:21; 7:9-10; II Sam. 12:23; II Cor. 5:8). The *attempt* to communicate with the dead is forbidden by the Bible (Deut. 18:9-12; Ex. 22:18; Lev. 20:6; Isa. 8:19-20; II Kings 1:3, etc.). What is thought to be spiritism today may be either human hoax or the *lying* signs of the devil (cf. II Thess. 2:9-12; Rev. 13:13-15). The famous magician Houdini wrote a book entitled, *A Magician Among The Spirits*—a well documented and thorough exposure of spiritism. In his book he said, "Mine has not been an investigation of a few days or weeks or months, but one that has extended over 30 years, and in that 30 years I have not found one (spiritist) that did not reek of fraud, one that could not be reproduced by earthly powers, . . . up to the present time everything that I have investigated has been fraud."

There are some extremely important lessons to be learned from this story. The right use of privilege and possessions in this life is significant for all eternity. The conditions beyond this life result from a godly, merciful use of money to help those in need (cf. Mt. 25:31-46). Life which is not affected by morality now will not be affected by the miraculous now or after this life! Neither a miraculous apparition or someone returning from the dead, nor a tragic story of the torture and suffering of the damned would effect the repentance of the rich man's brothers! Miracles are to establish the faithfulness of God's revealed Word—they do not in themselves bring people to repentance. Hardship, persecution, tragedy seldom produce

repentance (cf. Amos 4:6-13; Rev. 9:20-21; 16:10-11). It is the proclamation of the absolute faithfulness and mercifulness of God as demonstrated in the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ that is the power unto salvation. Miracles simply confirm that what God has said about atonement, forgiveness, salvation and heaven is to be trusted. Plenty of miracles were performed by God's messengers in Bible times. Man does not need any more miracles. God's word is sufficiently validated to engender trust in Him. Men who will not believe now would not be *convinced* (Gr. *peisthesontai*) if another miracle were wrought before their very eyes. Men did not believe or trust Jesus even when He brought a different Lazarus back from the dead (Jn. 11:45-57). Miracles which could not be denied did not produce discipleship in and of themselves (cf. Acts 4:15-22). The task of the disciple of Jesus is to communicate the word of God clearly, plainly, understandably and lovingly to the unbelieving world and then to let every hearer make his own decision. Every human being deserves the opportunity to hear the Word presented in an understandable and winsome way at least once. Disciples of Jesus are *not* responsible for the choice—only for the *communication*. This starkly realistic look at eternity should motivate every Christian for evangelism immediately!

### STUDY STIMULATORS:

1. Why, if material possessions are only temporary, does God's word say so much about how men use or misuse these possessions?
2. Do you consider all you own yours? After all you earned it! Or is it all God's? Why?
3. What is the best investment for your money?
4. Do you think some Christians or Christian endeavors are meeting the demand of Christ to be as wise as "children of the world" in their use of money? Why?
5. Have you ever thought there must be some people about half way between being lost and saved? What do you think about Jesus' categories?
6. Why can't a man serve two masters? How did the Pharisees prove that?
7. Do you agree with the religious denomination that today says John the Baptist founded the church?
8. What connection does Jesus' teaching on entering the kingdom by violence have to do with the proper use of money?
9. How is the subject of divorce connected to misuse of money?
10. Is divorce a sin? Can it be forgiven? What should the Christian attitude be toward remarriage of those who have been divorced?
11. Is the account of the rich man and Lazarus a parable? If it is how can we accept it as an accurate description of life after death?

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12. Where is Hades? What is it like?
13. Are the unsaved really going to burn forever in flames?
14. What are the four states of human existence?
15. Three religious heresies are disproved by the account of the rich man and Lazarus—what are they?
16. Why wouldn't sending a man back from the dead have convinced the brothers of the rich man?



# HELL

(Mt. 10:28)

By Paul T. Butler — OBC Chapel, September 1975

## INTRODUCTION

MY NAME IS NOT HARRY TRUMAN AND I'M NOT RUNNING FOR PRESIDENT. But I propose to give you a sermon on Hell this morning.

### I. HELL MAKES THE NEWS OCCASIONALLY.

- A. In May, 1967, *Time* magazine ran an article on it. Some theologians interviewed had doubts about whether there is an afterlife, and others absolutely disavowed the existence of an eternal hell.
- B. A 30 year old preacher in one of our western communities suddenly became a popular sensation and a national figure because he publicly and proudly denied the existence of hell—and was so quoted in *Time*—he said, “Hell is a damnable doctrine—responsible for a large measure of this world’s hatred. According to this doctrine, God, who commands us to love our enemies, plays the hypocrite by damning his enemies. This in turn stimulates the hatred of God by people who abhor hypocrisy—and it gives sanction to our hatred of certain selected enemies.”
- C. Of the doctrine of the Second Coming and all mankind, except a few, being extinguished or tormented for ever, Nels F. S. Ferre says (*Sun and the Umbrella*, pg. 33), “It seems doubtful that Jesus ever taught such a doctrine.”

### II. BUT THERE IS A RETICENCE, EVEN OF BIBLE BELIEVING PREACHERS, TO PREACH ON HELL.

- A. Billy Graham says, in one of his tracts,
  - 1. Hell “. . . is the most unpopular subject a minister can choose. . .”
  - 2. “In glancing through the books in my library I found that there have been few sermons written on this subject in the past 50 years.”
  - 3. “I have had a number of ministers tell me that they have never preached a sermon on hell and yet, as I read the New Testament, I am amazed at the number of direct references to this subject, especially by Christ.”
- B. In a tract from the “Back To God Hour” the results of a survey taken and indicated that 99% of the people in this country believe in God, but only 58% believe in hell (Tract #112).

### III. FEAR OF HELL IS A BIBLICAL MOTIVATION FOR REPENTANCE AND CONVERSION.

- A. Halley’s Handbook, pg. 459, Jesus “talked much about the future life. He appealed to the hope of heaven and the fear of hell. . . .

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It is a pity that the present day pulpit so generally deprecates the very motives that Jesus himself appealed to. Maybe that is one of the reasons the pulpit has lost so much of its power. One of the most powerful stimulants to good and deterrents from evil in this life is a profound conviction as to the reality of the future life, and that our estate there will depend on our behavior here. . . .”

C. S. Lewis, *Letters to Malcom*: “I have met no people who fully disbelieved in hell and also had a living and life-giving belief in heaven.”

- B. C. S. Lewis, in *The Problem of Pain*, pg. 118: “There is no doctrine which I would more willingly remove from Christianity than this, if it lay in my power. But it has the full support of Scripture and, specially, of Our Lord’s own words.”
- C. Dwight L. Moody once said, “The word of God teaches us plainly that there is future retribution; if it does not teach that it does not teach anything. . . . Now some people say, ‘Oh, you are just trying to scare us, you say such things just to alarm us.’ I would consider myself an unfaithful servant if I did not so warn you. The blood of your soul would be required at my hands if I did not so warn you. . . . No one spoke of the judgment as Christ did; none knew it as well as he.”
- D. Paul the apostle said, “Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men . . .” (II Cor. 5:11).  
Peter wrote, “. . . pass the time of your sojourning here in fear . . .” (I Pet. 1:17).
- E. Donald F. Tweedie, Jr., *Eternity*, April 1965, said: “. . . I personally am not negative about fear as an inducement to a crisis which will culminate in a Christian conversion. Probably at least some element of fear is a necessary part of such a crisis experience. Certainly, if the dangers of lostness and hell are real, fear is a most appropriate emotion.”

TO LET A LOST AND DOOMED WORLD OF MANKIND GO MERRILY, LAUGHING AND JOKING AND ENTERTAINING ITSELF WITH POSITIVE FEELINGS AND UNFOUNDED OPTIMISM TOWARD AN ETERNAL HELL IS LIKE LETTING A CHILD RUN MERRILY OUT INTO A BUSY STREET LAUGHING, THINKING HAPPY THOUGHTS ALL THE TIME AND NOT WARNING IT OF IMPENDING CATASTROPHE!

I am not contending that fear and hell and judgment is the most expedient way to motivate conversion. Trusting in the faithfulness, mercy, love and goodness of God is the most significant basis for a lasting and maturing conversion. But as easy as it is for any of us and all of us to fall into hypocrisy, presumptiveness upon the grace of God, or returning to a life

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of self-indulgence, WE NEED TO REMIND OURSELVES FREQUENTLY OF THE DANGER OF ETERNAL HELL!

### IV. ILLUSTRATION:

A number of years ago four men were fishing from a boat in the Niagara River some distance above the world-renowned falls. As the fish were not very hungry the fishers got into a controversy regarding future punishment. Three of the number contended that there was no such place as hell, whilst the fourth accepted the testimony of Scripture on the subject. The discussion became so heated they failed to observe that their boat was getting perilously near the sweep of the current. Perceiving their danger, they seized the oars, and rowed with all their might to a safe spot on the river. "If there is no such place as hell," said the believer in God's Word, "why were you so afraid to go over the falls?" One of them replied, "The 'No Hell' doctrine is good enough to go fishing with, but it is very poor to go over the falls with."

## DISCUSSION

### I. HELL IS A REAL PLACE.

A. There are four words translated Hell in the KJV.

1. *Sheol*: The Hebrew word which represents the locality or condition of the dead (*keber* means tomb; *shahkath* means corruption). *Sheol* is not as precise about endless, retributive character of the life beyond as New Testament. Still, wherever used, it does usually represent the place of future retribution (Deut. 32:22; II Sam. 22:6; Job 17:15; 21:13; 26:6; Ps. 9:17; 18:5; 89:48; 116:3; 139:8; Prov. 23:14; 15:11; Isa. 14:15; Ezek. 31:16, 17; Amos 9:2; Jonah 2:2).
2. *Tartarus*: II Pet. 2:4 — the place where God cast the angels who sinned and who are delivered into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment.
3. *Hades*: Most frequently used as antithetical to heaven. Mt. 11:23; 16:18; Lk. 10:15; 16:23; Rev. 1:18; 6:8; 20:13. Sometimes simply the place of departed dead.
4. *Gehenna*: or Valley of Hinnom; Mt. 5:22, 29, 30; 10:28; 18:9; 23:15, 33; Mk. 9:43, 45, 47; Lk. 12:5; Jas. 3:6. Most used word and most associated with judgment.

The words in themselves do not prove hell's existence. They merely describe in human language that which man has not yet fully experienced. The existence of hell is proven from three lines of evidence.

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### B. Natural Revelation (we shall equate judgment with hell).

1. "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and wickedness of men who by their wickedness suppress the truth. For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them . . . clearly perceived in the things that have been made . . . receiving in their own persons the due penalty for their error" (Rom. 1:18ff.).
2. The very fact that built into our universe and its moral structure there are penalties, judgments and executions of those judgments has indicated to the pagan world some place of future retribution.
3. Many would *like* to believe there is no such place and some even use the word hell to swear there is no such place, but God has not left Himself without witness to the whole world . . . so they shall be without excuse!
4. I've known some rounders in my day and every one of them except one believed there was a place of retribution—hell.

### C. Man's Conscience

1. "When Gentiles who have not the law do by nature what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. They show that what the law requires is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness and their conflicting thoughts accuse or perhaps excuse them . . ." (Rom. 2:14ff.).
2. Alfred M. Rehwinkel has written a masterful book on *The Voice of Conscience*.

Conscience is absolute in its verdict. There is no bargaining or compromising. We may attempt to excuse ourselves, but conscience will prevail. The judgment of conscience is final. Conscience does not change its verdict unless the standard or law is changed or done away. This is the very essence of the Christian's "passing from death to life"—Jesus has taken away the law that stood against us. This is the only escape from conscience. Without the removal of the law, judgment and retribution are inevitable. Conscience is no respecter of persons. It pronounces its unimpeachable judgments regardless of the opposing authority by which it may be confronted.

3. Conscience is man himself speaking as a moral being to himself. God has placed this voice in man at his creation and man cannot rid himself of it, even if he would.

Men have cried out to die and have committed suicide attempting to escape from the horror of a tormenting conscience. In the torments of an aroused conscience, man experiences a foretaste of everlasting torture in hell.

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### D. On the Authority of Jesus Christ

1. Never were there words as solemn and as searching as those in which Jesus warned of hell and the judgment to come. In 12 out of 35 of his parables he depicts men as judged, condemned, and punished for their sins. In one, (Lazarus and the rich man) he draws back the veil on the conditions men in the hereafter . . . a chasm that is forever unbridgeable (Lk. 16:19-31).
2. More than the love of God is revealed at the cross. There we see, unsheathed, the implacable hostility of God's wrath against sin—past, present and future. It is a precursor of the last judgment.
3. The documents that make up our New Testament have been submitted to nearly 2,000 years of intense, scientific, archaeological, textual, investigation. They have been verified, authenticated, accredited as historically trustworthy. They have never, by any authentic evidence, been contradicted. They are a record of one Jesus of Nazareth who walked on the sea, healed the sick, cast out demons, raised the dead and was himself raised from the dead.

HE SAID THERE WAS A PLACE OF FINAL AND ETERNAL RETRIBUTION IN THE LIFE BEYOND THIS ONE. . . . I BELIEVE HIM! UNTIL SOMEONE COMES ALONG WITH BETTER CREDENTIALS THAN HIS, I WILL CONTINUE TO BELIEVE HIM!

Madalyn Murray O'Hair, speaking on the campus of Drake University, said, "There is absolutely no conclusive evidence that Jesus ever really existed. . . . These stories about him must be considered nothing more than folk tales. . . . But there is never going to be any way of verifying them one way or another. . . . I reject the idea of a life hereafter on the same grounds. Do you know anybody who has come back with a first-hand report on heaven? If you do, let me know. Until then you'll pardon me if I don't buy it. I agree with Mark Twain, who wrote about the hereafter, that there is no sex in it; you can't eat anything in it; there is absolutely nothing physical in it. You wouldn't have your brain, you wouldn't have any sensation, you wouldn't be able to enjoy anything—unless you were queer for hymn singing and harp playing. So who needs it? SPEAKING FOR MYSELF, I'D RATHER GO TO HELL."

## II. HELL IS THE ETERNAL HOME OF THE IMPENITENT

### A. It is described as:

1. the outer darkness (Mt. 8:12)
2. weeping and gnashing of teeth (Mt. 8:12)
3. the pit of the abyss (Rev. 9:2, 11)
4. eternal punishment (Mt. 25:46)

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5. torment or anguish (Lk. 16:24; Rev. 14:10, 11)
  6. eternal sin (Mk. 3:29)
  7. second death (Rev. 21:8)
  8. eternal destruction from the face of the Lord and from the glory of his might (II Thess. 1:9)
- B. Hell is the penitentiary of the moral universe in which all impenitent are sentenced for eternity to share with the devil and rebellious angels.
1. Obviously its essential characteristic is lostness, separation from God and the fellowship of the godlike.
  2. It is eternal remorse, despair, hopelessness and guilt.
  3. C. C. Crawford, *Survey Course in Christian Doctrine*, Vol. II, "Hell has been prepared for the devil and his angels. Wicked men will eventually go to hell, not because God will cast them into it, but because their own consciences will drive them, instinctively, to their proper place (as in the case of Judas, Acts 2:23). As water seeks its own level, they who in this present life fit themselves only for the society of the rebellious, wicked, unbelieving, will instinctively seek that type of society in the next world. For, without a doubt, the devil and all his kind would be miserable in heaven."
- C. A place where sin and wickedness is rampant
1. Judging from the manner in which God deals with unrepentant sinners (Rom. 1), that is, allowing their sin to go unrestrained, it follows that man's destiny is the free expression of pride, selfishness and greed, hate, hurtfulness.
  2. God says: "You have lived for yourself, now you may have just that. . . . Man who was created a social being, is in the end cut off completely from God and goodness."
  3. When you were born into this world, you came to a place that had been prepared for you. Generations of blood and breeding and tradition . . . and, of course, the particular preparation of parents, etc. You were expected; you were prepared for; and so you arrived, not at just a place, but a prepared place. IN OTHER WORDS, YOU ARRIVED AT HOME. HELL IS PREPARED FOR THOSE WHO WANT IT!
- IT SHOULD NOT BE A STRANGE THOUGHT THAT, EVEN AS THERE WAS PREPARATION FOR MAN'S ARRIVAL INTO THIS WORLD, THERE IS ALSO PREPARATION FOR HIS ARRIVAL IN THE NEXT WORLD!
- D. A place of utter ruin and lostness and destruction of reality
1. C. S. Lewis in *The Problem of Pain* (p. 125-126), "To enter heaven is to become more human than you ever succeeded in

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being in earth; to enter hell, is to be banished from humanity. What is cast (or casts itself) into hell is not a man: it is "remains." To be a complete man means to have the passions obedient to the will and the will offered to God: to *have been* a man would presumably mean to consist of a will utterly centered in itself and passions utterly uncontrolled by the will."

2. "By virtue of God's moral law, the sinner reaps as he has sown, and sooner or later is repaid by contempt, selfishness, hate, hurtfulness. Then the selfishness of one sinner is punished by the selfishness of another, the ambition of one by the ambition of another, the cruelty of one by the cruelty of another. The misery of the wicked hereafter will doubtless be due in part to the spirit of their companions. They dislike the good, whose presence and example is a continual reproof and reminder the height from which they have fallen, and they shut themselves out of their company. The Judgment will bring about a complete cessation of intercourse between the good and the bad" (Strong, *Systematic Theology*, p. 1035).
3. Uncle Screwtape, writing to Wormwood says:  
"To us a human is primarily food; our aim is the absorption of its will into ours, the increase of our own areas of selfhood at its expense. . . . We want cattle who can finally become food; He (God) wants servants who can finally become sons. We want to suck in, He wants to give out. We are empty and would be filled; He is full and flows over. Our war aim is a world in which Our Father Below has drawn all other beings into himself. . . ."

HELL IS A PLACE OF TOTAL SELFISHNESS . . . WHERE EVERYONE DEVOURS, EXPLOITS, ABUSES, PERVERTS, DESTROYS, REBELLS.

Prisoners of hell enjoy forever the horrible freedom they have demanded and are therefore self-enslaved.

The blessed, forever submitting to obedience, become through all eternity more and more free.

What went on in Sodom and Gomorrah; what people did to people in the decadance of Rome; the hateful, hurtful tortures of the German Third Reich; the agonies and torments of the millions in Russian and Chinese concentration camps; the ruin, destruction, hopelessness, despair of thousands of American skid-rows, bars, brothels, and drug addicts. . . .

MULTIPLY A MILLION TIMES A MILLION AND YOU STILL DO NOT KNOW THE HORROR OF HELL.

IT IS A PLACE WHERE ALL THE HORRIBLE CONSEQUENCES OF UNBELIEF AND REBELLION ARE ALLOWED TO RUN RAMPANT FOREVER AND EVER!

## THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

### III. HOW TO GO TO HELL

#### A. Just want to!

1. God created all of us with the power of will and choice. He will not revoke that power. He will give us what we choose.
2. C. S. Lewis, *Problem of Pain*, p. 127, "I willingly believe that the damned are, in one sense, successful, rebels to the end; that the doors of hell are locked on the inside. . . . they (occupants of hell) do not will even the first preliminary stages of that self-abandonment through which alone the soul can reach any good."
3. Just want this world—want what the devil wants—not the globe, but worldliness or mind-of-the-world (rebellion, license, greed, exploitation).
4. "To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law, indeed it cannot; and those who are in the flesh cannot please God" (Rom. 8:6).
5. ". . . friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God" (James 4:4-5).
6. "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. . . . No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other. . . . You cannot serve God and mammon" (Mt. 6:21, 24).
7. DO NOT THINK YOU CAN PRETEND TO BE SOMETHING OR DESIRE SOMETHING OTHER THAN WHAT YOU REALLY WANT IN YOUR HEART AND MIND. JESUS' MOST SCATHING JUDGMENTS FELL UPON THE "GREAT PRETENDERS" THE PHARISEES, OF HIS DAY. WE MAY FOOL ONE ANOTHER, BUT WE CAN'T FOOL GOD ABOUT WHAT WE REALLY WANT.

It comes down to this: If you really *do not want to do the will of God*, God will grant you your choice and all eternity to make that choice and suffer the consequences.

#### B. Because, you become what you want

1. The Lord has the power to make us become what we want but He will not make us become something we do not want!
2. The people of the Old Testament wanted a king like the nations, worshiped gods like those of the nations, and became like the wicked people of the nations! (Hosea 9:10).
3. The Pharisees went over land and sea to make proselytes and by their hypocrisy *made* them two-fold more sons of hell than themselves (Mt. 23:15).



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4. Those who worship and serve the beast in the book of Revelation are stamped with the beast's image and character just as certainly as God's people are stamped with His Holy Spirit (sealed).
  5. What do those who do not want to do the will of God become? ". . . filled with all manner of wickedness, evil, covetousness, malice. Full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malignity, they are gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless . . ." (Rom. 1:29-31). **THEY NOT ONLY DO THEM BUT APPROVE THOSE WHO PRACTICE THEM.**
  6. ". . . immoral, idolaters, adulterers, homosexuals, thieves, greedy, drunkards, revilers, robbers will not inherit the kingdom of God" (I Cor. 6:9-10).
  7. ". . . immorality, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, anger, selfishness, dissension, party spirit, envy, drunkenness, carousing and the like . . ." (Gal. 5:19-20).
  8. ". . . reject authority, revile whatever they do not understand, grumblers, malcontents, following their own passions, loud-mouthed boasters, flattering people to gain advantage, act like instinctive, irrational animals" (Jude).
- C. One may actually do *nothing*, and go to hell.
1. "To him that knoweth to do good and doeth it not, to him it is sin" (James 4:17).
  2. The tree that produced nothing was hewn down and cast into the fire (Lk. 13:6-9).
  3. The parables of the talents (Mt. 25:14-30) and the pounds (Lk. 19:11-27) indicates those who did nothing incurred the wrath of the master.

ANXIETY, LETHARGY, SLOTHFULNESS ARE ALL SIGNALS OF UNBELIEF. WHAT YOU WANT, YOU BECOME; WHAT YOU BECOME YOU DO OR REFUSE TO DO!

The safest road to Hell is the gradual one—the gentle slope, soft underfoot, without sudden turnings, without milestones, with signposts (*Screw-tape Letters*, C. S. Lewis).

## CONCLUSION

### I. HELL OR HEAVEN?

- A. These are the alternatives in the Word of God for the whole human race.

## THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

1. By its warnings, threats, invitations and commands, it urges men to recognize the decisiveness of this life.
  2. It permits no silly, superficial view of life or of death, or of destiny.
  3. Instead, it insists on the inevitable fact that a man shall have what he has chosen. . . . "Let the evil doer still do evil, and the filthy still be filthy, and the righteous still do right, and the holy still be holy" (Rev. 22:11).
- B. It further declares that "now is the acceptable time" and "now is the day of salvation" (II Cor. 6:2).
1. It is unthinkable that a follower of Christ should take an indifferent attitude toward the issues of life.
  2. If the apostle Paul sought to persuade men, prompted by the terror of the Lord, it is difficult to see how we can become unconcerned for the salvation of the lost.
- C. Today's generation needs to be told what the New Testament teaches about hell and the awful reality of eternal retribution.
1. It is not a congenial task—not popular, but it is necessary.
  2. It must not be done sadistically, but seriously.
- II. THE PLAIN FACT IS THAT WE ARE ALL CLOSER TO ETERNITY THAN WE MAY REALIZE!
- A. The judgment day is nearer than any of us think. In a very real sense it is here right now.
- B. The night is far spent; the day is at hand, right here, right now.
- C. The Day is here, pressing upon us all with the immediacy of the *constant* call of Christ for our personal surrender to Him.
- D. The call is to engage now in a battle in Christ's Name in all the areas of the devil's usurpation of the throne of our hearts and lives.
- E. As C. S. Lewis says, "In all discussions of hell we should keep steadily before our eyes the possible damnation, not of our enemies nor our friends . . . but of ourselves. This sermon is not about your wife or son, nor about Nero, Hitler or Judas Iscariot; it is about you and me."
- III. GOD IN HIS UNSEARCHABLE GRACE HAS PUNISHED OUR SINS IN HIS SON ON THE CROSS AND OFFERED US THE CHOICE OF LIFE IN HIS NAME.
- A. The offer is to all men everywhere.
- B. Christ Himself is the source and the manifestation of that Life.
- C. The Scriptures are the invitation and the covenant terms of that Life.