

"Come Inside! It's going to rain!"

REGGIE THOMAS

MY
FAVORITE
REVIVAL
SERMONS



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COLLEGE PRESS PUBLISHING CO., Joplin, Missouri



*MY FAVORITE REVIVAL SERMONS
BY EVANGELIST REGGIE THOMAS*

The evangelistic sermons in this book have all been preached by Evangelist Reggie Thomas in great revival meetings conducted in 53 nations of the world and throughout the USA including Hawaii and Alaska.

These messages were tape recorded and transcribed from the tapes word for word as preached. Tapes of the original messages can be secured directly from:

Evangelist Reggie Thomas
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As Evangelist Reggie Thomas is now well into his 44th year of preaching, he is not able to give credit for all sermon illustrations and ideas. He was greatly influenced by the teaching of his own parents, Mr and Mrs A.R. Thomas. He also received help and much guidance from his minister, Russell L. Martin. He also received a wealth of information from his professors, R.C. Foster, George Mark Elliott, Ira Boswell, and many others of the Cincinnati Bible Seminary. Wherever he could give credit, he has, and where his memory has failed, he asks forgiveness! As he freely received instruction and inspiration from many others, he now passes it on to others. If you can use any material in this book, *preach it brother!* To the glory of God and salvation of souls!

A DEDICATION

“Hear the instruction of thy father and forsake not the love of thy mother” (Proverbs 1:8). “Children obey your parents in the Lord” (Ephesians 6:1).

God richly blessed me with Godly parents. My father, Arthur Reginald Thomas, always set a Christ-like example. He was an excellent Bible teacher and a sincere personal evangelist. He loved me. He was my best friend, my brother, my advisor. I stood in awe of him. Many have said, “He was faultless” and to this I agree.

My mother, Florence Lucille Thomas, was and is a “saint”. She read the Bible to me every night. I learned all the Bible stories from her by the time I was five years old. She has always been a “tower of strength” to me. She believed in me when no one else did. She has always encouraged me and supported me.

My father slipped away to Heaven April 10, 1983. My mother, in her 80th year, is still active in the Lord’s service. To my dear father and mother, who have heard me preach all these sermons many times, I lovingly dedicate this volume.

REGGIE THOMAS

1989

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REGGIE THOMAS BIOGRAPHY

Mr Reggie Thomas was born in Joplin, Missouri, January 8, 1929. He was baptized at the age of eight years in the South Joplin Christian Church, Joplin, Missouri. In 1943 he and his parents moved to Miami, Oklahoma, where he became very active in the First Christian Church. He dedicated his life to a specific Christian service at the age of 16, and under the ministry of Russell L. Martin was inspired to begin preaching immediately.

He preached for one year, during his senior year in high school, at the North Miami Christian Church, Miami, Oklahoma. Following this, he and his high school chum, Lloyd Cameron as singer, began to tour the country in revival campaigns. Then followed four years of Bible Seminary education at the Cincinnati Bible Seminary, Cincinnati, Ohio. Mr Thomas graduated from CBS in 1951 with a Bachelor of Arts degree.

He then toured the nation for four years as a full-time traveling evangelist, the last year and one half of this time as a CRA evangelist. During these years in evangelism, more than 100 revival meetings were held in nearly every state in the union. These revivals resulted in more than 4,000 souls won to Christ.

In 1955 Mr Thomas became the minister of the Catlin Church of Christ, Catlin, Illinois, and was in his seventh year of service there when he was called to the ministry at East Point Christian Church, East Point, Georgia. During his years at Catlin, the membership more than doubled. The population of Catlin was 950 and at the time that Mr Thomas left, morning worship attendance was averaging 520. There were more than 1000 new members added to the congregation at Catlin during his years of service there. A new quarter of a million dollar building was built and paid for; also a new \$25,000 parsonage was built during his ministry at Catlin.

BIOGRAPHY

In April 1961 he began his ministry at East Point, Georgia. During his first five years at East Point, more than 1171 were added to the local congregation. On April 10, 1965, 1241 were in attendance. While he was very busy as an active evangelistic minister of a local congregation, Mr Thomas also took time to serve in many areas of the Lord's work. During the year of 1964 he served as President of the Southern Christian Convention. He also served two terms as Chairman of the Board of Trustees at Atlanta Christian College, East Point, Georgia. He served in 1966 as Vice President of the North American Christian Convention. He has served as an active trustee of the following institutions: African Christian Mission, Rhodesian Christian Mission, Christian Television Mission, Dixie Christian Service Camp, South Pacific Evangelizing Fellowship, the Atlanta Christian College and Revival Fires. In addition to these many duties, he also served, 1961-1966, as a part-time professor at Atlanta Christian College, teaching Personal Evangelism. In 1965 he was nominated one of 10 outstanding young men of America and his biography appeared in the 1965 edition of "Outstanding Young Men of America."

During the years 1966 through 1971 Reggie Thomas served as full-time evangelist with the Christian Restoration Association in Cincinnati, Ohio. His evangelistic work took him to many parts of the world. In 1967 he and his family toured Australia for three months. In 1968 the Thomas evangelistic team toured the African nations of Rhodesia and Zambia for three months. In 1969 the team was in Mexico. In 1970 the team spent three months in the Kiamichi Mountain Mission of Oklahoma. In 1971 the team went all the way around the world spending two months in India. These overseas evangelistic campaigns resulted in more than 5000 souls baptized into Christ. On June 1, 1971, Mr Thomas resigned his position with the Christian Restoration Association and accepted Cecil Todd's offer to become Director of Overseas Evangelism for Revival Fires Ministry. Reggie served as Director of Overseas Evangelism un-

til 1978 at which time he organized White Fields Overseas Evangelism. It is the goal of White Fields to take the Gospel to every nation.

From December 1979 until June 1987, Reggie served as Senior Minister of Hickory Valley Christian Church in Chattanooga, Tennessee. The following was written in the Hickory Valley Christian Church centennial yearbook in October 1988.

Reggie Thomas, an Evangelist from Missouri, preached a revival from September 16-21, 1979. Following the revival he was asked to become Senior Minister and after much thought and prayer accepted the call. Brother Thomas began his ministry on December 16, 1979. We observed many outstanding days, one of which was "Incredible Day" on September 28, 1981, when we set a goal to raise \$50,000 to carpet the sanctuary, provide a church bus, pave the parking lot, etc. This goal was realized. The sanctuary was refurbished with new wall to wall carpet, pews were refinished and reupholstered, and the pulpit and choir area was enlarged and remodeled. Two new congregations were begun by the Hickory Valley Christian Church. The North River Christian Church in Hixson was begun in April, 1982. They have completed an auditorium and a youth building and are now self-supporting. The Mountain View Christian Church in Ooltewah was begun in August, 1985 (they broke ground for their first unit building on March 27, 1988). All indebtedness on the church buildings was paid off and on April 5, 1987 a Bond Burning Celebration was held. Missions giving increased substantially. There were 475 additions during his seven year ministry. Brother Thomas resigned effective May 24, 1987 to return to full-time evangelistic work. He hopes to see every nation in the world reached for Christ by the year 2000. He is trying to preach where the Gospel has not yet been preached and start as many new churches as possible.

EPILOGUE

During the past 23 years, Reggie has preached and directed great crusades in six continents of the world. In Africa he has preached to some of the most primitive people on earth and thousands were baptized. In India he has preached in the world's largest leper village. He has criss-crossed Australia and New Zealand, and has preached on many islands of the seas. He was preaching in Chile, South America at the time of the attempted coup, June 30, 1973. He has traveled over two million miles preaching the Gospel of Jesus literally **AROUND THE WORLD**. He has a thrilling story to tell what God has done in overseas evangelism. Since 1966 Mr Thomas has traveled in 53 different countries of the world. To date, over 140,000 souls have been baptized into Christ as a part of this overseas ministry.

On January 9, 1988 the Kerala Christian Bible College, Ayoor, India, bestowed the honorary Doctor of Divinity Degree upon Reggie in recognition of 22 years of dedicated evangelistic crusades worldwide. The degree was also granted in appreciation for 13 trips to India.

Many people have shared in these crusades including his own family. His dedicated wife, Esther, travels with him in his meetings.

Reggie and Esther are thankful for their eight children and their eighteen grandchildren. Esther is the director of the Mapou Christian Orphanage in Haiti.

AN INTRODUCTION
REGGIE THOMAS THE EVANGELIST

In 1962, my wife Alice and I had the good fortune to travel the United States, preaching in many of our lovely American churches, as well as attending gatherings at some of our splendid Bible colleges, and experiencing such highlights as the Kiamichi Clinic and the North American Christian Convention, Lexington, Kentucky.

What a revelation! From then on we hoped to have some part in sponsoring an evangelistic team from America to visit Australia, and in so doing bring with them something of the vital and living force of New Testament Christianity.

Then it happened! Early in 1966, a letter came to us from Reggie Thomas, at that time ministering at East Point, Georgia, asking if it were at all possible to arrange an evangelistic tour of Australia. We had only briefly met Reggie Thomas when we had visited Atlanta, but we knew of him by reputation; that he had a passion for souls, a passion for evangelism, and a passion to do great exploits for Christ. Alice and I looked at each other on receiving Reggie Thomas' letter and wondered if we could surmount all the difficulties in arranging an Australian itinerary. Then we agreed that if Reggie had the courage to undertake such a venture, we had to do everything we could to promote such an effort.

In the meantime Reggie Thomas left East Point Christian Church, and undertook the position of evangelist for the

Restoration Herald Association. A great mass of correspondence passed between us, and to the various Australian Conference Executives in Queensland, New South Wales, and Victoria. Above all else we wanted their approval.

It was agreed that any such effort was to be aside from church politics of any kind. Reggie Thomas made it quite clear that his business was to preach Christ and to promote New Testament Christianity.

Interested churches were contacted and finally an itinerary was drawn up; the first of its kind on such a scale unveiling the fast growing movement of those we refer to as our Independent Churches. Hitherto, at the Australian end unknown by the rank and file.

In due course Reggie Thomas advised us that his fund-raising efforts in the United States had proven successful. He also told us he would be bringing his family; and that his song leader would be Jerry Taylor, a student at Atlanta Christian College (father of five children) and Paulette Pitman who would chaperon the Thomas children and also share in the singing. Paulette was then a student at Ozark Bible College.

We were greatly encouraged by Reggie Thomas' faith. In due course the Thomas team arrived in Queensland with some forty pieces of baggage and faced a barrage of press and T.V. cameras, and were met by Brisbane brotherhood representatives, Conference President Maurice Pieper, and Women's President Mrs Cassie Baker, and there were of course several ministers from a number of churches. Some forty shared in a luncheon with the Thomas team. That night their Brisbane city-wide campaign opened. Torrential rain fell with record floods in Brisbane, with only three fine nights for the Crusade, but the whole effort was as reported in the *Australian Christian* "undoubtedly one of the grandest blessings that our Brisbane churches have ever experienced."

The journal goes on to say: "Perhaps the most thrilling aspect of the entire Crusade was the clear, powerful,

authoritative preaching by Reggie Thomas." This volume of sermons presented in this book are those preached in Australia but chiefly at Margaret Street, Toowoomba, Queensland, where I was resident minister at that time. The Brisbane Crusade ended with 58 primary confessions of faith, 44 of whom were baptized into Christ during the Crusade, and there were others who followed soon after.

After Brisbane, the team left for Toowoomba where we, including my wife Alice, ministered at the Margaret Street Church of Christ. Rain was still falling at this wonderful mountain city, but the Reggie Thomas Team captivated all who heard them, and apart from two or three average meetings, the chapel was filled to capacity night after night. At Toowoomba forty made decisions and 31 were baptized into Christ. One of the meetings exceeded any attendance in the history of the church. The farewell scenes to the Team were very moving.

Other campaigns followed at Wollongong, New South Wales, then a visit to the National Church of Christ, Canberra, A.C.T., with the next appointment at Geelong, Victoria, which culminated with a tremendous final rally in our City Church of Christ, Melbourne supported with glorious items by the Victorian Churches of Christ Choral Society.

There remains little else to be said except that this visit was but the beginning and a forerunner of teams visiting our Australian churches. Reggie Thomas also has organized two plane-loads of evangelists invading our churches conducting therein campaigns.

It is worth noting that at a State Conference, Queensland, it was moved, seconded and applauded on the floor of Conference our gratitude to Reggie Thomas for his tremendous campaigning resulting in an increased membership State-wide for that year.

In all we are thankful to have had the privilege of organizing the first Thomas campaign in Australia. We did so with great joy since it meant a means of returning in some measure what

INTRODUCTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

was done for us by so many when we toured the United States.

Do buy this book of sermons and find out for yourself the essence of good Gospel preaching, which is so seldom heard today.

Arnold C. Caldicott

June, 1989

Dr A.C. Caldicott is an Australian minister who has served in some of Australia's most influential congregations. He now lives in retirement in Adelaide, South Australia.

A RECOMMENDATION

I have known Reggie Thomas as a friend, a fellow evangelist, a co-laborer in about five revivals, and have heard him preach on innumerable occasions in various types of meetings.

Reggie's sermons are like his life. He is an indefatigable worker. He has a genuine passion for souls. He is a great personal worker and uses scriptures so effectively in the home of a prospective Christian.

He is dedicated to the simple New Testament message and to Restoration principles. He preaches with simplicity, earnestness, and a sense of urgency.

His evangelistic campaigns have been among the most memorable over the last several decades. Every local ministry in which he has been involved has been noted for a tremendous soul-winning emphasis and success. He possesses a world-wide vision. It was my privilege to be associated with him in his first overseas evangelistic endeavors when he labored as an evangelist with the Christian Restoration Association. He built some significant bridges with brethren in Australia and made a tremendous impact on the country "down under." His pioneer spirit has led him to fields destitute of New Testament Christianity. Overseas he has recruited, helped to train, and raised support for many national evangelists.

With this type of background, it is understandable why Reggie's sermons are well-organized, full of scripture, excellent illustrations, and good humor. They are inspirational and motivational. And they are preachable and need to be preached time and again in this generation.

Harvey C. Bream, Jr.
July, 1989

Harvey C. Bream, Jr. is past President of the Cincinnati Bible Seminary and now the Chancellor of Cincinnati Bible Seminary.

COMMENDATION

Reggie Thomas has one consuming passion; one dream; one goal; one thought; and that is to *evangelize! Evangelize! Evangelize!* Like Paul who said, "This ONE thing I do . . .", there is one thing on his mind, evangelism! This includes preaching the ancient apostolic gospel and establishing the New Testament church in every nation in the world. It has already taken him into 53 countries, where he has been mightily used to win the lost in their thousands, and establish the Church of Christ in numerous villages, towns and cities across the globe. His untiring efforts and unselfish giving of himself in this difficult and often dangerous ministry of world evangelism, are an inspiration and challenge to all who have had the privilege of knowing him and working with him.

He has been blessed with a keen mind, a warm personality, and a gripping voice that projects his deep sincerity. In the midst of great success and honor, he has maintained a humble and caring spirit. May his tribe increase! It is also my prayer that those seeking God with all their heart, through reading his sermons, will be led into the glorious light of the gospel of Christ and come to know the truth which alone can set us free.

Doug Willis, Evangelist
Bexhill, Australia

Doug Willis is a native Australian. He has devoted his life to world evangelism and travels throughout the world preaching the Gospel.

INTRODUCTION

July 18, 1989

As one preacher to another preacher — as an evangelist to another evangelist — as one who has heard these messages at Grundy, Virginia in a tent crusade in 1969 — they are Biblical — fundamental — down to earth — understandable — exciting — plain — clear — convincing sermons to convict the sinner and warm the heart of every Christian.

Reggie Thomas' favorite revival sermons will become some of your favorite messages. May God continue to bless the preacher and continue blessing the sermons and bless a thousand more as they read these messages.

Clarence Greenleaf, Evangelist
50 years at Grundy, Virginia

Come Inside It's Going to Rain

Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.

But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only.

But as the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.

For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark.

And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.

Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left.

Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left.

Watch therefore; for you know not what hour your Lord doth come.

Matthew 24:35-42

A Favorite Bible Story

The story of Noah and the ark and the great flood is certainly one of the best known of all the Bible stories. It is a children's

favorite. I am sure that probably everyone in this audience could tell the story by memory. I must confess that it is my favorite Bible story in the Old Testament.

A Funny Story

I hope I am not like the old preacher that I heard about who just loved to preach about Noah, the ark, and the great flood. It was his favorite Bible story and he loved to preach about it so much that he fell into a rut and preached on it every Sunday morning. He just couldn't get away from preaching about Noah and the congregation was getting tired of it. But it didn't get better, it only got worse. He also started preaching on it every Sunday night as well as every Sunday morning. The congregation murmured a lot and there were complaints. It didn't get any better, it only got worse, he began teaching about it on Wednesday night at Bible Study and Prayer Meeting. It finally got so bad that he even brought it in to his funeral services.

Well along about this time, there was a big wedding coming up in the community. The mayor's daughter and a prominent young attorney were getting married and they had asked the old preacher to do the honors. He agreed. Two mischievous boys in the church were discussing it and one said to the other, "I bet he even brings Noah into that wedding. It's time someone put a stop to it." These two boys went down to the church house and they found the old preacher's Bible on the pulpit. So they searched through the Bible until they found the story of Noah and the ark there in the book of Genesis, and they took a pair of scissors and cut out one of the pages. Then they snipped up some of the verses and pasted them on top of other verses, even glued a couple of pages together and then closed the Bible and left it there on the pulpit. The old minister was unaware that anyone had tampered with his Bible. So when the big day ar-

rived, "everyone" that was "anyone" showed up. It was the biggest society event of the season. The old preacher, figuring that all the important people of the town would be there for the occasion, had really prepared for the occasion because he wanted to impress the people with what a good preacher he was. He had memorized the wedding ceremony and he stood in front of that august crowd and started repeating it by memory just like it was an oration. But right in the middle of it something reminded him and he reached for his Bible on the pulpit. When he did the two boys nudged each other and said, "Here it comes, here it comes." Sure enough they guessed right because he opened his Bible to Genesis. He said, "You know this wedding reminds me of my favorite Bible story." So he began to read, "And when Noah was 140 years old he took unto himself a wife, 300 cubits in length, 50 cubits in width, and 30 cubits in depth. Be smeared within, without, and with pitch."

And suddenly he paused in the midst of laughter. He realized what he had said and he reread the passage and got red in the face and he said, "Ladies and gentlemen something is wrong; I have been preaching the Lord's word for more than 50 years and this is my favorite Bible study, but I didn't even know this part of it was in the Bible. Nevertheless, it still proves my point; a woman is an unusual character."

The Sermon

I am not going to retell the story, I'm simply going to make some comparisons. I want you to notice that just as Noah built the ark, so Christ built the Church. God gave the plan to Noah for the building of the ark and Christ has given the plan for the building of the Church.

I. So in the first place, I want you to observe with me that Noah built just one ark. He did not build an ark on top of every hill, and he did not go around preaching to the people saying,

“One ark is just as good as another; take your choice.” God’s plan was that Noah would build one ark for the saving of the whole world.

What does it remind you of? It reminds me of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ who came into the world to build one church. In Matthew 16:18 Jesus said, “UPON THIS ROCK I WILL BUILD MY CHURCH.” And this is the only church that Jesus ever built, His own church. So we are not concerned about all the denominations that exist in this world of today built by men. We are concerned about the church Jesus built.

Un-Denominational Christianity

This congregation is one of several thousand congregations throughout this world that seeks to exemplify and promote an undenominational, Christian faith. Denominationalism is a system that tries to divide believers into different groups and tries to make them Christians of a certain brand or type. Denominationalism gives human names more prominence than the name of Christ and denominationalism introduces practices like sprinkling and infant baptism, which have no warrant in New Testament teachings and so denominationalism causes the witness of the church to be frustrated by divisions not of the will of Christ.

We also hear a lot about interdenominationalism. Interdenominationalism seeks to get competing denominations to cooperate in community and social projects and tends to reduce the symptoms of denominational infection without curing the disease, which is denominationalism itself. We believe the church can be just what Christ intended it to be by conforming in essentials to the requirements for the church laid down in the New Testament.

To what denomination did the 3,000 baptized on the day of Pentecost belong? You know as well as I know, they did not

belong to any denomination. They just belonged to Christ and His church. To what denomination did the Ethiopian baptized there in Acts 8 belong? You know as well as I that he didn't belong to any denomination, he simply belonged to Christ and to His church. So, the Church of Christ or Christian Church is undenominational because we are working for the unity of all believers of Christ. We believe the only way this unity can be achieved is to restore Christ's Church in its teaching, its practices, and its simplicity. We plead with all believers in Christ to help in this glorious work of restoration.

Now it is possible that some of you are saying, "Well, I see your point. You think you are the only one that is right and you think your church is the only one that is right and that everyone ought to join your denomination." Well, now if that's what you think I am driving at, you missed the point. I do not have the church, I do not belong to any denomination, and therefore I am not pleading with anyone to join my church or denomination, because I do not have any. I am simply pleading that we will all follow Jesus and belong to His church. The best I can understand the plea of the Church of Christ; this IS the plea: that we will simply belong to Christ and be members of His church without any denominational affiliation. So Noah built one ark; Christ built one church.

II. Noah built this ark out of one material. God said make me an ark out of Gopher wood. There were many other kinds of wood available. No doubt there were plenty of sidewalk superintendents, and as Noah built the ark, I'm sure they came along with their suggestions, "Why not build it out of pine wood? Why not use oak wood? Why not build with this type of material?" But Noah rejected all of these suggestions saying, "I must do what God commanded." Noah realized that even one plank of some other kind of material would cause the ark to sink when the flood came. The orders of God must be obeyed.

What does it remind you of? It reminds me of the Lord Jesus Christ who built His one church out of one material. The

one material that makes up the Church of Christ is what? Brick? Block? Stone? Wood? NO! The Church of Christ is not a building. The Church of Christ is the body of Jesus according to the New Testament. The scriptures say that we are members of His body. So the church is made up of people. People like you and me. People who are willing to repent of their past sins. People who are willing to surrender themselves in full obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ are the material that make up the church that Jesus built.

III. Noah built one ark, out of one material, for one purpose. What was that purpose? Was it to be used as a pleasure yacht? Or perhaps a speed boat? Maybe a fishing boat? No! The purpose of the ark was far more serious; it was to be used as a lifeboat. Noah's ark was to be used to save people from the terrible flood that was going to cover the entire earth.

It reminds me of the Lord Jesus Christ who built His one church out of one material for one purpose. What is the purpose of Christ's Church? Well some seem to think the purpose is to get together and have a Pot Luck supper once a month. Nobody likes to eat more than I do, but that is not the purpose of Christ's Church. It's not to bring us together to eat. Others seem to think the purpose of the church is to get together with your friends and to shake hands and exchange the latest news. There's nothing any nicer than to get together with your friends and to shake hands and hear the latest news, but that is not the purpose of the church. The purpose of the church that Jesus built is that the church is to serve like a lifeboat. It is the purpose of Christ's Church to carry us safely from this earth to Heaven that we might escape the fires of Hell.

A "Crazy" Man

In my mind's eye, I can see Noah as he must have appeared sort of on the "nuts" side to the people of his day. Here he was, high up in the hills, building a great big ship; twenty miles from the nearest creek that wouldn't even float a canoe and he was

preaching to the people. Everyone who came around heard the same sermon, "Come inside, it's going to rain!" Noah preached. The people laughed, they said he was a "religious nut, a crazy man, a fanatic."

I am sure Noah's best friends came to him and said, "Look Noah, they are going to come and lock you up in the mental institution if you don't change your tune. Now if you really believe this, why don't you build a raft and hide it in the bushes somewhere. Then when all this water comes that you are talking about, why you can crawl on your raft and float away to safety and the rest of us poor devils will drown, but in the mean time you won't be making such an idiot out of yourself preaching this silly stuff about all this water that you say that's going to come."

He Obeyed God

Noah said, "I'm sorry, I appreciate your advice, but God has spoken. God has told me that it is going to rain. God has instructed me to build this ark. I must do what God has commanded." So the Bible says there in Genesis 6, "Thus did Noah, according to all that God commanded him, so did he." And it is the same way today, those of us who believe with all of our hearts that the Bible really is God's word, are laughed at. Those of us who really believe in the church that Jesus died to establish, are ridiculed. Those of us who believe that there really is a Heaven and that there really is a Hell, are called religious fanatics. We are fools in the eyes of the world. I don't know if that disturbs you or not. It doesn't disturb me. I intend to go right on believing what the old book teaches.

The Majority? Or Minority?

Look what happened in Noah's day. Everybody who

laughed at Noah and ridiculed him, perished in the flood. I tell you it is good to be on the winning team. It may appear right now that we are not on the winning team, because the majority of the people ridicule and say that the Bible is nothing but a fairy tale. The devil certainly has the majority of the people, no question about it. But that doesn't discourage me because God's people have always been in the minority. It was true in Noah's day; there were only eight who believed God. That was Noah, his wife, their sons, and their wives. Everyone else in the world rejected God's word. They were in the majority and they drowned. But God's minority was on the winning side. I am glad to know that we can be on the winning side. The Church of Jesus Christ is going to be victorious and all that laugh at God's word and ridicule will certainly perish when the Day of Judgment comes.

IV. Noah built one ark, out of one material, for one purpose, with one window. Doesn't it seem strange that as large of a ship as the ark was and yet there was only the one window, but apparently everyone had enough light. When we read the scriptures we find that the window went all the way around the top of the ark, so that everyone could see. Not that the window was the light, the light came from the sun. The window just let the light in.

Where the Bible Speaks!

What does this remind you of? It reminds me of Jesus who built one church, out of one material, for one purpose, with one window. The window in the Church of Christ is the Bible. Now notice that the Bible is not the light, Jesus said, "I am the light of the world," but the Bible is the window. When we open the window and read it then Jesus Christ, the True Light, can shine in and light our pathway to Heaven.

V. Noah built one ark, out of one material, for one pur-

pose, with one window, and one door. There was only one way to get into the ark. There was no back door, no side door, no secret door, it reminds me of the Lord Jesus who built one church, out of one material, for one purpose, with one window, and one door.

Jesus the Door

Yes, there is just one way to come into Christ's Church. What is the one door, the one way to come into the Church? Well, Jesus settled that forever when He said in John 10:9, "I am the Door, by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved." Christ Jesus, the Founder of His church, the Head of His church, the Foundation of His church, and He is also the Door that leads into His church.

4 Steps Lead Into the Door

Many times there are steps that lead up to a door. So there are steps that lead up to Christ, the Door of the church. *The first step* that leads up to Christ, the Door, is the step of *faith*. The Bible teaches us that we cannot be saved without faith. Hebrews 11:6 says, "But without faith it is impossible to please Him. For he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." If we are willing to take that first step and put our faith in God, then we are ready for the second step that leads up to the door which is Christ.

The second step is repentance. Jesus says in Luke 13:3, "I tell you nay; but except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish." If we will put faith in God and repent of all of our sins then we are ready for the third step that leads to Christ, the Door of the church.

The third step is public confession of His name. In Matthew 10:32 Jesus said, "Whosoever therefore shall confess Me before

man, him I will confess also before My Father, which is in Heaven." If we will believe, repent of our sins, and confess the Lord Jesus then we are ready for the fourth step.

The fourth step is Christian baptism. I want you to notice what the Bible says about Christian baptism, in Galatians 3:27, "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ." So there is only one way to enter the door of the church, of course, the door of Christ. In John 10:9, Jesus says, "I am the door, by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved." The only way to enter the door is by Christian baptism. "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ." That's why Jesus says in Mark 16:16, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." So if we'll put our faith in Him and repent of our sins and confess His name and be buried with Him in Christian baptism then we have entered Christ the door and are members of His church.

God Shut the Door!

I want you to notice it took 120 years to build the ark. All that time Noah preached God's word and invited the people "to come inside before it rained." Then at the end of that period of time, God shut the door. God had a time limit, when his time limit expired, the door was shut and it was too late for anybody else to be saved. God did not allow Noah to shut the door because that would have made Noah the judge. Maybe he would've closed the door too soon or maybe he would have left the door open too long. God Himself was the final Judge.

The End of the World!

There is coming a day when God's time limit will once again expire. Yes, God does have a time limit. Right now we are living in the days of God's grace; when the door of the church is open, when all men everywhere are invited to come into the church

and be saved. But the door will be shut. When will that happen? That's the very question the disciples were asking Jesus in our text Matthew 24:35-42: When is the end going to come? When will God shut the door? To answer their question Jesus said, "No man knoweth the day nor the hour; only God knows." It could be tonight. Yes, this might be the last sermon. We might be approaching the last invitation. This could be God's last call to you. So I want to ask, on which side of the door are you, right now? It could make all the difference.

Look at the difference it made in Noah's day. I can picture him now, standing there before the great crowd, preaching his final message. The animals had begun to gather and they were going on-board two by two, what a phenomenon it was! How the crowds murmured, "What does this mean?" As the elephants, the giraffes, hippopotamus, rhinoceros, the dogs, the cats, all the different animals were going on-board two by two. No doubt many of the curious were getting afraid and they said, "Do you suppose that this is really true?" Others laughed and said, "Oh, don't be silly. This man Noah is crazy as a fool." About that time Noah stood up and said, "Hear me, my friends, I'm going to tell you again God has spoken to me. The end is coming. God has told me that waters are going to cover the whole earth. I have built this ark that we might be saved from the flood. Oh, please won't you come inside before it rains." All of the people laughed.

One of the reasons that they found it so hard to believe was because it never had rained up to that time in the history of the world. The earth had always been watered by mist. They didn't know what rain was, they'd never seen rain before; so since it had never happened, why should they believe it was going to happen now?

Where Is Jesus?

Doesn't that seem familiar to our time, when people say,

“Well, where is He? For almost 2000 years people have been saying, ‘Jesus is coming again, Jesus is coming again.’ Where is He? We don’t see Him. What evidence do we have that He is coming? He hasn’t come; we don’t believe He will come.”

Yes, Jesus said, “As it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be when the Son of Man shall come.” People will not expect His coming. Jesus taught us, “So it will be sudden when we will be least prepared.” Jesus said, “BE READY!” Well, Noah preached the sermon and the people would not believe and would not obey. So, his family went on-board and God shut the door.

Not a Drop of Water Fell!

Most folks think it started raining immediately, but the Bible says it didn’t rain a drop for seven days. Can you imagine what a testing time that must have been for Noah and his family? I can hear one old atheist shouting now, “Hey Noah, how does it smell in there with all those animals? Shooooo! Nice, fresh air out here, Noah. You’d better come on out.” I can hear another old atheist shouting, “Hey Noah, where’s all that rain you talked about? Not a cloud in the sky. The sun is shining.” The crowd roared with laughter. I can hear another old atheist shouting, “Hey Noah, what are you going to do when the food runs out and the animals get hungry? Those lions will make mincemeat out of you, Noah.” The crowd laughed.

Then the Water Fell!

Yes, for seven days they ridiculed and laughed, but then the sky grew black, the lightning flashed and the thunder roared and the water poured down. When it was too late, the crowd ran to the ark crying and pleading, “Open the door, Noah. Give us

one more chance." I'm sure many of them knocked on the side of the ark in vain saying, "Noah, we believe you now. Please, Noah, please don't let us drown in this flood. Please, just open the door and we'll come inside." But it was too late, the last sermon had been preached, the door was shut, and they all drowned.

A Heart Breaking Story

A few years back, I was travelling for the North American Christian Convention holding rallies. I held a rally out at Seattle, Washington and the next night I was supposed to be in San Francisco. So I was flying the next morning on the airplane down to San Francisco and we passed over the Columbia River. When we flew over the Columbia River, the pilot called our attention to where we were. So I quickly got up out of my seat and looked out the window and spotted that little island down there at the mouth of the Columbia, where it divides and flows into the Pacific Ocean. I remembered a terrible tragedy that had taken place on that island a few years previously.

A wealthy, young, business man purchased that island and moved there during the spring of the year with his young wife and their baby. He had been so successful in business but had developed a bad case of ulcers because of the pressures of his business. He, his wife, and the baby moved on the island in the spring of the year so he could get away from it all and be free from all worry and just rest and regain his health. They didn't even have a telephone on the island. They didn't even have a boat. There was just a flimsy, little, foot bridge that connected their island to the mainland.

That year there were floods along the Columbia River. As the river authorities always do, they moved up and down the low lands warning everybody to move out because the floods were coming. When they came to the mouth of the river, they warned this young man and his wife like they had with everyone

else. He was a good talker, he convinced them that they would leave, but as soon as they left he laughed at them and he said to his wife, "They aren't going to frighten us off, we are going to stay right here because there is no danger." Foolishly his wife said, "Whatever you think, Honey." They ignored the warning and stayed on.

A couple of days later, the river authorities came with the final warning and they were shocked to discover this family still on the island. So they were angry and they warned them under no uncertain terms that the flood was coming and that they must leave immediately. They even threatened to bodily evacuate them. But again, the young man really talked his way out of it and assured them that they would certainly leave within the hour and that they should not worry about them and go on to warn others. So with his absolute promise that they would leave, the authorities moved on. No sooner did they leave than he laughed at them and said, "Do you think I would ever have purchased this island if there was any danger of a flood coming up over our cabin? I checked into the history of this river, I know what I'm talking about and we're not leaving." Again his wife said, "Whatever you say, Honey." They went to bed that night thinking they were safe, not realizing the terrible danger.

It was about midnight when a great wall of water rolled down the Columbia River and the young man was awakened by the angry rushing sound of those flood waters. He jumped out of bed, startled, realizing the seriousness of the situation, he shook his wife and said, "Get up quick! Those fellows weren't joking, we've got to get out of here right now!" He said, "I'll get the baby, you get the other stuff. Let's go!" He rushed over to the baby's crib and he scooped his arms underneath and he began to carry the bundle as he waded through the darkened, swirling, flood waters towards the little foot bridge that connected their island to the mainland.

Even as he stepped up on that bridge, the water was beginning to lap up over and he realized that an old tree trunk, log, or

board could hit that bridge at any moment and it would pop like a match stick and they would be swept out in the Pacific and drown. So he prayed earnestly and sincerely, "Oh God, help me to get across this bridge before it breaks." Fortunately he reached the other side safely, but when he looked back his wife was nowhere in sight. He began to scream at the top of his lungs, calling his wife's name and urging her to hurry. She was back at the cabin picking up things. As someone will often do in an hour of crisis, she was thinking of losing their worldly possessions. She was thinking, "I can't give this up. I can't lose this." Here she was bundling up things while her very life was in danger. But she heard the urgent cries of her husband and so she put the stuff she collected in a bundle and threw it over her shoulder and started wading through the flood waters towards the bridge. When he finally saw her on the other side he began to pray for his wife, "Oh dear God, please help her get across safely." She did, but no sooner had she reached Oregon soil until she dropped the bundle and something hit that bridge and it just popped like it had been a toothpick. The pieces were swept out into the ocean and they were cut off. It was that narrow an escape.

They both breathed a sigh of relief. She said, "You are going to have to carry this bundle it's too heavy. Let me have the baby." She reached out and touched her husband. The moment she touched his arm, she screamed, "Where is the baby?" He said, "What is the matter with you?" Quickly she undid the covers and here he stood with an arm full of blankets and there was no baby. In the haste to escape maybe he had scooped his arms down into the crib and just picked up the blankets and accidentally left the baby or maybe somehow as he waded through the flood waters that baby had slipped from his arms and he didn't even know it. They never recovered the body and they will never know until their dying day just what did happen to their baby. They will always blame themselves because they ignored the warning and they waited until it was too late to save

the child.

(Ard Hoven gave me this illustration.)

The Door Is Still Open

With all the love that there is in my heart I have tried tonight, once again to sound the warning. Judgment Day is coming, the last sermon will be preached, the last invitation will be given and this might be it! If you listen you may hear the sound of the hammer and the nails and soon the trumpet may sound and the church, the ark of the 20th century, may set sail. On which side of the door are you right now?

Please accept Jesus as your Savior, obey Him in baptism, enter Christ the door before it is too late!

This is the *best loved*, and *most often* preached sermon of Evangelist Reggie Thomas. He has preached this sermon in 53 nations and literally thousands have obeyed the Gospel after hearing this message.

Midnight Photography

For there is nothing covered that shall not be revealed; neither hid, that shall not be known. Therefore whatsoever ye have spoken in darkness shall be heard in the light; and that which ye have spoken in the ear in closets shall be proclaimed upon the housetops. Luke 12:2-3

Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight; but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do. Hebrews 4:13

INTRODUCTION:

The word photography pertains to light and it means taking pictures by the use of light. In 1800 AD the first attempt was made at taking pictures. But it took two French men twenty-six years to develop the first silver plate which they used to take photographs. The invention of the daguerreotype in 1826 AD marked the beginning of photography as we know it today. The next great forward step in photography came with the invention of the tintype. After the tintype of which we all are familiar, George Eastman invented the roll film which made the Kodak

Company a reality. Because of the Kodak Company all Americans have become familiar with photography. But I wonder if you are aware of the many new advances in the field of photography, which have come into existence during the past few years?

Man Today is Seeing the Invisible of Yesterday

Today airplanes fly at dizzy heights all over the world. Many times they are so high it is impossible for the pilot to distinguish everything on the ground below. But with modern day photography he has nothing to worry about for with a powerful camera a picture can be taken which will reveal every detail on the ground thousands of feet below.

Ships are constantly crossing the seven seas of this world. In days gone by if heavy fog came or if a severe storm struck the ship would often be in danger because the captain could not see ahead. But today there are no worries. If it's fog or a storm the captain calls for the ship's photographer who takes a picture and in thirty seconds that picture is developed and the captain can then see seven and one half miles ahead through the fog or storm!

Not so long ago photography came out with a new invention even more amazing than the others I have mentioned, and it is called "Midnight Photography." It is the art of taking pictures in complete darkness. Beyond the light that we see all around us there is also invisible light. Midnight photography is the art of taking pictures by the use of this invisible light. You have probably visited a shoe store where you can place your foot in a machine and through the use of lights see how your foot looks inside the shoe. Ultraviolet light is used in that machine to enable you to see right through the shoes. Infrared light is the invisible light used in taking pictures in complete darkness.

Infrared light is susceptible to heat and so midnight

MIDNIGHT PHOTOGRAPHY

photography works on the principle of heat. The photographers have invented film which responds to heat. You could take an old flat iron, the kind Grandma used to iron clothes with, and heat it on the stove. Then if you would hold this hot flat iron next to a camera loaded with infrared film, the heat would provide invisible light and a picture could be taken in complete and total darkness.

During World War II, they took pictures during the bombing raids in London and other English cities. Common sense tells you they didn't run around with flash cameras, flashing pictures. The photographs that were taken during those total blackouts were taken with infrared film in total darkness and that's where the nickname came from: "Midnight Photography."

GOD'S ETERNAL MIDNIGHT PHOTOGRAPHY

One day I was reading the word of God and I came across this statement of our Master, "For there is nothing covered that shall not be revealed; neither hid, that shall not be known. Therefore whatsoever ye have spoken in darkness shall be heard in the light; and that which ye have spoken in the ear in closets shall be proclaimed upon the house tops" (Luke 12:2-3). When I read those words I thought to myself, "There it is! That's God's midnight photography!" God sees what we do in secret and reveals it openly. He hears what we say in darkness and reveals it in the light. Hebrews 4:13 states, "Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight; but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do."

Christmas Eve 1949 found an old bedraggled looking woman walking the streets of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. She held a tin cup in her hand and was begging for money. The people of Pittsburgh, feeling the spirit of Christmas, gave generously to the old lady. But soon the police department was informed and a car

picked the old lady up and brought her to headquarters. When she arrived at headquarters, even the policemen felt sorry for her and decided against locking her up over Christmas Day. They decided to give the old lady some money, some decent clothes in place of the rags she wore, and then let her go. When they mentioned giving her some clothes in place of the rags, the old lady became very excited and argued that she didn't want any clothes. This aroused suspicion and two ladies who worked at the police force in Pittsburgh were called in. They took the old lady off in a side room and forced her to remove the rags she wore and in exchange they gave her some very nice clothing. After examining the rags not more than five minutes they discovered two thousand and ninety three dollars in cash that she had sewed up on the inside of the rags. And so the thing she had hidden in secret came to light and she was exposed openly before the people she had deceived.

This story illustrates perfectly the thing Jesus was talking about when he said, "For there is nothing covered that shall not be revealed; neither hid, that shall not be known."

A. Men of the Bible Could Not Hide From God

Adam and Eve found out hundreds of years ago in the Garden of Eden that God is a midnight photographer. God told Adam and Eve, "Of every tree in the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (Genesis 2:16-17). When the serpent tempted Eve she believed that God could not see her and when she gave some of the forbidden fruit to Adam he felt God was not watching. Later on in the cool of the day, when the lengthening shadows of darkness began to fall across the earth God came walking through the Garden. Adam and Eve tried to hide themselves among the trees of the garden. But they soon

discovered that it is impossible to hide from God. They found out that God is The Great Midnight Photographer always on the job, always taking pictures of the things we do in secret and then He reveals them in the light.

Cain, the son of Adam and Eve, also found out the hard way that God is a midnight photographer. The Bible tells us, "And Cain talked with Abel, his brother, and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel, his brother, and slew him" (Genesis 4:8). Cain thought that no one would know and that God did not see. When God spoke to him and said, "Where is Abel, thy brother?" Cain replied, "I know not: Am I my brother's keeper?" (Genesis 4:9). Then God revealed to Cain that He knew all along and that He was the midnight photographer, who sees everything because He said, "The voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground" (Genesis 4:10).

Achan, the soldier in Israel's army also found out the hard way that God is a midnight photographer. The children of Israel were preparing to take the city of Jericho. God had warned them, "And the city shall be accursed — and ye, in any wise keep yourselves from the accursed thing, lest ye make yourself accursed, when ye take of the accursed thing, and make the camp of Israel a curse, and trouble it" (Joshua 6:17-18). But when the walls fell flat and the soldiers marched in to take the city, Achan found himself all alone for a moment during the heat of the battle and he saw among the spoils a Babylonian garment, two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold. He coveted that rich treasure and took it and hid it in the earth beneath his tent. Everything was all right for awhile and Achan thought he would get away with his disobedience, but he forgot that God, the great Midnight Photographer, was on the job, as always, taking pictures of the things we do in secret. When the Children of Israel fought their next battle at the little city of Ai, they were utterly defeated. Joshua and the elders of Israel fell on their faces before the Lord in a great prayer meeting. This is one time

God broke up a prayer meeting and putting it in our modern day language God said, "Why are you lying here on the ground praying? Sin is in the camp!!! That's the trouble!!" Joshua lined up the people and man by man they were brought before him. When Achan stood before him, God showed him the picture of Achan's sin. Joshua said, "Make confession and tell me now what thou hast done; hide it not from me" (Joshua 7:19). When Achan had confessed his sin, Joshua sent messengers and they ran to the tent and found the accursed thing. Achan was stoned and burned with fire when God, the great Midnight Photographer, revealed in the light that which was done in secret.

King David is another who discovered long ago, "There is nothing covered that shall not be revealed; neither hid, that shall not be known." While David's soldiers were fighting, David arose from bed one night and walked upon the roof of the king's house. He saw a very beautiful woman and after inquiring about her, found that she was the wife of one of his soldiers. David took this woman into his own house and committed the scarlet sin of adultery. He thought no one would ever know. But, when the woman conceived and sent and told David, "I am with child," he began to plot how he would continue to hide his sin. After all methods had failed, David sent Bathsheba's husband into the thick of the battle and caused him to be deserted by the other soldiers and Uriah was killed. After adding the sin of murder to adultery, David still thought no one would find out. But, he had forgotten God, the great Midnight Photographer. God, who is always on the job taking pictures of our secret deeds, showed the photograph to Nathan the Prophet. Nathan fearlessly came before the King and pointed his finger at David and said, "Thou art the man! Thou hast killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and hast taken his wife to be thy wife" (II Samuel 12:7,9).

"You cannot hide from God though mountains cover you, His eye our secret thoughts behold!"

Gehazi is a name many have missed in the reading of the Old Testament scriptures. Gehazi was the servant of Elisha the Prophet. Naaman, who was the captain of the host of the king of Syria, came to Elisha to be healed of leprosy. Elisha directed him to go to the Jordan River and dip himself in the water seven times and he said after the seventh time Naaman's flesh would be clean. After Naaman obeyed the voice of God's prophet, his leprosy left and his skin became pure like the flesh of a little child. With great rejoicing Naaman returned to Elisha's house to thank him and to give praise to God. He offered gifts to Elisha, but Elisha refused them and said, "Go in peace." Gehazi, the servant, determined in his heart to have those gifts and so he ran after Naaman. When he had overtaken Naaman, he said, "My master hath sent me, saying, Behold, even now there be come to me from Mount Ephraim two young men of the sons of the prophets: give them, I pray thee, a talent of silver, and two changes of garments." II Kings 5:22 Naaman gave him two talents of silver and two changes of garments and as Gehazi started back home, I imagine he chuckled to himself saying, "Boy oh boy! This business of being secretary to a prophet isn't bad at all. A few more deals like this and I'll be sitting pretty." But as soon as he returned, God, the great Midnight Photographer, who is always on the job, showed the photograph of Gehazi's sin to his master Elisha. Elisha came in and stood before his servant and asked, "Where have you been?" Gehazi answered saying, "I have not gone away at all." Elisha reminded him that he had lied and because of his lie, "the leprosy therefore of Naaman shall cleave unto thee, and unto thy seed forever" (II Kings 5:27). Once again we see, "There is nothing covered that shall not be revealed; neither hid, that shall not be known."

B. Words Never Die

In Matthew 12:36 Jesus said, "But I say unto you, that every

idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment." Now I must confess that I used to think that statement was figurative. I used to think Jesus didn't mean what He said. But now I believe He meant exactly what He said!

Marconi has come up with a brilliant opinion and if he's right it helps us understand how easy it will be for God to accomplish this seeming impossible task of keeping track of all our words. Marconi states that every individual is different as to the wave length of his voice. No two individuals in the world have the same wave length to their voice. Marconi also states that every word that we speak goes out into its own wave length and starts circling the earth. Marconi says that our words never die, but keep traveling the circle of the earth in their wave length. He says scientists are working on an instrument similar to a radio. If and when this instrument is perfected, we can tune in and hear Plato teach philosophy although he's been dead hundreds of years. We can tune in and hear Jesus Christ deliver His Sermon on the Mount. We can tune in and hear Lincoln deliver his Gettysburg Address. Think of it, our words never die! They live on forever! Now whether Marconi's idea is true or not, I don't know. But I do know what Jesus said is true! If Marconi's idea is right, don't you see how easy it will be for God to cause us to give account of ourselves?

Three summers ago, we were the guests of Mr and Mrs Virgil Brock, the famous song writers, at Winona Lake, Indiana. During the week we visited there, a famous scientist named George Speaks was lecturing at the tabernacle on the Winona Lake grounds on the subject, "Science and the Bible." Each lecture brought out the fact that there is no disagreement between true science and the word of God. On Tuesday night, when we walked into this great tabernacle which seats around 10,000 people, we noticed George Speaks on the platform as he pointed a little cone shaped instrument at different ones in the audience. Later on in the evening, during his lecture, he made reference to

Matthew 12:36, "But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment." George Speaks said the scientists used to laugh at that verse and say, "How ridiculous." But he said the scientists do not laugh anymore for they all are saying, "How wonderfully true the Bible is."

Then he held up the little cone shaped instrument and told us it was a brand new invention and that it listened in on people's conversations when they didn't know it. He said, "I was pointing it at various ones throughout this audience before services began tonight and wherever I pointed it, it heard what you were saying or whispering and recorded your conversation on this tape recorder." Then as he pointed to the recorder, he took steps toward it and said, "I will now play the tape and let you hear what you were saying." When he made this statement, I noticed six people who jumped up and left the tabernacle in a big hurry!!! They were ashamed of their words and couldn't stand the judgment. What will happen when God brings out the record of our lives and puts it on His great recording machine to play it back!! "Every idle word that men shall speak they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment."

Midnight photography, is it impossible? Listen to this: Date Line August 25, 1972, "An American Air Force helicopter flew a hazardous course over the mountains of Vietnam yesterday, while one of the crew swept the deserted area with a camera. The red dirt roads were empty, but when the hundreds of feet of film were developed they showed tanks and lorries traveling down the road. Researchers said, "They had passed that way 24 hours before, yet there was still time to photograph them 24 hours after they had gone." Does it sound impossible? The very latest infrared photography outfit that the airplane was carrying can actually take a picture of something after it has happened and after it is gone. Think of the avenues and opportunities that this is going to open up. Bank robberies, twelve hours after it has happened or twenty-four hours after it has happened they

can go in and photograph who stole things. Think about it, just imagine what all can be done when this type of photography is fully developed. Photographing things after they have already happened, yes we have already done it last August 24, 1972. Do you doubt the words of Jesus? "There is nothing covered that shall not be revealed; neither hid, that shall not be known."

C. God Knows You Are a Sinner

Sometimes I have met with people and when I would speak to them about their personal need for Christ and His Church, they would throw back their shoulders and proudly say, "I'm not ashamed of my record." Have you ever made such a statement? If so, you must have a mighty short memory! Suppose I had a movie of your life. A movie that would show everything you've ever done from the time of your birth to this very moment. Suppose it was a talking movie containing every word you have spoken along with your deeds. And suppose I would announce that I was showing the movie of your life in a public theater tomorrow night! I'll guarantee one thing, you would not be there to see it! You would be halfway to China by tomorrow night if you knew your life was to be seen by everyone. None of us are proud of our records! "For there is no difference: For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:22-23).

D. Christ's Blood Blots Out the Bad

You cry out then, "Oh! What can we do? If God knows every secret of our lives and if God knows every word we have spoken and if He is going to bring all of this out in the open, we can't stand a judgment like that. None of us can. Isn't there some way we can change the photographs? Isn't there some way

we can erase the bad words from the record?" The answer to the question is, "Yes." There is a way to change the picture. There is a way to get rid of the evil words.

That's why the Lord Jesus Christ left Heaven and came to this world. We were all sinners and were condemned, but Christ came to save us. He came to change the picture and change the record.

If you have ever taken home movies, you have probably had my experience. When 100 feet of film come back from being developed and you hold it up to the light to look at it, you may come across 5 or 10 feet that is clear as water. No image is visible on the film. If that happens you are disappointed and groan. It means that section of the film is ruined. Not enough light. You may come across 5 or 10 feet more film that is black as ink. You groan again. Too much light. It's ruined. So what can be done. Why you cut out the bad parts of the film and splice together the good. After all the bad parts are cut out and all the good is spliced together, you have one continuous film that can be shown from beginning to end without embarrassment. That is exactly what the Lord Jesus will do for you and me. Our lives have been ruined by sin and we would be ashamed for anyone to see them. But Christ is willing to cut out the bad and splice together the good so that in judgment before God, only the good can be seen. Jesus promised, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved" (Mark 16:16). And again the Bible says, "Repent and be baptized everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost."

Date Line: April 1972, from the St Louis paper, A MOVIE CAMERA THAT FORGETS. Have you heard about it? "A movie camera that forgets has been invented by a retired Air Force colonel, Colonel Keller. The camera records pictures on a circular belt of phosphorus coated tape. But, if you don't like what you took, then you can erase these pictures with infrared light making the film reusable again." Isn't that exactly what

the Lord Jesus Christ is offering to do for each one of us? Yes, he is offering to take away all of our sins. To remove everything that we have done, everything that we have said that is wrong, that we are ashamed of, and give us new life. Jesus said, "Ye must be born again." When our old sins are washed away and forgiven by the Lord Jesus Christ, He goes even further than that, He then credits His righteousness to our account and when we stand before God, God does not see our old sins, they have been forgiven and forgotten, God only sees Jesus. II Corinthians 5:21, "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him."

If you have an old, worn out, yellow, faded photograph in which you can hardly distinguish the picture, you can take that photo to one of our modern photography shops and through a special process which they call superimposing, they can restore your old photo to a new clear cut picture which looks as though it was taken yesterday. Again, that's what Christ will do for us. He is willing to take your old, worn out, sinful, stained, dirty lives and superimpose His perfect, holy life over our sins. "But He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed" (Isaiah 53:5). "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth 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" (Galatians 2:20).

If you have a photograph which has blackness in it where there should be whiteness, you can take it to a photographer and he will immerse it in a chemical solution which makes the black turn white. This is called reverse photography. Again, this is what Christ will do for us. He wants to make our black sins white as snow. If we will trust Him in faith, repent of all sin, accept Him publicly and be immersed, His blood will change our black sins and they will be forgiven and forgotten forever. God

promises, "For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more" (Hebrews 8:12). And again Jesus says, "For this is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins" (Matthew 26:28).

Two years ago, while engaged in a revival with the church at McAlester, Oklahoma, we were permitted to visit the two penitentiaries. There were nearly 2,000 men in the men's part and I am not sure of the exact number of women in their part. This was an experience never to be forgotten. We visited the room where they have the electric chair and heard the guard tell stories of prisoners who had died there. After visiting this part of the prison, we left and upon leaving we saw a young man about 25 years of age with a big smile on his face. Most of the other prisoners were gloomy looking and this one fellow was such a contrast that I remarked to our guide, "What's that fellow so happy about?" The guard replied, "He's got something to smile about." I asked, "What do you mean?" The guard said, "Just two days ago that fellow was on Death's Row awaiting execution in the electric chair, but yesterday the governor changed his sentence from death in the chair to life imprisonment!" When I heard that I could see what the guard meant and I knew why the prisoner was so happy.

INVITATION

And dear friends, there is real cause for us to rejoice and be happy for we were sentenced to die forever in Hell. We were lost and condemned because of sins. God was going to bring out every secret deed and reveal every idle word, but Jesus forgave it all. Have you accepted this wonderful pardon by receiving Christ as your Savior in complete obedience? If not, do it today.

The Old Leaf

He came to my desk with quivering lip, the lesson was all done. "Dear Teacher," he said, "I have spoiled this old leaf. Could I have a new one?" I took the old leaf all stained and blotted and gave him a new one all unspotted. And smiled into his sad eyes as I said, "Do better now my child." Then I went to the throne of God with quivering soul. The old life was almost gone. "Dear God." I said, "I have spoiled my life. Can you give me a new one?" And God took my old life all stained and blotted and gave me a new one all unspotted, and smiled into my eyes and said, "Do better now my child."

Mother's Photo

Dwight Moody used to tell about a girl over in London who ran away from home. She went down into the slums of London and became a very wicked and violent sinner. It broke the heart of her dear Christian mother and this dear old Christian mother wrote letter after letter begging the girl to come back home. All of the letters were ignored. They came back, "addressee unknown," "refused," "return to sender." Finally in desperation, the dear old lady made a personal trip right down into the slums of London. She was physically unable, but she exerted herself to her very limit, she searched everywhere trying desperately to find even a slim lead as to the whereabouts of her daughter, but she could not. Finally, her strength was gone and there was nothing she could do except to leave and go home in utter despair. Someone finally had pity on the old lady and when they saw that she was giving up, they went to her and said, "Sometimes we have seen your daughter go into that house." They pointed to a house of shame across the street. Broken hearted, the mother went across the street and entered the house and she took a photograph of herself and she wrote across it,

“My daughter please come home.” She just signed it, “Mother.” She left it hanging on the wall and she returned home. Three days later, the girl stumbled into this house of vice and the first thing she noticed upon entering, was that photograph of her own mother hanging there upon the wall. She had been able to ignore the letters, had even refused to open them and read them, but she could not turn her back upon this photograph of her mother’s face. It drew her closer and closer, just like it was a magnet and finally she was close enough to read the message, “My child please come home, signed Mother.” Dwight Moody says she did go home, it was the undying love of the mother that drew the daughter back home where she found forgiveness in the arms of her mother.

The Photo of God’s Love

I have done my very best to try to hold up before you, the photograph of God’s undying love and concern for your soul, it’s the picture of Jesus, His Son, hanging upon the cross of Calvary bleeding and dying for you, so that He might say to you, “I love you, please come home.”

Let us bow our heads and pray, Our Father, we are thankful for the many wonderful, loving and divine warnings of scripture. We are thankful for the warning that there is nothing hid that shall not be known. We are thankful for the warning that for every idle word we shall have to give account in the day of judgment. Oh God, how we thank thee after warning us that thou hast made a way of escape from this judgment by sending Jesus to be our Savior. We pray for everyone in this audience who has not yet taken Christ, the escape from sin. We pray that they will come and accept Him not only as Savior, but as Lord of their lives, this very night. Bless every man and every woman and every young person who needs to come, that they might step forward right now and confess His name and to be buried with

MY FAVORITE REVIVAL SERMONS

Him in baptism and have their sins forgiven so that they will never again have to fear this judgment. And those who need to place their membership with the church because they have moved here to this town, we pray that they will come. For we ask it in Jesus' name, Amen.

I Am Not Ashamed

I want to preach to you from my favorite verse of scripture which is Romans 1:16.

“For I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first the Jew, then the Gentile.”

Good people are not ashamed of things or names of great worth and importance. As Americans, we are not ashamed of such names as George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, Thomas Jefferson, James Garfield, General Douglas MacArthur, or other great giants who have helped to build on this continent a nation under God that respects and defends the individual rights of all mankind. These names will always occupy a sacred place of honor in our hearts.

We take pride in telling people of this world that Abe Lincoln was a log splitter and he became the President of the United States. We like to tell how he studied by an open fire at night from borrowed books so that he could get what he called book learning. We like to tell how he was a proprietor of a one room general store over there in Illinois. We all know that if

Abe lived today that he would be called ignorant and hillbilly by the so-called philosophers who are intellectual without being intelligent.

No nation under the living sun could be any prouder of a national leader than we Americans are of Abraham Lincoln. Listen to the words of this beloved statement as he delivered his second inaugural address on March 4, 1865. "With malice towards none, with charity for all, with firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in. To bind up the nation's wounds, to care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow and his orphan, to do all that may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves and with all nations." This is Abraham Lincoln and he represents the kind of men that have built this beloved United States that we claim as ours. True Americans are not ashamed of men like Abe Lincoln and other giants who have braved the path of Christian brotherhood and Christian government. Is there one among us right now who is ashamed of any of these? If so, you should hide your face in shame. For we who have studied the pages of our history and have wept for every drop of blood shed for this American dream realize that these men deserve the honor and credit of centuries to come and still their greatness would be untold.

James Russell Lowell has said these words, "Our country has a gospel of her own to preach and practice before all the world. The freedom of man, the glorious claims of human brotherhood, and the souls loyalty to none but God."

Traveling all over the world these past 23 years has really made me appreciate my home, the United States of America. It is wonderful to be an American, but it is far greater to be a Christian. "I am not ashamed of the Gospel," Paul said. I know that none of us are ashamed to be an American, but it is even a greater privilege to be a Christian and to be able to say, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Jesus Christ." I believe that it was with this same kind of pride that the Apostle Paul took

pen and paper in hand wrote these words to the Christians in Rome, "I am a debtor both to the Greeks and to the Barbarians, both to the wise and unwise, so as much as in me is I am ready to preach the Gospel to you there in Rome also. For I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto Salvation."

I. I want to speak first of all about the power of the Gospel.

The Gospel is the power of God unto salvation. Today we are living in an age of tremendous power. I think that all of us were tremendously impressed when the doctor in South Africa first succeeded in transplanting a heart. Dr Christian Barnard, is the name of the surgeon who performed that first transplant on a Dr Blaiberg. It was a wonderful thing; Dr Blaiberg was able to receive a dead person's heart and live on that heart and go back to the normal pursuits of life, playing tennis, swimming, and everything else. I think he lived about 18 months longer than what he would have otherwise. Since that time many others have received heart transplants. Just recently Dr. Christian Barnard succeeded his second experiment as he put an extra heart into the chest cavity of someone, and now I read this person is walking around enjoying life on two hearts, the old heart which was damaged and the borrowed heart which he got from someone else. This is a great thing that we are succeeding in the field of Medical Science, and it shows us the power doctors have. They say in time there will be a spare parts bank. If you wear out your left leg, you'll be able to go to this bank and borrow somebody else's. If you wear out your left lung, you'll be able to go to the spare parts bank and get somebody else's lung. I have no doubt that the doctors will continue working until they succeed in doing this. It is the sign of the age of power in which we are living.

The Jet

This is the age of power as far as transportation is con-

cerned. It is the age of the jet airplane.

Now, back at the turn of the century, the skeptics all shook their heads and they predicted "they" would never get "it" off the ground. "They" were Wilbur and Orville Wright, and "it" was a huge, crude contraption, with a twelve horse power engine, but they did get it off the ground. Orville made the world's first controlled flight, in a heavier than air machine, on December 17, 1903. The flight lasted just twelve seconds and covered the distance of 120 feet at Kittyhawk, North Carolina. But it opened a vast new dimension in man's conquest of time and space.

The Jumbo

Not so long ago, some were saying again, "They will never get it off the ground." This time "they" were the Boeing Company and "it" was a giant jet liner, designed to carry more passengers, up to 500, faster, further and higher than any of the predecessors. Once again the skeptics were confounded. The 747 jumbo jet did fly, and went into commercial service in January of 1970. By the end of that year the Boeing Company delivered more than 90 of the giant jets to 30 US and foreign airlines at a price tag of \$25,000,000 each. Since that time, on a number of occasions, I've been privileged to fly in one of these giant jetliners which is called the Jumbo Jet, the 747. And I guarantee you that it is more comfortable than sitting in a church pew. It's even more comfortable than sitting in your living room chair with your feet propped up, watching TV at home. It is an amazing concept in transportation; another sign of the age of power in which we live.

But my friend, I am so glad to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ because it is the power of God unto salvation, and the Gospel has more power than the 747, and the Gospel has more power than the rocket that took man to the moon back in July 1969.

The Moon

Now that's another amazing thing and demonstrates the age of power; to think that we have been able to send man to the moon, and they have walked on the moon, taken pictures of it, and then brought them back to earth again because of the power of the rocket.

Now I understand they are saying that they are going to build a glass city on the moon. Inside the glass city they are going to grow plants, the plants will produce oxygen, it will be possible to live on the moon the year around. So they are already beginning to plan rocket passengerships to and from the moon, because people are going to be traveling there quite regularly. One airline has already sold out the entire first class section of the first passenger rocket to the moon at \$10,000 per ticket! People are that anxious to go.

The Church on the Moon

Well, I got to thinking if we are going to have people on the moon, then we need the church on the moon, that means they are going to need a preacher, so I'm getting ready to go. Anybody want to go with me? It sounds ridiculous, but if we make the strides in transportation in the next few years that we have since Lindbergh flew the Atlantic in 1927, I have no doubt that all this will come to pass. But the Gospel is even more powerful than those rockets that fly to and from the moon and the rockets that they are planning to take to the moon in the future.

I am not ashamed of the power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The Gospel has the power to provide the best in this life and the best in the life which is to come. I am not ashamed that the Gospel has the power to take any sinner and change that sinner totally and completely.

An Idol

I want to tell you about one village in India where I had the privilege of preaching the Gospel; two times I worked with Bernie Getter, while we have been in India. He and his dear wife Jo Ann, and their children are a blessing to everybody. While I was with Bernie Getter we were going to this one village to hold evangelistic meetings, and he told me this story about how he was able to start the church in this village. It was an idolworshipping village. I'm sure you know the people of India, for the most part, are idolworshipping people. Most of them are Hindu. They do bow down to the idols, and it is heart breaking to see them going to the Hindu temples and bowing down to gods that cannot hear, gods that cannot answer prayer, gods that cannot speak, gods that cannot help in anyway. What a blessed privilege it is for Christians to go over to India and tell them about the one true God who lives, who can hear our prayers, who answers our prayers, and helps us each and every day.

Well, Brother Getter went to this particular village to preach the gospel. He took an Indian evangelist with him to this village and the Indian evangelist also preached the Gospel. They worked in this village for a long time, and finally there were a few that gave their lives to Jesus, but Brother Getter did not have the funds to leave an Indian evangelist in that village to help teach these people and to help them to grow in Christ. All he could do was leave the Bible and leave them on their own.

Brother Getter returned to that village a year later, and the first thing he saw on entering the village was a grotesque idol that had been set up at the center of the village. He was terribly upset as was the Indian evangelist. All the Christians came out and joyfully received them, but, of course, Brother Getter and the Indian evangelist were troubled and the Christians could see there was something wrong. They said, "Let's have a church service, you are finally here and can tell us God's word." Brother Getter said, "What is that that I see at the center of the

village?" The people said, "Oh, it's nothing." Brother Getter said, "Don't tell me it's nothing, I can see it's an idol. You have turned back to idol worship." The people were so remorseful and they began to weep. They said, "We are sorry. We didn't have anyone to teach us, we didn't have any one to preach to us, there was no one to encourage us. We are terribly sorry we did it."

The Indian evangelist rushed to the center of the village and grabbed that idol and jerked it down, he broke it, he stomped on it, and ground it in the dust. He shouted to the people and said, "You all are nothing but a bunch of backsliders, we will have nothing to do with you, you turned away from the one true God." The people fell on their faces before Brother Getter and they wept and they said, "Please pray for us. Ask God to forgive us. We will never again do a terrible thing like this, if God will just forgive us." So the Indian evangelist had prayer with the people, and again they left these people alone with nothing but the Word of God. There was no trained preacher in the village to follow up the work, to encourage them, to teach them, they just had the Bible to read themselves.

The thrilling part of that story is, today in Orissa State, the church in that village is the strongest in all the state of Orissa. And strictly by the power of God. The power of God's word is all these people had. They didn't have a missionary, they didn't have an Indian evangelist, they just had the Bible. Just by studying the Bible on their own, they became very strong, steadfast Christians. When we arrived in that village we had the biggest reception, the biggest parade, the most joyful time of all of our evangelistic meetings.

As the Bible was powerful enough to change those idol worshipping people in that village to true, dedicated, sincere Christians, I know the Gospel has the power to change your life and my life and the life of any other sinner totally and completely. I've seen it and I know you have seen it, the Gospel changing alcoholics, drug addicts, adulterers, adultresses. I have seen the

Gospel change the worst of sinners, and make them gloriously happy servants of God. Maybe some of you here in the audience are defeated by the power of the devil and the power of sin. Maybe you are saying, "I would love to be a Christian, but I cannot do it. I have tried, but failed. Maybe you've been trying in your own strength. Try depending on God's power instead of your own power. God's power is the same today as it's always been. It is the same as when Paul said, "I am not ashamed of the power of the Gospel."

II. In the second place, I want to talk about the promises of the Gospel. I am not ashamed of the promises of the Gospel. I am glad to say that the promises of the Gospel are for everyone. Jesus said in John 6:37, "Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast him out." That includes the rich and the poor, good and bad, the high or the lowly, the educated or the uneducated. Revelation 22:17 says, "Whosoever will come." Remember that Jesus did not come into this world to improve society by reforming it, He came into the world to redeem society by saving it. Won't you listen to His great invitation from Matthew 11, "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest." I don't know who is not heavy laden. Everybody in the world, it seems, is facing terrible trials and problems.

Troubles

I was standing on a busy street corner of Georgetown, Guyana down in South America. I had gone there to establish a Church of Christ in that city where there was no congregation. A young man noticing that I was a foreigner, came up and began to talk to me and when he learned who I was and what I was doing, he began to pour out his troubles. And that young man ended his remarks by saying, "I have a notion to go out and get a gun and put it to my brain and just blow my head off, because I've got so many troubles."

In India, it was the time of examination for many of the Indian school children. The people of India greatly prize education! They want an education if there is any possible way of getting one. They put such great importance to education. Examination time means everything to them. More than a few Indian students came to me and said, "Please pray for me, because if I fail my exam, I am going to commit suicide." Every place you go, people have problems and people have troubles. But people who have come to Jesus have found that there is a way that you can bury your problems, and that is to cast your troubles and problems upon the Lord. Isn't that a wonderful promise that we have. We can do that. God is willing to bear our problems and troubles. And we'll have the faith to put them upon God, then they become God's problems and God's troubles and not ours.

Let us think specifically about the exceeding great and precious promises of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

A. First of all, there is the promise that God will forgive all our sins. How many times have you thought, "Oh, I wish that I can live my life all over again." No doubt you were burdened when you said that. You had problems, you were thinking about your mistakes, your sins, and you were thinking, "Oh, if I could live my life again, I wouldn't make this mistake, I wouldn't make that mistake, I will do things much differently." Then you said, "What's the use, nobody can live their life over again. That's foolish thinking." With God nothing is impossible and as a matter of fact God is concerned you must live your life over again. Because Jesus said, "Ye must be born again and except the man be born of the water and the spirit, ye cannot enter the kingdom of God." Now how is this possible? Well, Peter gave the answer on the Day of Pentecost, when he spoke to the murderers of Jesus. In Acts 2:38, he told them, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." Ananias told Saul of Tarsus the answer when told in

Acts 22:16, "Now why tarriest thou, arise and be baptized and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord." If you want to start your life all over again, you can do it by trusting Jesus and obeying His commands. If you put your faith in Him and repent of your sins and obey Him in the waters of Christian baptism, Jesus promises to wash away all of your sins and give you a brand new life to live for Him. That's the first promise of the Gospel.

B. The promises of the Spirit. Some of you may be saying, "Well, I believe that, but I'm worried about what happens after baptism. I'm afraid that if I accepted Jesus and was baptized and was forgiven, that I wouldn't be able to live a Christian life. I'm afraid I would backslide and I don't want to disappoint myself, I don't want to disappoint others, and I don't want to disappoint God. So I want to wait until I'm absolutely sure I can live a Christian life. When I'm sure, then I'll become a Christian." My friend, you'll never be sure until the day you die, so if that's what you are waiting on, you'll die unsaved. As a matter of fact, none of us is able to live a Christian life by himself in his own power and strength. The devil is stronger than you and the devil is stronger than me, and the devil is a roaring lion, walking about seeking whom he may devour. He is always ready to tempt us in every turn and every corner and at every opportunity, but you see God will give you His Holy Spirit, if you will be born again. Through the power of God's Holy Spirit, you will be able to live a Christian life. Not because you can do it, but because God can do it, through you, giving you the strength and guidance, the peace and comfort that you need that is so necessary. God's Holy Spirit does guide, does lead us, He even prays for us when we know not how to pray as we should. So again, I want to repeat what Peter said to the murderers of Jesus on the Day of Pentecost, "Repent, be baptized everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

The second promise of the Gospel is the gift of the Holy

Spirit. The Holy Spirit, who comes into our lives, not only as a comforter, but as a guide, as a helper to give us the added power and strength that we need to overcome the devil's temptations, so that we may live for Christ.

C. Heaven. There is a third promise of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and that is a home in Heaven. All of us love our homes, but there are things that ruin everything in the home, such as hunger, pain, sorrow, death, sometimes a terrible illness. Won't it be wonderful when we get to our Heavenly home, we won't have any of that. There will be no hunger in Heaven. No sorrow in Heaven. No death in Heaven. No separation in Heaven. We will get to be with our God and our Savior Jesus for ever and ever and ever.

The first time I went to India, I worked with Bernie and Jo Ann Getter, and this was right after their oldest son had been killed in a train accident, it was a terrible thing. We got there after the accident, after the death, after the funeral. It was a terrible time of sadness in the lives of the Getters, but they went right on with evangelistic meetings and carried on. It was really a heart touching thing to them and to others who observed, to see the unbelieving Hindus pouring in to extend their sympathy to the Getters. They had been in India for twenty-five years. During those twenty-five years, Brother Getter had been arrested 13 times with criminal charges filed against him by the unbelieving Hindus. Thirteen times he has been acquitted in court. Once he was poisoned by the unbelieving Hindus. So, you can imagine how wonderful it was for the Getters after all those years to have some of those Hindu people come to extend their sympathy, at the time of death of their oldest son, Kenneth.

There was one Hindu couple that came to the house and they wept and they wept and finally the Hindu wife said, "Oh, I don't know how you people can stand it, just to think the star of your family has been snatched away in the hour of his manhood. How can you stand it?" Of course, you need to

understand a little bit of Hindu culture to know just how they would feel about this. Indians pen all of their hope in the oldest son. Everything revolves around the oldest son. To lose the oldest son is an unspeakable tragedy as far as they are concerned. So you can imagine why they said this. Mrs Getter spoke up and said, "It's very hard and we are real sorrowful because we miss Kenneth, but we can stand it because we have hope." Then she went ahead to explain the Christian hope, "You see, Jesus our Savior also died and was buried, but He arose from the dead. He lives and because He lives, we know that we shall also live. We know that Kenneth lives. We know that Jesus has taken Kenneth to Heaven and we know someday we are going to rise from the dead, and we are going to be reunited with our son in Heaven and we will get to be with him for all eternity. That's our hope as Christians and that's why we can stand it." The Hindu man and woman looked at Mr and Mrs Getter and said, "Oh, we do wish that our religion would give us a little bit of hope."

Now Hindus believe such a variety of things, it's hard to say what they believe, but some of the Hindus I have talked to believe they are going to be reincarnated and come back as a cow if they were very good Hindu. Most of them fear that if they don't live up to their Hindu religion, they will come back as a donkey or as a pig, and that's the worst of all to come back as a pig, because pigs are so dirty. What kind of hope is that? Can you imagine what life would be like if you didn't have any more hope than that? Oh, how we thank God for the promises that are ours through the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

III. I am not ashamed of the power of the Gospel; I am not ashamed of the promises of the Gospel; and then I want to say in the third place, I am not ashamed of the price that has been paid for the Gospel.

Now the price of anything usually has a lot to do with what it's worth. In these days of inflation, everybody is price conscious and we are all looking for a bargain price. My friends, the

Gospel of Jesus Christ was not purchased at any bargain. The price paid for the Gospel was the greatest price ever paid for anything in the whole history of the world. The price paid was the blood of Jesus Christ. That's why I say I'm not ashamed of the price, I am only ashamed of my own unworthiness and of the many times I have lost precious opportunities to tell others of the price that has been paid. Thinking of the price paid for the Gospel and then of course, the price that we must pay to be a follower of Jesus.

I want to give you one more illustration from our campaigns in India. One time when we were there, we worked with Art Morris in South India. We worked in the Erode area. Erode is a very large city in South India, then there are many, many villages in a radius around Erode. There are also some forbidding mountains around Erode.

When Arthur Morris first went to the Erode area he selected this one particular village where he wanted to try and establish the Church of Christ, the people were terribly hostile. They wouldn't give him anything to eat, not even a cup of water, but he kept going back preaching and teaching God's word. Finally the day came when the people warmed up a little bit, they would give him a cup of water to drink, and then finally they even gave him some food to eat.

Eventually there were three teen age boys who yielded their lives to Lord Jesus. But after Brother Morris baptized these boys into Christ, they said, "You'll have to go home with us." When he asked why, the boys said, "Because we are afraid our father will kill us." That is not uncommon in India. I have seen with my own eyes, a new Christian getting beaten up by an unruly mob of Hindu people following a baptismal service. It is not at all uncommon for a Christian to be persecuted publicly, to be kicked out of the family. If they become a Christian in India, they pay a high price. So Brother Morris knew what the boys meant when they said, "we are afraid our father will kill us," and so he agreed to go home with them to tell the parents.

When he told the parents what the boys had done, they flew into a rage, and the father demanded the three boys deny Jesus, but they would not, they said, "We believe that He is the son of God and our Savior." The father was in such a terrible rage, he kicked them out of the family and he ordered them to go to the mountains and stay there for ninety days.

I am told that people cannot live in the mountains near Erode, because there is no food, there is nothing but wild animals. It's absolutely impossible. When the father said go to the mountains and stay ninety days, it was the same as us saying, "Go to the electric chair. Go to the gallows." It was like a sentence of death being pronounced.

Arthur Morris thought surely that the boys would deny Jesus when the father said that, but the three boys said, "Alright, if that's what we must do, we'll go to the mountains, but we won't deny Jesus." Art Morris said to the boys, "We will pray for you. With God nothing is impossible. God can save you, not only take you to Heaven, but save you here on earth, and we will pray for God to deliver you from this terrible fate." They had prayer and the boys left in obedience to their father and went to the mountains.

Brother Morris went back to Madrapakkam and organized the Christians and they conducted a 24-hour prayer meeting, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. For 90 days at least one person was praying day and night. Praying to God on behalf of those three young Christians, that God would deliver them from what seemed a certain death.

On the 91st morning, Brother Morris went back to that village and sat down. Some of the people came and greeted him and asked him why he had come. He said, "I come to greet the boys back from the mountain." They laughed at him and said the boys were dead. Brother Morris said, "No, they are alive. God has heard our prayers." They laughed at him. He said, "We'll wait and see." He sat there and waited all morning long. Brother Morris told me, privately, "I was about like that man in

the Bible. 'Lord, I believe, but help thou mine unbelief.' " He said, "I sat there and finally it was afternoon and word spread through the village. Every once in a while someone would come by and laugh at me."

About three o'clock in the afternoon here came the three boys walking into the village. Brother Morris said, "Oh boys, how did you live through these 90 days?" The three boys looked at him like he was crazy. "Why God answered your prayers. How do you think we lived?" Brother Morris was so ashamed of himself and he said, "I know God answered our prayers, boys, but I want to know how God answered our prayers?" They said, "When we got up to the mountain, we thought surely we would die, but right away God showed us that if we would build a house in the trees, that would keep us safe from the animals. So we built a little platform up in the trees and we would sleep there in the night time and that kept us safe. God showed us some food. We found some roots we could chew on. We even found some coconut, we were able to eat the meat and drink the milk out of the coconut, that gave us liquid in place of water. God answered your prayers every day and brought us back alive."

Think of the price those boys paid for becoming Christians. But now I want you to think of the reward that came to those three boys. Because those three teen age boys had the courage to not only accept Christ, but to live for Christ, lay their lives on the line and be willing to die for Christ if necessary, those three boys lived to see the Church of Christ established in that village. They lived to see their parents, who put them through that ordeal, baptized into Christ. They lived to see a strong Church of Christ established in that village, in fact in that village we had our biggest campaign, all because three teen age, Indian boys were willing to pay the price for Jesus, because they appreciated so much how Jesus paid the greatest price of all for them.

It was Stuttard Kennedy who wrote these lines:

When Jesus came to Golgotha, they hanged Him on a tree. They

MY FAVORITE REVIVAL SERMONS

drove great nails through His hands and feet. They made it Calvary. They crowned Him with a crown of thorns, red with wounds and deep. For those were crude and cruel days and human flesh was cheap. But when Jesus came to Niles, Michigan, some of you just passed Him by. You wouldn't harm a hair on His head, just let Him die. And it rained a bitter rain that drenched Him through and through. The crowds went home and left the streets and without a soul to see Christ crouched by a doorway, and He cried for Calvary.

Decision for Destiny

I would like to read from Acts 8:35-39, "Then Philip began with that very passage of Scripture and told them the good news about Jesus. As they traveled along the road, they came to some water and the eunuch said, 'Look, here is water. Why shouldn't I be baptized.' And he gave orders to stop the chariot. Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized him. When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord suddenly took Philip away, and the eunuch did not see him again, but went on his way rejoicing."

He rejoiced because he had made life's supreme decision for destiny!

A Treasure Hunt

I understand that every year in New York City the people of that great metropolis enjoy a treasure hunt. The treasure hunt is conducted by the newspapers. The papers carry the names of all the people in New York who have dormant bank accounts. It is an amazing thing that several thousand people, every year, turn up in New York with dormant bank accounts. Around the first

of September, when the newspapers list all of these names, the people of New York will be seen scanning the columns of the paper trying to find their name to see if perchance they might have one of these dormant bank accounts.

Again, it is amazing that every year several hundred people will come in and claim their money. Recently a fellow came in and claimed more than \$8,000 that had been listed in a dormant bank account. It was such an unusually large amount of money that newspaper reporters were there to question him. After he had proven that he was the valid owner of these funds and had received them, a reporter stepped up and said, "Sir, why did you have that money in the bank all of these years and just now come to claim it after your name appeared in the papers?" Then this fellow got a little red in the face as he said, "Well you may find it hard to believe, but the truth is I had just forgotten that I had this money in the bank."

When I read that I was dumbfounded! I can't imagine it! If I had \$8,000 in the bank I know that I wouldn't forget about it, in fact I would probably be telephoning that bank every morning, noon, and night just to be sure that it was still there, safe and sound. But this same thing is happening all across our country.

I was holding a meeting in Louisville, Kentucky and I noticed this article in the *Louisville Courier Journal*. It read, "Come and get it," and it told about hundreds of unclaimed dollars in Louisville banks, insurance companies and race tracks. They were advertising to try to get these people to pick up their money. In most cases the people don't know the money is there. "They have forgotten about it," says William J. Clark, Vice President and controller of Citizens Fidelity Bank and Trust Company of Louisville.

The largest amount of money in Louisville unclaimed was \$1,317 held by Citizens Fidelity for a Mrs A.S. Coleman whose address was not known. The money had been in a savings account for 25 years and according to Mr Clark, she had not been in the bank once in that 25 years. In Kentucky, savings accounts

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are dormant when there has been no activity for 25 years. Checking accounts are dormant when there has been no activity for 10 years.

As amazing as it is to think that there are people who have money in the bank and they forgot about it, I am here this morning to tell you of something more astounding. I am here to tell you about men and women and boys and girls who claim they believe the Bible is the Word of God. They claim to believe that there really is a Heaven and there really is a Hell and they say that they believe that Jesus Christ is the only one who can save them from Hell and take them safely to Heaven, and yet these same people who say they believe all of this, do nothing about it. They have allowed the claims of the Lord Jesus to lie dormant within their hearts. I want to say over and over again in every way that God can give me the words to say it, God wants a decision. It is time to make your decision.

Everyday Decisions

We make decisions everyday that we live. In fact decisions far outnumber anything else that we do in our life. You have already made a number of decisions this very Lord's Day. You had to decide to get up this morning. I'm sure you didn't just automatically fall out of bed. Then you had to decide what to have for breakfast, if anything, and you had to decide to come to this church service. You had to decide what to wear. You had to decide how to get here; were you going to walk, drive your car, ride with a neighbor, come in a taxi cab, or ride your Honda, or roller skates, or something like that. A decision had to be made.

Education

Some decisions are far more important than others. Every

young person must decide about education, are you going on to school and graduate and then go to college and prepare your mind for the future years, or are you going to be a dropout so that you can obtain some of this easy money that is available right now. Whatever you do about education is an important decision, but it is not life's supreme decision for destiny.

Vocation

Every person must decide about a vocation. Just as an architect will draw plans and specifications before a lovely building can be constructed; even so, our lives need a blueprint if they are going to be entirely satisfactory. A misfit in any vocation is tragic, but as important decision as vocation is, it is not life's supreme decision for destiny.

Marriage

When two young people come walking down the aisle of a church building like this to recite the marriage vows, a decision is being made. A tremendously important decision, two lives will be blessed or else two lives will be tragically ruined. As important a decision as marriage is, even that is not life's supreme decision for destiny.

The All Important Decision

Well you say, what then is the all important decision? My friends, it is the very same decision that was made so long ago by the Ethiopian eunuch as he rode down the highway reading his scriptures. His decision was made when he said, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." In order to get this man to

make the decision for destiny, God provided a copy of His own word, the Holy Scriptures, so that the Ethiopian could read about the Messiah. God also provided an angel, one of His Heavenly messengers who came to put this seeking soul in contact with the searching Savior. But I think best of all, God provided a willing, surrendered, Christian man. A man who was willing to make a personal visit to explain to the seeking soul just exactly what he needed to do to be a Christian.

I. Was it illness? Why did this man make his decision? If we can find out why, then perhaps you could make your decision for the very same reason that he made his. As we ask the question, "Why did he do it?", I know that the thought of illness and death comes to your mind. Many times people can be reached for Christ when they are in the hospital, or when they are sick at home, or when they know death is coming soon.

A Death Bed Example

I am thinking right now of a man who was reached in Atlanta, Georgia a few years ago, when I was preaching at the East Point Christian Church. The man's wife made the request of me that I go to the hospital to visit her husband. He was dying, in fact, he was in the last stages of cancer and I fully knew the situation as I walked in the hospital room.

Having been briefed by the wife, I felt no reason to waste any time and so I came right to the point. I said, "Joel, are you ready to die and meet God?" Big tears came in his eyes and his chin quivered with emotion. It must have been five minutes before he could even answer me and finally when he gained control of himself, he looked me right in the eye and he said, "No sir, I am not ready to die, I am afraid to die." His chin began to quiver again and I said, "Joel, would you like to be a Christian?" and he said, "Sure, I would like to be a Christian, but I have waited until it is too late." I said, "Joel, it's not too

late. You are still alive, you can think, you can make your own decision. Do you want to be a Christian?" He said, "Yes, but I tell you it is too late," and I said, "Joel, why do you say it is too late?" He said, "Look at me, I am so weak that I can't even get off this hospital bed. Look at all these tubes and needles that they have stuck in my arms and legs. There is no possible way that I could ever be baptized. I have waited until it is too late and that is all there is to it."

I said, "Joel, if you want to be a Christian, you let me worry about how to baptize you. Give me the name of your doctor." He gave me the name of his doctor and I telephoned him right away. I explained to the doctor what Joel Chastain wanted to do, and it turned out that the doctor, himself, was a Christian and as soon as I explained why I telephoned, the doctor was overjoyed. He said, "You know, I was afraid Joel was not a Christian and I thought of speaking to him myself. I am so glad you are there and that he has made his decision. Certainly, he can be baptized." Then the doctor said, "If you would permit it, I would like to assist in the baptism." Well, I assured the doctor I would be more than glad to have his assistance.

He came right down to the hospital. The tubes and needles were removed and Joel was prepared and a couple of the male nurses in the hospital helped to carry him down to the physical therapy room, where a big pool had been prepared with water. In a few minutes the doctor and I lifted Joel Chastain off of the bed and gently put him down in this pool of water and there he was buried with Christ and raised up in newness of life. He was really happy and I have never seen a man witness any more joyfully than this man witnessed for Christ. He did not neglect to tell his story to a single doctor or nurse or visitor that came into that hospital. Everybody had to go to his room and hear how Joel Chastain had become a Christian.

The immediate result of his conversion was that we baptized six other adults into Christ, they had listened to his testimony and then made their decision. Everybody knew why Joel Chas-

tain became a Christian, he was a dying man and he was afraid to die without Christ. Now, I do not say that fear is the best motive, but I do not say that is an unworthy motive. Why do we have insurance, except that we are afraid of what might happen. Didn't our Lord Jesus Christ teach us to, "fear him, who is able to destroy both soul and body in Hell"?

I tell you the truth, I am afraid of going to Hell, but it was not fear that prompted the eunuch to become a Christian.

It was fear that prompted Joel Chastain, but not this man that we are reading about in Acts chapter 8. This man was not ill, he had made a long journey from his home in Ethiopia all the way to Jerusalem and now was in the process of going back home again in a chariot. This is not the sort of journey that a sick man would ever have attempted. He was not thinking that he was going to die right away, this man was strong and able bodied. So we have to search for another reason why he made his decision.

II. A great sinner? As we ask that question perhaps some are thinking that he was a terrible prodigal. It is a fact that when a man has become so deeply engulfed in sin, occasionally his conscience will get the best of him and in deep sorrow and remorse he may turn to Christ in order to get rid of a tormenting conscience. But as we search the scriptures we fail to find any indication that this was the reason.

A Good Moral Man

To the contrary, this man was very good. The Bible informs us that he was the queen's treasurer in the 27th verse of Acts 8. So out of all of the citizens of Ethiopia, he must have been the one selected to be most honest and trustworthy of all. Furthermore, we learn that this man was a believer in God. He had made the long journey, all the way to Jerusalem, for one pur-

pose, to worship God. We also learn that this man read his Bible. As he journeyed back home again, he spent his time, not sightseeing, but he spent his time studying God's word. He was reading from the prophet Isaiah. This means he must have been a very prayerful man. I want to ask you this one question; are you as good as this man that we are reading about this morning? I hope that you are, but if you are, you are not good enough because neither was he good enough! He believed in God, he worshipped God, he studied God's word, he prayed. Everyone in the kingdom considered him a good, honest citizen so much so that he was the queen's treasurer. But all of these good points were not enough to take him to Heaven.

A Difficult Prospect

This man represents the hardest type of a prospect to win to Christ. I tell you the truth, I would rather call in the county jail or state penitentiary any day than I would to go calling on a man like this, because you know what happens when we call on these good people. They will swell up with pride and they will say, "I don't know why you are talking to me, I don't know why you think that I need to be converted. I'll have you know that I am a good person, I believe in God, I go to church on Christmas and Easter, I say prayers whenever I am in trouble, once in awhile I donate to charities and I take care of my family and I pay my taxes, I tend to my own business, and I will tell you one thing I am a lot better than that bunch of hypocrites that go up there to that church."

How many times do you hear that story? I hear it everyday. I hear it from people in every town that I preach in. They are good people and I may even be preaching to some of them right now. Have I described you? Oh yes, you are good, you believe in God, you live a good life, but you are not good enough, because you don't have Jesus. This man was not good enough with all of his good points, because he didn't have Jesus.

Why did he make this decision then? It wasn't because he was a bad man. He was good. It wasn't because he was a sick man. He was strong and able bodied. It wasn't that he was afraid to die right away. He wasn't even thinking about death. Why did he make this decision?

III. A love story. It seems quite evident that it was because the world's greatest love story had really touched his heart. We all know how love appeals to the hearts of all people, everywhere. Can't you just see this learned man as he rode down the highway reading God's word and the very place of the scripture that he was reading was this, "He was led as the sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearers, so opened he not his mouth. In His humiliation, His judgment was taken away: and who shall declare His generation? For His life is taken from the earth." He could see that somebody loved somebody else a great deal. But, he didn't really understand just who the scriptures were talking about, and so his mind filled with wonderment.

A True Love Story

I think that the greatest love story that I have ever heard except for this love story of God in the Bible, occurred in Columbus, Ohio a number of years ago. A large family moved into the south side of the city. They had really known the tough breaks. Mr Paul, the father, had been injured in a mill accident and was unable to find employment. His wife had been an invalid ever since the birth of the last baby. The children had known what it was like to be hungry and to be without clothing and shelter, they had really suffered.

Some of the good Christians in the community found out about this situation and it was reported in church services on Sunday morning, and right away the Christians came to the

rescue. Some brought odds and ends of furniture, others brought clothing, and many brought food. Then somebody in the church used his influence with the city and got Mr Paul a light job that he was able to handle and so things really began to look up for this big family, who had suffered so very much.

In grateful appreciation they all began to attend the services at the church and then one by one began to respond to the invitation of Jesus. Almost every week for about eight straight Sundays, another member of that family would step to the front and confess the name of Jesus and be buried with Him in baptism. Finally every member of that family was a Christian except for the two who were very small and not old enough to understand.

Then one day the telephone rang in the preacher's study, the excited voice of one of the church ladies came from the other end of the line. She cried out, "Oh preacher, come quickly to the Pauls' house there has been an accident, they need you right away!" and so the preacher ran to his car and drove off as fast as he could and went over to the little two room shack where this big family was living. As he came to a halt, he noticed that Mr Paul was standing outside the door waiting on him and as he rushed up to the door breathlessly, Mr Paul grabbed his hands and said, "Thank you for coming, Preacher, we surely do need you today," and he motioned for the preacher to enter the room.

As the preacher stepped inside the little two roomed shack, he noticed at once that the room where he stood was the bedroom, a kitchen, a dining room, a play room, a wash room, an ironing room, a family room. It was just everything all in one. Out in the center of the room was an old rusty cook stove and its four legs rested on four little blocks of wood. Over in one corner was a table and around the table some old chairs and a few boxes and that is where the family sat to eat their meals. Over in the other corner was an old green iron bedstead and lying there upon the bed was little, eleven year old Ellen and she was

wrapped in bandages almost from the top of her head to the soles of her feet.

The preacher was so astonished he said, 'Why Brother Paul, what in the world has happened to our little Ellen?' Everybody in the church loved the little girl, she was the oldest daughter in this big family and ever since her mother had been an invalid, following the birth of the baby, Ellen had taken over the household duties. She cooked, she washed, she ironed, she babysat, she did everything. Nobody could understand how such a frail, fragile, undernourished child of 11 could do so much and be so cheerful about it. Consequently, the whole church loved her to a fault. You can imagine how distressed the preacher was as he asked, "What in the world has happened to our little Ellen?"

Mr Paul said, "Preacher, we are not sure just how it happened. She was getting ready to do the family washing. She had a great big kettle of hot scalding water there on the stove already to pour in the wash tub, but at the last moment for some reason she decided to sweep the floor. While she was sweeping, it happened! We don't know how. We think maybe the baby was crawling around and maybe he was playing with one of those blocks of wood underneath one the legs of the stove and somehow manage to loosen it, we are not sure. Ellen just happened to turn around and as she turned around she saw the stove was tipping to one side and she realized that the big kettle of scalding water was going to fall right on top of the baby and she knew it would scald him to death. There wasn't time to do anything and so she just jumped and fell across the baby and protected his body with hers and the water scalded her flesh to the bone."

The Greatest Love Story

The preacher said, "Brother Paul, without a doubt this is

the greatest love story that I have ever heard except for one and the only one that is greater is that one in the Bible, where God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, Jesus, to save us from our sins. Remember, Brother Paul, how Jesus came from Heaven giving up all the glory that was His and He dwelled among us and suffered like we suffer and was tempted like we are tempted and then finally gave His life willingly upon the cross suffering in great agony so that we might have our sins forgiven and have a home in Heaven. That, Brother Paul, is the greatest love story of all."

Can you picture it, dear friends? That little 11 year old girl's love was supreme in her heart as she instantly made the decision that she would give her own life, if necessary, to save the life of her baby brother, whom she loved. Can you picture it then, this learned man, this Ethiopian riding down the highway in his chariot, studying God's word, but not understanding what he was reading? At that point Philip came and beginning at the very same scripture preached to him Jesus. He told him all about how Jesus had come and how Jesus had lived, about His miracles, about his teachings, about His death, His burial, His resurrection, and about how Jesus wanted us to be His followers, and it was at that point that the Ethiopian said, "Here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?" Philip said, "If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest." He said, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." And so they went down into the water, both Philip and the eunuch and he baptized him. When they were come up out of the water, the spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more and he went on his way rejoicing, because he had made life's supreme decision for destiny.

That very same decision you need to make this Lord's Day morning. "Jesus is standing in Pilate's hall, friendless and forsaken betrayed by all. Hearken what meaneth that sudden call, What will you do with Jesus? What will you do with Jesus? Neutral you cannot be and someday your heart will be asking,

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‘Jesus what will you do with me?’ ”

Let us bow our heads and pray:

Our Father in Heaven, we are thankful for this congregation of Christians, who have been willing to sponsor this evangelistic campaign. We thank Thee for the work that they have done for Thee, for all of the preparations that they have made, for the many calls that they have made in the homes of the people of this community. Now we pray that those who have received the visits and who have listened to their words, have reached the moment when they will be willing to decide and come forward and publicly confess Jesus’ name and be baptized just as this man was that we have read about in Acts 8. We also pray that they might decide today, to place their membership and to continue their service for Jesus through this congregation in this town where they now live. May this be a great moment for many to decide. In Christ’s name we pray, Amen.

Shall we now stand and sing the hymn and will you make your decision by stepping right out and coming to the front even as we sing the very first verse.

Stop Signs on the Road That Leads to Hell

In Matthew 7:13-14 Jesus said, "Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow is the road that leads to life, and only a few find it."

The Old Tombstone

In the southern part of Indiana, not too far from Bedford, there is an old cemetery. People like to visit this cemetery because they enjoy reading the etchings on the old tombstones. Some of them are rather amusing, others are quite thought provoking. The story has been told of a certain Scotchman, who was wandering through this cemetery one day reading the epitaphs on the stone. He came to the grave of a certain Irish man, he stopped to read the message. The message inscribed on that stone reads like this, "My friend as you pass by, remember! As you are now so once was I and as I am now you soon will be. So prepare for death to follow me." This Scotchman had difficulty reading the etching on the stone because rain had been beating on it for years and had almost erased the words. He got

down on his hands and knees and adjusted his glasses, he got up very close to it and he tried to make it out, but he couldn't. He had to write it down letter for letter and he even had to fill in the missing letters, like you would in a crossword puzzle from the newspaper. He finally got it all written down. He adjusted his glasses and he stood up and read aloud with much meaning the message from the Irish man. "My friend, as you pass by, remember as you are now, so once was I, and as I am now you soon shall be. So prepare for death to follow me." They say at that point the Scotchman reached into his pocket and pulled out a piece of chalk and on the tombstone he wrote, "My friend to follow thee, I am not content until I know which way you went!"

Two Ways

Well, I think that Scotchman had exactly the right thought, don't you? Because after all there are two ways. There is the straight and narrow way and there is the broad way. I hope that I can convince you, every one of you, that you are traveling one way or the other. Right now you are either on the road to Heaven or else you are on the road to Hell, there is no middle ground. Jesus said, "He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad."

The Broad Way

If you are traveling the broad way, the road that leads to Hell, there are several things that you need to know about this terrible place. For example, in Matthew 25:41 Jesus said, "Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." Hell is a place of everlasting fire. If you are traveling this broad road that leads to Hell you also need to know that

there is no escape. In Luke 16 Jesus told us about a certain rich man, who died and went to Hell. He cried for water to cool his tongue and he prayed for somebody to go back and preach to his five brothers lest they would also come to this terrible place of torment. You remember that it was pointed out to this rich man in Hell, "And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed, so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence." So Jesus pointed out that there is no purgatory, there is no second chance, there is no probation, Hell is forever, there is no escape. Then if you are traveling that broad road that leads to Hell you also need to realize this fact that we find recorded in II Peter 3:9, "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." Remember that God does not want you to go there. If you go to Hell, it will be against the will of God. He has done everything that He can do to stop you. He has erected stop signs along the road that leads to Hell and the only way that you can ever go to Hell, is for you to ignore these stop signs, like a reckless driver on the highway.

I. God's first stop sign on the road that leads to Hell is the Christian home. Since I came from a Christian home myself, I can give my own personal testimony. I know from personal experience what a Christian mother and a Christian father can mean in one's life. The home that I came from was a wonderful home. My Christian parents are still living and I thank God for that everyday. I never knew what it was like as a boy growing up to go to bed at night without first of all hearing my mother read from the word of God. Never once did I go to sleep without first of all seeing my father get down on his knees to pray God's blessings upon our family. Consequently by the time I was 6 or 7 years old, I knew all of the Bible stories by memory because they had been taught to me by my mother. I remember one of the first stories that I learned from the word of God, from the lips

of my mother was the story of Moses.

Moses And His Parents

Moses was born at a very dangerous time. Pharaoh, the wicked ruler of Egypt, had passed a law that every male child born to the Israelites should be immediately put to death. It was into an unfriendly world like this that Moses came, but his parents, Jochebed and Amram, being God fearing parents, would not submit to this wicked law of the king. They saved their baby boy's life by hiding him from the Egyptian soldiers and they were successful for about three months, but when the cries of the child became so loud that they could no longer conceal him. The loving hands of mother Jochebed fashioned a little ark and she embarked upon a daring plan. She took the ark and her child down to the Nile River and she set him adrift on the Nile trusting him into the hands of God. Miriam, her daughter, the sister of Moses, was to stand guard and bring back news as to what happened to the young child. That day of all days Pharaoh's daughter came down to the river to bathe with her maidens and while she was there, the baby was discovered. He began to weep, little did anyone realize that the tears of Moses would be the jewels that would ransom Israel from their bondage. When the child wept, the Princess of Egypt had compassion upon the baby and just then Miriam came running up and she said, "Do you want me to get a Hebrew mother to nurse the baby for you?" Pharaoh's daughter replied, "Yes, go get a Hebrew mother to nurse this child and tell her I will pay her wages to bring up the child for me." I can picture Miriam as she happily began running toward the house as fast as her legs would carry her. I can also picture Jochebed anxiously standing on the back porch of their slave quarters looking down towards the Nile River awaiting news about her baby boy, when all at once in the distance she can see somebody running toward the

house and in a moment she realizes that it is her daughter. I am sure that her heart must have failed for fear because as she saw Miriam running so fast, she thought it would surely be bad news, but as Miriam came up all breathless she shouted, "Mother, Mother come quickly, guess what, Pharaoh's daughter has found the baby, but mother she wants to keep him alive. She says that she will pay you wages if you will nurse the baby, come quickly." I can see Miriam and Jochebed running toward the river as fast as they can travel, right up to the Princess of Egypt she races and asks the question, "Did you want a Hebrew mother to nurse this child." The Princess says, "Yes, if you would like the job, I will pay you wages." If she would have said, "I will give you half the kingdom of Egypt," it wouldn't have meant nearly as much as it meant to be able to hold her own baby boy safe in her arms once again.

Jochebed and Amram must have been real God fearing parents. They only had Moses just a few brief years, possibly until he was 7 or 8 years old. Then he was taken away and from that time on, he was brought up in Pharaoh's palace among all the idolatrous influences of a pagan, sinful nation, but Moses never forgot those years of training with his own Godly parents. The New Testament records this fact in Hebrews 11:24-25, "By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a reason." In Proverbs 1:8, "My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother." Proverbs 23:22, "Despise not thy mother when she is old." The life of Moses is a testimony as to the influence that a Godly home can be upon the life of a young child.

A Godly Mother — A Rebellious Son

In Columbus, Ohio there is a deacon in one of our congregations who tells this story about his life. As a young man he left

the teachings of his Christian home. He began to drink and gamble and travel in a very sinful crowd. Night after night when he would come home after his night of sin and revelry, he would find his dear Christian mother down on her knees in prayer. The very carpet beneath her knees wet with her tears. When he would enter the house, she would arise from her prayer and begin scolding him and calling upon him to repent but he would not. He continued in his reckless way of sinful living. Finally his life of sin brought his mother to a premature death and even after her death, he would not repent. One night he was in a tavern drinking beer and suddenly over the top of his glass, he thought he saw an image of his mother's face. It was as real to him as though she had come back from the dead to haunt him and he was so startled that he took that glass of beer and he slammed it down on the counter, for it seemed as though his mother was shaking her head warning him once again to stop before it was too late. The young man walked out of the tavern and to this day, he has never touched another drop of alcohol. When anyone asks him what it was that caused him to be converted to Christ his answer is always the same, he will say, "It was the influence of my dear Christian mother. I could not get away from her, she followed me beyond the grave."

I am sure that many of you in this audience were blessed by having a Christian mother or a Christian father or both parents being Christian and you know that the one thing that you could do more than anything else to make your parents happy would be to give your life to the Lord Jesus Christ. If you would recognize them certainly your Christian parents would be one of God's stop signs along the road that leads to Hell.

Everyone of you have observed reckless drivers on the highway that will ignore the stop signs and drive right on through endangering their own life and the lives of others and that is exactly the way some people will do as they travel toward Hell. They will simply ignore God's stop signs, but God in His love and mercy has a second stop sign before us as we travel that

broad way that leads towards Hell.

II. God's second stop sign is His own word, the Holy Bible, "a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our pathways." If we would read God's word, God's word would certainly stop us from going to Hell. In II Timothy 3:14-17 the Bible says, "But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."

I Can't Understand the Bible

But, here is the big problem, you can't get most people to read the Bible. Their excuse is universal. I can't understand the Bible. How many times have you make that remark? Oh, I believe in reading the Bible and I would like to read it if I could only understand it. Now you know why most people don't understand the Bible? It is because of their atrocious reading habits. Now you can tell me if this is not true. Most people never read the Bible until they get into trouble and it's only after trouble has come that they get the Bible out, conscience stricken, and they say, "Oh, I just know I have been having all of this bad luck because I haven't been reading the Bible. Now I am just sure if I start reading the Bible my luck will change and things will get better. So I guess the thing to do is to just read it from start to finish." Most folks start reading with Genesis and they get along remarkably well reading through Genesis, it is easy reading, all about how God created the heavens and the earth, Adam and Eve, all about Abraham, Moses, and so forth, it is really interesting just one story after another. Then they get over into the second book, Exodus and start reading about

Jewish worship and about how God gave the Jews the plans for the building of the tabernacle and the different articles of furniture that are to go into the tabernacle and the various altars and sacrifices, and not understanding Jewish worship, most people stop right there without even completing the second book of the Bible and they close it and say, "Well, the Bible is a very difficult book to understand, if I could just understand, if I could just understand it, I would read it but I don't know what this tabernacle is and all of these altars and offerings and everything else." So they put the Bible in the bookcase to collect dust or maybe they lay it out on the coffee table for good looks whenever the preacher calls and they forget about it.

More Troubles

Four or five years go by and then there is trouble. Once again, conscience stricken, they get the Bible out and shed a few tears and say, "Oh me, if I had just been reading the Bible why these terrible things wouldn't have happened. What am I going to do? I couldn't understand the Old Testament, I have heard folks say that the New Testament is easier to understand. I believe that I will try reading the New Testament this time." They start in Matthew 1 and they start reading, "Abraham begat Isaac; Isaac begat Jacob; Jacob begat Judas; Judas begat Phares;" begat, begat, begat, begat, begat. They wonder what in the world is it all about and without even completing the first chapter, they close the Bible and say, "Boy, I am telling you the Bible is too difficult to understand for me to read it, that is all there is to it."

Illness Comes

They put the Bible up and forget about it and four or five years go by and all at once there is an unexpected illness and they wind up in the hospital and conscience stricken they say,

“Oh I have just got to read the Bible. Would you please bring my Bible to the hospital.” Somebody brings the Bible up and they get it out and they say, “Oh blessed book, if I had only been reading this wonderful book of God, I wouldn’t be in all of this trouble. But I don’t know what to do, I have read the Old Testament and I have read the New Testament, I don’t understand any of it. I think this time what I will do is just poke my finger in and wherever it comes open I will read it and maybe I will get some kind of good out of it.” They poke their finger in and it opens to Ezekiel and they start reading here about a valley of dry bones. After reading about this valley of dry bones and the army of bones, they close the Bible and say, “Did you ever read anything more weird than that? I tell you I have tried to read the Bible and I just can’t understand it.”

Death Comes

Again, they forget the Bible and four or five years go by and there is a death in the family and this time they are really conscience stricken and they get the Bible out and say, “Oh me, I have got to read the Bible. Just look at what’s happened now. What am I going to do, I have tried reading the Old Testament and I have tried reading the New Testament and I can’t get any good out of it. I think this time I am going to read from the back to the front and maybe I will get something out of it.” So they started reading in Revelation about seven angels, and seven seals, and seven vials, and seven thunders, about 666, and the Battle of Armageddon, and after reading some of those things, they close the Bible and say, “Well, there you have it, I have tried it from generations to revolutions, I just don’t get it.”

Now isn’t that about the truth, that is just about the way that most folks read the Bible and then claim they can’t understand it. Say, you wouldn’t understand any ordinary dime store novel if you read it that way. Suppose you picked up just the cheapest novel and read maybe a chapter and a half and then

forgot about it for five years. Then you picked it up and read a half a page of the middle chapter and closed it for five years. Then picked it up and read two or three lines of the last chapter. Do you think you would get any good out of it? Certainly not! How can you expect to gain any good out of God's word if we read it like that.

Dear friends, if we would pick up God's word everyday and read it reverently and prayerfully asking God to show us His will to guide us and to teach us, we would understand the Bible, but not all of it. The wisest man who ever lived never understood all of God's word, but you know I am like Mark Twain on that point. I don't really worry about the parts of the Bible that I don't understand, I'm worried about the parts that I do understand. There is so much of the Bible that we can understand and that we do understand and we need to be applying those parts of the Bible to our lives.

Faith

Now maybe you don't understand Jewish worship, but why worry about it? We aren't living under the Old Testament dispensation anyway. You do understand that you must put your faith in God, those scriptures are quite clear. Why don't you trust God, why don't you believe God's word; why don't you accept the Lord Jesus by faith and start obeying those scriptures and forget about the Jewish worship that you don't understand?

Repentance

Maybe you don't understand the purpose of the genealogies in the scriptures as they are found in the first chapter of Matthew, but you do understand God's word when it says, "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish" so why don't you obey what you do understand and repent of your sins and quit worry-

ing about the genealogies that you don't understand.

Confession

Maybe you don't understand Ezekiel and the valley of dry bones, but you do understand the Lord Jesus when he says, "If you will confess my name before men I will confess your name before my Father which is in Heaven." Why don't you come and publicly confess Jesus' name and quit worrying about the valley of dry bones.

Baptism

Maybe you don't understand Revelation with all of its symbols and prophecies of the future, but you do understand the Lord Jesus when he says, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." Why don't you come and obey Christ and be baptized and let Him forgive your sins that you might be saved and quit worrying about something in Revelation that you don't understand. In Hebrews 4:12 we read, "For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."

If we would read God's word, it would stop us from going to Hell. But just as there are those who will recklessly ignore the Christian home and proceed on down the broad way toward Hell, so there are those who will recklessly ignore God's word and continue speeding on toward Hell.

III. Because of God's love and mercy, He has a third stop sign on the way that leads to Hell and God's stop sign is the preaching of the Gospel.

Notice that I didn't say the preacher was God's stop sign, but the preaching of the Gospel, that is the important thing. "I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ for it is the power of

God unto salvation to everyone that believeth to the Jew first and also to the Greek." Romans 1:16. This is the big problem in our modern age of 1973, there are too many preachers who are not preaching the Gospel.

Preaching the Reader's Digest

I was holding a revival meeting in Buchanan, Michigan and I visited a lady and I invited her out to the revival and she said, "No thank you, I will not come." I said, "Why not?" She replied, "Because preachers don't preach the Gospel." Now I said, "Wait a minute, some preachers don't preach the Gospel, but that is the very thing that we are preaching in this meeting." She said, "I will attend one night and see if you are telling the truth." I asked her, "Why are you so skeptical? What does your preacher preach?" She said, "The Reader's Digest! I can read the Reader's Digest and understand it myself, and when I go to church I don't want to hear an article review out of the Reader's Digest, I want to hear God's word." I told her, "You come, that is what we are preaching, the word of God." She attended that night and when the invitation was given she came forward and accepted Jesus and was baptized. I was surprised because I had understood she was a member of one of the big denominations in town. So when the service was over I went up and congratulated her and said, "Tell me, didn't you say you were a member of _____" and she said, "Yes." I asked her, "Didn't they ask you to accept Jesus, didn't they ask you to be baptized when you became a member?" Her only reply was, "No." I said, "What did you do?" She said, "Oh, we just told the preacher we wanted to be a member and he wrote our name down on the book and that was all there was to it." "Well," I said, "If he preaches out of the Reader's Digest, I guess that would be as good of a way as any to become a member." Now imagine, that is what she heard where she was going to church.

Preaching Politics

I was in Pauls Valley, Oklahoma and I invited a man to come to church and he said, "No thank you." When I asked him why not, he said, "Because preachers don't preach the Bible." I said, "What does your preacher preach?" He answered, "Politics, and I am sick of it!" I told him, "Well, come to the revival, we are preaching the word of God." I will never forget it, that man came that night and he shook my hand going out the door and he said, "It's the first message from the Bible that I have heard in over six years."

Preaching on the Texaco Strike

I was in Lawrenceville, Illinois holding a revival meeting and found out one of the doctors was not attending church, so I visited him and invited him to come to the meeting. He said, "No, I'm not interested." I said, "Doctor, why have you stopped going to church?" He answered, "Well, I'll tell you. When I go to church, I want to hear the Bible and our preacher doesn't preach the Bible." I asked him, "What does he preach?" He said, "Well you know we have a Texaco refinery plant here in Lawrenceville? Well, a few weeks ago the plant went on strike. Our preacher got up and for three solid Sundays he preached on the labor side of the strike. Then the next three Sundays he preached on the management side of the strike. Since our congregation is about equally divided into labor and management, why after the sixth sermon, our church split. Now I hear about the strike all week long and when I go to church on Sunday, I don't want to hear about the Texaco strike. I want to hear a message from God's word." I said, "Doctor, that is exactly what the Christian Church or Church of Christ believes. We preach God's word. If you come that is what you will hear." The doctor came and this was at a time that we were getting ready to leave for Australia. Before that meeting was over,

the doctor made a generous contribution toward our mission to Australia, simply upon the basis that we were going to preach God's word.

Christian Church Preachers Believe the Bible

I have the feeling that most members of the Christian Church or Church of Christ do not appreciate how wonderfully we have been blessed by having ministers who believe and preach the word of God. Isn't it wonderful that you don't have to question whether your preacher believes that God is alive or that Jesus Christ is really the son of God. According to "Christianity Today", October 13, 1967, Western Reserve sociologist, Jeffery Hadden contacted ten thousand protestant clergymen in the United States asking what they believed. Of the ten thousand enquiries that he mailed out, he got 7,441 replies. One of the questions that the ministers were asked was this, "Do you believe in Jesus' physical resurrection from the grave?" 51% said "No". Another question, "Do you believe in the virgin birth of Jesus as a biblical miracle?" 60% said "No". Another Question, "Do you believe in Satan and the existence of demoniac powers?" 62% said no. Perhaps the most revealing and alarming result of the poll, "Do you believe the Bible is the inspired word of God?" 82% said no.

I don't think we realize in the Christian brotherhood how blessed we are to have ministers that believe God's word and that preach God's word. You never have to ask of a minister in the Christian Church or Church of Christ, does he believe the Bible, does he really believe that God is alive, does he really believe Jesus rose from the dead, does he really believe in the vicarious death of Christ? All of our ministers we know believe these things and preach God's word but the rest of our religious neighbors have not been so fortunate as we. We must realize that this terrible scourge of atheism in the pulpit is sweeping our

land. We have so many preachers that preach everything on earth except the Bible and that is not going to save anybody's soul. We must preach God's word! I realize it's not the most popular thing.

The Lady Who Didn't Like My Preaching

There was one lady who went out the door one night, and she almost gnashed her teeth right in my face. She was really upset, she said, "I don't like your preaching at all." I said, "Well, I'm sorry, what did I say that was wrong?" She answered, "You upset me, that's what is wrong." I said, "How did I upset you?" She said, "You called me a sinner, and you have got me so upset I won't be able to sleep tonight without taking two or three tranquilizers. You told me I was going to go to Hell. I am so upset, why, I am even scared to even step outside this building." I said, "What would you like me to preach?" She said, "Something soothing if you don't mind." I realized the preaching of God's word is not always the most popular thing.

When we preach the Gospel, we do remind men and women, boys and girls that they are sinners and when we preach the Gospel, we remind them that there is a burning Hell where sinners will go and when we preach the Gospel we do preach the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ and we do preach that there is a Heaven where we can go if we will let Jesus save us from our sins. Some of those things are quite upsetting to people who are not willing to yield to the Lord Jesus Christ. There are many who will ignore the Gospel preaching and they will speed right on towards Hell, but God in His love and mercy has given one last stop sign on the road that leads to Hell.

IV. God's final stop sign is His own Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. He died for you. You say, "Well, I have seen pictures like that before", maybe you have, but if you haven't done

something about it you need to look at it again. I want you to take a good long look at God's last stop sign for this is the one who loved you and gave himself for you and beyond this there is no other stop sign. The word of God describes Jesus in this language found in Isaiah 53:3-6, "He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." Think how the Son of God suffered for you; a crown of thorns was smashed down upon His head and the blood came trickling down His face, nails were driven through both hands and feet and the blood drained from His wounds and stained the ground below. In great agony the Son of God hung there for six long hours suffering just for you, that He might stop you from going to Hell and save you and take you to a beautiful home in Heaven.

The Boy Who Started a Night Club

I read the story about a young man who wanted to get rich. He decided to open up a night club. His Christian father was broken hearted and he said, "Son don't do it. You will be sending your own soul to Hell and every customer will be going to Hell and it will be your fault." The young man said, "Dad, the people are going to blow their money and I might as well get it as the next fellow." He went ahead with his plans. He rented a hall, he engaged a dance band, he put out his advertising. Opening night came, but at 8:00 pm when the doors were opened, not

one person entered. 8:15 pm came around and still there were no customers. The dance band was getting nervous and they were saying, "Where are the people?" The man could not understand it because he fully expected his place to be packed and so he finally decided to go outside to see if he could figure out what was wrong. Perhaps you can imagine his shock, his surprise when he stepped outside the door and saw his own father blocking the entrance to the parking lot. With his own ears he heard his father say to a whole car load of people, "Sorry folks, this joint will not open, drive on." The young man was so enraged that he rushed out there and he grabbed his father and choked him, and he beat him with his fists, and knocked him down and stomped upon him and fortunately someone restrained him or he would probably have killed his father. Being restrained, he gradually came back to his senses, a crowd had gathered. He began to apologize and he said, "Folks, this crazy idiot was driving away all of my customers. I'm sorry, please come on inside, the first drinks will be on the house." While he was busy apologizing, his poor old dad struggled to his feet and got over by the door way and he fell across the door way blocking it with his own body and then he raised himself up with one hand and he held his other hand up that was all scratched and bruised and bleeding from the beating his son had given him and he cried, "Stop, oh stop, please stop. Don't enter this place. If anybody wants to go in there, I'm going to make you walk across my body." For that is how much he loved his son.

Christ Blockades the Way

The Lord Jesus Christ has loved you with that same great love. So great is His love that He has placed His own body as the last stop sign, the final barricade on the road that leads to Hell. If you go to Hell, you have got to walk across the bruised, the bleeding body of Jesus because He has placed Himself there

upon the cross to try and stop you and save you.

Let us bow our heads and pray. Our Father, we do thank thee for thy great love and we thank thee for Jesus for His willingness to suffer, to bleed, to die, to save us. We pray for those in this audience who do need to accept Jesus as personal savior. We pray for those who need to repent of their sins for those who need to be buried in baptism and have their sins forgiven. We do pray that they will make up their mind and come to Jesus now while there is time and before it is too late. We pray for those who need to transfer their membership and make their church home here where they live and be faithful to thee, praying they will come tonight and make that decision. For we ask this in Jesus' name, Amen.

Russell Martin, Charles De Vore, and A.B. Mc Reynolds shared ideas for this message.

Reggie always used large stop signs with a picture on each illustrating the 4 main points of the sermon.

Why Be a Christian?

Tonight I want to preach to you on the question, "Why be a Christian?" Many years ago when I was a student at the Cincinnati Bible Seminary I remember a wonderful minister who came to lecture to us. He made a great impression upon my life. He had just retired from 25 years of ministry in Columbus, Ohio and he was touring our Bible Colleges to give the young ministerial recruits the benefit of his years of experience. One of the things that Brother Walker said that I shall never forget was this, "If I had my life for Christ to live again I would not change any major decisions because I never made a decision without praying about it; without asking God to guide me to know His will and to do His will. Therefore every decision of my life was just what God wanted me to do and I am happy with my life. I wouldn't change anything if I had it all to live over again." I was 18 years old at the time and I was utterly amazed that an 80 year old man could say he wouldn't change anything because as an 18 year old I could already think of many things in my own life that I would change if I could live it over again. I thought, how could a man 80 say that he wouldn't change anything. I pondered that for several days before I really realized what he had said. Christ is the one who makes all the difference. If we

are living for Christ certainly there are no regrets. The Christian life is the life that is lived for Christ and in Christ and consequently can be lifted up before the rest of the world as an example. For there in the life that God has redeemed and blessed and regenerated is something that the rest of the world cannot possibly reproduce.

In Deuteronomy 33:27-29, "The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms: and he shall thrust out the enemy before thee; and shall say, Destroy them. Israel then shall dwell in safety alone: the fountain of Jacob shall be upon a land of corn and wine; also his heavens shall drop down dew. Happy are thou, O Israel: who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord."

To me that is a very daring question, in fact it is a most vast and sweeping claim. "Who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord." What I propose to do this evening is to suggest several specific ways in which the Christian life is better than any other life and if I can show you several specific ways that the Christian life is better than any other life then I think that that might surely answer the question, "Why Be A Christian?"

II. In the first place, I am prepared to maintain that the Christian life is happier than any other life. I can almost imagine that some of you are ready to challenge me on that point. "Happier", you say, "to be a Christian, why I always thought of the Christian life as a cramping, restricting, forbidding sort of life. Why if you are Christian it is, don't do this and don't do that, and don't go here or there, look out you are liable to commit a sin." Then for proof of it some of you will look around in the church and pick out some poor miserable hypocrite and you will say, "Look at old so and so, he or she is supposed to be a worthy Christian and did you ever see anybody more miserable in all of your life?"

Now that argument that is used so often against Christ reminds me of something else that happened while I was a student at Bible College. I was preaching in a country church at a

quaint little village called Sugar Tree Ridge, Ohio, and that is getting pretty far back in the sticks, some of God's greatest Saints live at Sugar Tree Ridge, Ohio and I will never forget them. It was quite a drive out in the country and then there was a lady who lived on outside of Sugar Tree Ridge and that really was sure enough getting out in the country. When television first came out we could get nothing out at Sugar Tree Ridge because that was too far away from Cincinnati. All that we knew about TV was what we heard about it from the people who went in to Cincinnati. This one lady who lived on out in the country, she was really a TV bug, that is all that she could think about, it is all that she could talk about. Everybody that went to Cincinnati was questioned by this lady upon their return, "Well tell me what it's like," she would ask. Some of the people came back and said, "Well watching TV is just like looking at a picture that comes out of a great big rectangular metal box." Then other people came from Cincinnati and she questioned them and they said, "Watching TV is like looking at a picture through a large round glass window in a metal box." Then other people came out of Cincinnati and said, "Watching TV is like looking at black wavy lines flashing in front of your eyes." Then some people came and said, "No, no, watching TV is like looking at the snow falling, in fact you have never seen so much snow in all of your life."

Well you can imagine what a distorted idea this poor old lady had of TV after hearing all of the different opinions as expressed by the various people who went down to the city and saw it. She could hardly wait for the day to come when she would be able to make the trip to Cincinnati to see with her own eyes TV. Well the day finally came and when she arrived at the bus depot in downtown Cincinnati she hopped off of that bus and started running down the street trying to find the nearest TV shop. In her mad search she suddenly screeched to a halt in front of one of the modern laundry mats that had just gone in, now that's back when those things first came out and having

never seen one before she stopped and stared in the door and clapped her hands for joy and said, "Oh boy, at last this is it, I am going to get to see TV." And she ran inside and stood directly in front of one of those washing machines that was madly swishing clothes around and she said, "This has got to be it because it is a great big metal rectangular box just like they told me, but where is the picture." Then she started looking at that machine more closely and she said, "There is the round glass that they mentioned, I have got to look through that glass to see the picture. But where is the picture?" About then a pair of overalls swished past the door and she said, "My, my, look at all of those black wavy lines. Well it is just like they told me, they described it right. But I just don't see the picture. Where is the picture." She kept looking and those suds were really working up a lather and she said, "My, my look at it snow, did you ever see so much snow in all of your life, but where is the picture," After standing there for about 10 minutes she whirled around and stamped out of the place in disgust and said, "Well, all I have got to say is if that is TV you can keep it." But of course she hadn't even seen TV.

That is exactly the way that a lot of people judge Christianity. They will look around in the church and pick out one of the poorest members, someone who gripes about everything, someone who goes around like an old grouchy bear (you know there is always a member in every church who acts like he was baptized in dill pickle juice) and that is the very one they will pick out and say, "Look at him, he is supposed to be a Christian, why if he is a Christian, I don't want anything to do with Christianity." It is really too bad that such an argument as this can be used against the Lord Jesus Christ. There are those who profess to serve Jesus and yet by the joylessness and dreariness of their religion they are betraying Christ. This was the very idea that Francis Thompson had when he stated that, "Christianity was a prison house and that Jesus Christ was the master kill-joy of the universe." In his own wild words said, "I fled him down the

nights and down the days and through the arches of the years, I hid from Him under running laughter.” Then Thompson made known the reason for his flight from Christ. He said, “For I was so a dread that lest having Him I might have not else besides.” There are thousands today standing away from Jesus for the very same reason. What we long to say to these people is this, “Don’t be put off from Christ by these miserable characters of Christianity but come and stand with Jesus. Come and stand by His side like Peter and John and Andrew and the other apostles. Come and walk with Jesus, come and live with Jesus and you will find out that to live with Jesus is to live the very happiest life that you could ever possibly live. And I can prove it I think, you see Christianity eliminates the three greatest enemies to our happiness. The three greatest enemies to our happiness are worry, boredom, and self-centeredness.

Think of the multitudes in the world today who are miserable because of worry. There is always something to worry about if you are going to worry. Some people worry that they are going to run out of money. I heard about one fellow who kept one hundred thousand dollars in one dollar bills hidden in a wall safe in his house just in case that he might run out of money, he would have it there for reserve. That didn’t end his worries because then he was worried that somebody would break in the safe and steal the money. There is always something to worry about. Some people worry that they are going to be killed in an airplane wreck and others worry they will be killed in a car wreck and some people worry that they might not die that they might live too long. There is always something to worry about if you are going to worry.

Then think of the people who are bored and there are thousands and millions who are bored to tears. I have had people say to me, “Could you think of something that I might do to keep myself occupied because I am simply bored to tears.”

Then self-centeredness, well you know the type who always is thinking about themselves, nobody else, it’s just my little

aches and pains and my problems. That type of a person will always be very unhappy.

Now notice with me how the Lord Jesus eliminates these three enemies to our happiness. First of all worry. No true Christian is going to spend his time worrying. Christ takes away our worries. Now you say, "Well don't we have to worry about dying", no not if we are a Christian because Jesus said, "Whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?" I tell you I am sure that the communists will never get me, I don't worry about it because if I die physically I will go right on living forever with Christ. "Whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die." Christ takes away the worry of death. Some of you say look there is a lot of other things to worry about besides dying. Don't we have to worry if we live; what about food? Why the way prices keep going up, isn't that something to worry about? What about clothing and shelter and education and our job and money, aren't all these things real worries. Not to the Christian. In Matthew 6:33 Jesus said, "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you." And the other things that Jesus spoke about were these very things that worry people; food, clothing, shelter, jobs, education, money. Jesus said, "Look at the birds of the air, God takes care of them aren't you worth more than a sparrow. Look at the lilies of the field, how God clothes them and takes care of them, beautifully. Aren't you worth much more than a flower that is here today and gone tomorrow. Seek ye first the kingdom of God and all these other things shall be added unto you." Notice that God promises to provide for our needs not our wants but our needs. You may want a brand new Cadillac but you don't need it, you can get by just as well on a Pinto. You may want a new fur coat but you don't need it you can get by just as well on a cotton coat. So God has not promised our wants but our needs and that eliminates worry.

What about boredom? Well I have never known of a Chris-

tian to be bored. Every Christian that I have ever known in my entire life would say I wish that there were 48 hours in the day instead of just 24 because there is not enough time to get anything done. I need more time to read the Bible, more time to pray, more time to work with the youth program in the church, there is always something to do. There is never an opportunity to be bored in the service of Jesus Christ. Did you ever notice one of the disciples of Christ being bored, no you never did. Sometimes the disciples were amazed, sometimes they were frightened, sometimes they were angry, but never once were they bored. Jesus was a thrilling companion to them and just as He was to them He will be to you if you will walk with Him and serve Him everyday.

What about self-centeredness. The moment we become a Christian self-centeredness is gone. I saw the most dramatic illustration of this back in 1971. Our team went all the way around the world that year in evangelistic meetings and our last meeting before coming back home was in Japan. We were working with Bill and Betty Turner, missionaries near Osaka, and they had decided that we were going to do beach evangelism. This was something that I had never heard of before but I love the beach, I love to go swimming and when they said beach evangelism I said, "Do you mean that we are going down on the shores of the Pacific?" And they said, "Yes", and I said, "Well that is fine with me." And so we did, we went down along the beach where the Japanese people were swimming and we had our bathing suits on, we didn't do much swimming but we sang and we preached to the people who were out swimming, it was really a novel experience. While we were there witnessing to the Japanese who were along the beach I noticed an elderly lady. I later found out she was 96 years old, she was totally blind and she was being guided along by some teenagers and they were Christians. I recognized the teenagers and so I inquired about the old lady and found out that she was not a Christian. So I went up to this old Japanese lady and I

spoke to her about Jesus and asked her if she would accept Him as her Savior and the old lady said, "Well I would like to but I can't." And I said, "Why not?" She said, "Well, you don't understand. I'm too old, too feeble, I'm blind, I can't get out there in the water and be baptized or anything like that, I just can't do it." And I said to the old Japanese lady, "Now you are worrying for nothing. If that is the only problem why although you can't see him I have one of my sons here with me and he is bigger than I am. I tell you what we will do, my son and I will pick you up and we will carry you out in the water and we will baptize you and then we will even carry you back up the hill to the hospital where you stay and it will not require any effort on your part whatsoever. You will be alright." Well she stood there for a moment and didn't say anything and then all at once she said, "I'm ready." And I said, "You mean right now." She said, "Yes." She was wearing a beautiful Japanese kimono and I could hardly imagine that she would be willing to get that beautiful kimono all wet with salt water but she said, "I am ready." So I called to my son Tony and he came over and we picked her up, she was light as a feather, probably didn't weigh 80 pounds, and we carried her out in the water and Bill Turner the missionary baptized her. Then Tony and I carried her back up to the hospital where she stayed. The next day the Japanese teenagers came to the Turners' house and they were bubbling over with excitement and they said, "Guess what." And I said, "What?" And they said, "You know that old blind Japanese lady that we brought down there to the beach yesterday that was baptized?" And I said, "Yes." They said, "You know we have been going up there to the hospital everyday for the past several months to take her on a walk." And I said, "Yes, I heard that. It is a very good thing that you have been doing." And they said, "Yes, but we didn't want to go. It just really took all of our courage to go up there everyday and face her." And I said, "Why?" They said, "Because she gripes so much. Everyday when we go up there it was just gripe, gripe, gripe, from the time

we got there to the time we would leave her.” She said, “Oh, my legs hurt so much, my joints ache so bad, I just feel so terrible, Oh will you pray for me?” They said, “That is just the way that she complained the whole time, we have gone through that everyday. But today it was different, we went up there and she was smiling and she said, ‘Pray for this one and pray for that one’, she started naming different ones there in the hospital and she started asking us to go see different people and to tell these people about Jesus. It was all joy, she never once complained and she didn’t even ask us to pray for her. It was all just about other people; we are so excited, what has happened?” Well I knew right away what had happened. When Christ came into her heart self-centeredness had gone out. She had lost her self-centeredness and so she had found joy in thinking about others that might be helped as she had been helped. When we become a Christian that is the way that it is, we get concerned about others, we sing, “Others, Others, I Want to Win Others to Jesus”, and even when we kneel to pray we pray for others.

So with worry eliminated and boredom eliminated and with self-centeredness eliminated for the happiness for the life, “Who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord.”

II. But in the second place I want to say that the Christian life is holier than any other life. Now when I say that, I imagine that I get some opposition just like I did when I said happier. “Holier,” you say, “I don’t like that word.” Why is it that people have little liking for the word holier? I believe it is because the word has been so misused.

When you think of someone being holier what do you think of? Probably the Pharisee who went into the temple and prayed with himself, bragging about all of his good points, looking off the end of his nose at the publican and thanking God that he was not like that miserable sinful publican. And you say that is one thing that I never want to be, I don’t want to be one of those holier than thou Pharisees. I don’t want to think of myself more highly than I ought to think. I don’t want to be like that

old man that I heard about one time.

I am sure that all of you have heard this story about the old man who was always bragging about his holiness. Yes, he bragged that he had the Spirit, that he had the second work, that he was really sanctified, and that he had gone so far that he was above sin and beyond sin, he couldn't even be tempted to sin. But the neighbors who watched him everyday didn't feel that way about it and they really tired of his constant bragging about his personal goodness. One day the old man went out to milk his cow and some of the neighbors had noticed that the cow was quite frisky and they thought there might be trouble. So the word was passed from neighbor to neighbor and soon a small crowd had gathered quietly and they peeped over the fence to watch the old man. He hadn't milked more than a minute or two until the cow kicked the bucket over and he said, "Thou knowest that I am a Christian and that I will not lose my temper." He sat down on the milk stool and put the bucket under the cow and started milking again. Well in a few moments that cow kicked the bucket over a second time and the old man jumped up and his face was red and hot and he said, "Thou knowest that I am a holy man, and that I will not take the name of my God in vain." He sat down on the milk stool and put the bucket under the cow a third time. In a few minutes that cow kicked again and knocked the bucket over and banged the old man against the barn door. This time he jumped up and grabbed a 2×4 and he waved it in front of the cow and said, "Thou knowest that I am a holy man and that I will not take this board and smite thee but one thing thou doest not know, this Friday night I will take thee to the sale and sell thee to a sinner who will beat the tar out of thee."

And so when I ask do you want to be holier, you say God forbid. I would never want to be like that. Wait a minute my friends, that is a total misuse of the word. The word holy carries the idea of wholesomeness of character. It speaks of the inward health of an individual. A holy person would be a Christian, a

person with healthy instincts, healthy emotions, a healthy appetite. The modern day psychologist says that man needs an integrated personality. Well I don't know but what that is correct, isn't it the greatest need of all of us. Why was the Lord Jesus called the great physician if not because He and He alone can give us the inward health of character that we need and Christ can do this by providing our lives with a new purpose all summed up in, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God." Then he provides us with new power to carry out that purpose. The power of the Holy Spirit who we receive when we repent and are baptized into Christ according to Acts 2:38. So with the Holy Spirit in our lives we can have emotional help, moral help, spiritual help, and thus for the holiness of the life, "Who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord."

III. Then I also want to maintain tonight that the Christian life is more hopeful than any other life that you might live. Any other life that you can think of is bounded by the confines of this little world. While the Christian life has all of the windows open toward immortality. If we are living for Jesus we are going to go right on living forever. Christianity sweeps away the horror of the darkness of death.

Three times our team has been privileged to go to India with the Gospel of Christ. I think out of all of the countries of the world where we have been privileged to proclaim God's Word, India is the country that would challenge me most. For one thing it has the most people, only exceeded by China, 800 million people live in India. That is so many people that when you stop to think about it in comparison to the total population of the world that means that one out of every seven people is an Indian, think about that, 800 million people crowded together in $\frac{1}{3}$ the space of the United States. We don't know what crowds are, you can't imagine the population of India, you have to see it to believe it and most of them are hungry and many are starving to death. India is a sad place to go to not only because of the physical hunger but because of the spiritual poverty of

the people. Now it is not that the people of India are not religious they are very religious. They believe in thousands of gods, they are always worshiping. All of the animals are gods. You have heard how they worship the cows, and it is true. Here they are starving to death and millions of cows are around everywhere, cows cluttering up their front yards and back yards and all the streets, you can hardly even drive down a street in an automobile because of the cows. They are gods, they wouldn't think of killing a cow or any other animal or not even bugs, they are all sacred. They worship every kind of idol that you can think of. So they are very religious but they are without hope. The gods that they worship can't hear them, they can't help them, they can't give them life after death. The best hope that a Hindu has is that after death he might be reincarnated and come back to this world as a cow. Now you tell me what kind of a hope that is. If they are a bad Hindu and don't live up to the Hindu religion then they fear that they will come back as a donkey or worse than that as a pig, and that is the very worst thing that they can think of. Now how would you like to have a religion like that, what kind of a hope would that be? Oh it was wonderful to preach to these people and tell them about the true God, the God who loves us, the God who lives, the God who can hear us when we pray, the God who answers our prayers, and the God who can give us eternal life in heaven.

The first time we went to India we were privileged to work with the Bernel Getter family. The Getters have been in India for 25 years. They love the Indian people. For all practical purposes they have become Indians that they might win India to Christ. During the 25 years that they have been in India they have had three brief furloughs, can you imagine it. All seven of their children were born in India, raised in India, and the eldest son died in India. That death occurred just shortly before we went there the first time and so of course it was a sad time for us to be in the Getter household. Everyday they were talking about Kenneth, their oldest son, and they would tell us a little more

about the story of his death. It was such a strange accident. He was killed in an accident on the train while going to school. It is such an interesting story but really doesn't have anything to do with the point that I want to make here. The Getters had to go down to the place where the accident was to get the body of Kenneth and it took 18 hours for them to get there. The roads are so horrible in India that you hardly ever can travel by automobile, you must always go by train. They had to go from their home in Bilaspur down to the place where the accident had occurred. All of this time Kenneth's body remained on top of the train with his arm dangling by a window. Nobody offered to help. The Indian people wouldn't help because they were afraid of getting involved with foreigners and there was an American family on board the train and they wouldn't do anything because they were too unconcerned they just didn't want to be bothered. So the body lay there in the hot boiling sun all through the heat of the day for 18 hours. A hospital was within view and the thing that nags the Getters to this moment is the thought if somebody had just helped when the accident first occurred maybe they could have gotten him to the hospital and maybe his life would have been spared but of course by the time that they got there he was dead and the birds had even come and started to peck at the body. Finally someone did throw a sheet over the body. When the Getters got there they had to go get ice and put the body on ice to take it back to Bilaspur for burial.

As the news spread following the death of Kenneth Getter, the Getter family was overwhelmed as the people of India came to pour out their sympathy. The Hindu people came along with the Christians and the Getters said that it was really gratifying to think that after 25 years of ministering to the Indians now at least the Indians when they had the opportunity came to minister to them. They were particularly thrilled at the number of Hindus who came. One Hindu husband and wife who came to offer their sympathy wept and after a long time they said, "Oh, Mr and Mrs Getter, we just don't know how you can

stand it. To think that the flower of your family has been taken away in his youth." Now you have to understand the culture of the Hindu people to know what they meant by that statement. To a Hindu family the oldest son is the all important member of the family, all the hopes of the family rest in that oldest son. So that is what they meant when they said the flower of your family, the oldest son has been snatched away, how can you stand it? And at that point, Mr & Mrs Getter spoke up and they said, "Well, it's hard we won't deny that, our hearts are broken but we can stand it because God loves us and we know that our God has a home in heaven and that is where Kenneth has gone and we know that one of these days we are going to go there and we will see our son again and we will be with our son Kenneth forever and ever and ever." The Hindu mother spoke up and said, "Oh you have such a beautiful religion, I do wish that our Hindu religion would give us a little bit of hope." But of course they have no hope as a Hindu. How wonderful it is as Christians to have hope. Yes, the hope of life everlasting, a home in heaven where we can be with God and with our Christian loved ones forevermore.

I do trust that you know why you should be a Christian. As we come to this invitation I am asking will you make up your mind then that you will be a Christian. You say, "Well what does it require?" Well you make up your mind, you must repent of your sins, are you willing to turn away from the sins of the past? Do you really want to live a Christian life? If you are willing, if you will make up your mind then you should step forward and stand before this congregation to confess publicly that you believe Jesus is the Son of God. Then the minister will baptize you into Christ as Jesus has required and Jesus will wash away your sins. Then you are to arise and live this Christian life; this happy life; this holy life; and this life that is more hopeful than any other.

Shall we bow our heads and pray. Our Father we are thankful for thy love and we are thankful for the love of Jesus.

WHY BE A CHRISTIAN?

We are thankful for His saving Gospel, the Good News of His death, burial, and resurrection. We know that because He lives we can live also eternally. Bless those who need to become a Christian that they will make up their minds and do it right now. Those who need to place their memberships with the Church we pray that they will come. We do pray that no one will put it off but that all will realize now is the time and today is the day and this is the very moment to decide. For we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

After first verse of invitation song:

You know while we were in India there were many people who came up to us and asked if they could be a secret Christian. By saying a secret Christian they meant just that. Could they secretly just believe in their heart and could they secretly be baptized but never let anybody know about it. How would you have answered them? Of course the answer is no, whoever heard of such a thing. You cannot be a secret Christian, that is an utter impossibility. Now in the case of the Hindus it is not that they were ashamed of Jesus, it was that they were afraid of their relatives, and their neighbors, their landlord, their employer, and the government because the government of India is hostile to Christianity. There are many penalties for being a Christian in India; you might lose your job, you might lose your house, you might have to give up your family and be kicked out, you might lose your government subsidy for education if you were a young person; these are some of the penalties that people pay for being a Christian. In America people are not so bold to say could I be a secret Christian but the meaning is there. A lot of people say, "Oh, I am afraid to come and step out in front of everybody and walk down to the front." Well, I suppose that everybody is a little bit fearful when it comes to that moment, I was, everybody that ever became a Christian I imagine was. You can do it if you really want to go to heaven can't you. That is

not a penalty it's a privilege to come and stand before a great audience like this and say, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. Yes, we would hesitate because of shyness but we will do it because we love Jesus. What about it, has shyness held you back, the thought of the crowd. I plead with you don't delay any longer because everyone here who is a Christian has experienced the same thought, the same shyness, the same fear, we are all for you, we are all standing back of you. If you come we will rejoice with you. There is nothing to fear. Even Jesus said, "Fear not." Will you come and surrender your all to Him. What about those of you that are members of the Church some place else. Won't you make up your mind and come tonight and identify in this place, as we sing that third verse. Step right out and come without delay and answer the call of Christ.

Before last verse of invitation song:

What if this were the last verse forever and that you would die before ever having another opportunity. If I came around and asked you tonight do you think that you are going to die, you would say, "Yes, everybody will die someday." But do you think that you will die tonight, you would say, "Oh no not tonight. No it will be some other time, not tonight." I wonder about those 106 who perished in the airplane crash in Switzerland this past week. Do you think they thought they would die at the beginning of the flight? I dare say that not a one of them had such a thought, it might happen to somebody else but not to me. Last week at Dewey, Oklahoma I met a widower and he told me that his wife sat up in bed one morning when the alarm went off, she was thirty years old, she made one gasp and fell back dead. She had not been sick a day. There was no indication that anything was wrong. She died of a heart attack just like that at the age of 30. Will you die tonight? No you say not tonight some other time. Do you intend to become a Christian before you die and you say, "Oh yes I will do it some other time." But my friends the Bible says now is the time.

WHY BE A CHRISTIAN?

Will you accept the Lord Jesus Christ's invitation right now. He is appealing to you to come to Him. If you will come and obey he will forgive all of your sins. Will you do it right now as we sing this last verse?

The Place Called Calvary

In Luke 23:33 we read:

And when they were come to the place, which is called Calvary, there they crucified him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left.

The Preacher's Holy Land Trip

The preacher of a tremendously wealthy church came almost to the point of a nervous breakdown. He had worked terrifically hard. The calls on him were many, there had been an epidemic of illness in the city. Many of the members were in the hospital, some of them were dying. The preacher had been on the go day and night.

He had served this congregation for more than 12 years, and the people loved him to a fault. They were concerned about him. Some of the leaders realized if they didn't do something to help him, he might die. It seemed like a vacation was an absolute necessity, but when it was mentioned, the preacher refused. So there was a special called meeting of the Board. After a consultation with the doctor, they found out that an extended

vacation was necessary.

In another special called board meeting, they decided to recommend to the church that an offering be received to send the preacher to the Holy Land. I suppose every preacher has a desire in his heart to someday be able to go to Israel and walk where Jesus walked. The preacher was very pleased to find out what was decided. The day for the offering arrived, and since the congregation was very large and the members were wealthy, enough money was received to send both he and his wife with first class accommodations to the Holy Land.

One of the best deacons in the church owned a camera shop and he gave the preacher a Bell and Howell 16mm camera, together with thousands of feet of film, so he could record everything that they saw on the trip. It was really a generous gift that this man made, and it brought him real joy because he loved his preacher very much.

The trip was made, and in a few short months, the preacher came home with his wife and was able to resume his ministry. He was refreshed, invigorated, bold and brave, just like he had always been.

Then one Sunday morning he announced that the following Wednesday night there was to be an all-church supper in the Fellowship Hall. Following the supper, he would show his movie films of the trip he made on the journey to the Holy Land.

Wednesday night came, and the Fellowship Hall was jammed packed and was filled way beyond capacity. Nearly all the members turned out along with friends from the community. After the sumptuous meal, the auditorium was darkened and the motion picture began to unreel scenes. First it showed the preacher and his wife standing on the parsonage steps waving good-bye to everybody. Next, it showed them in New York City among the sky scrapers, and then they were on the ship, plowing across the Atlantic Ocean. Next, it showed them on the streets of London and then they were going across the British Channel into Europe on down to Paris, on down to the Mediterranean.

At last there were the scenes from the Holy Lands.

Scenes of Palestine, Joppa, Haifa, Mt Carmel, the Sea of Galilee, Nazareth, on down to the Dead Sea, and back up to Bethlehem. Finally the streets of Jerusalem. All of a sudden in the darkened auditorium, a man's hoarse voice called out these passionate words, "And now preacher, show us Calvary." I believe that consciously or unconsciously that is the cry of the whole world. Everywhere people are saying, "show us Calvary."

No Place Like Calvary

In every state of the Union there are historical places. In the great state of Illinois there are places you love to take your visiting friends. In our lives, there are those places that tug at the heart's strings. The place where we were born, the place where we courted and obtained our life's partner, the place where our children were born, and for everyone of us there is that silent city of the dead; the cemetery where we've laid our loved ones to rest. All of these are precious places that we like to revisit in life's memory lane, but there is no place that compares with Calvary.

I. Why is it that Calvary is such a wondrous place? First of all, because it is a place of pain.

(A) *Real physical pain.* How many of you have ever run a sliver of wood into your finger between the nail down into the quick? I am sure that an accident like that has happened to you on more than one occasion, and you have experienced real physical pain at such times. How many of you have jammed one of your fingers in the door of an automobile. That has happened to me several times, in fact one time I jammed my finger so bad that I lost the nail and I thought I was going to lose the whole end of the finger. I'll never forget the pain I suffered because of that accident. How many of you have ever had a nail driven through your hand? When I was 17 years old, I did not

have a nail driven through my hand, but I had a knife driven through my right hand and it is scarred on both sides and I cannot fully open the hand and lost all the feelings on one side of my finger. Those are the reminders I have till this day and I shall never forget the pain. How many of you have been whipped? With a cruel whip that would bind into your back until your flesh became like bloody stripes of human flesh? If any of these things have ever happened to you, then you understand just a little bit of the physical pain that Jesus Christ endured there at a place called Calvary.

(B) *There was not only the physical pain of Calvary, but also the pain of loneliness.* As Jesus Christ hung there on the cross, He realized all of His friends had deserted Him, His disciples had forsaken Him, and even the four women and one man who stayed there so long at the side of the cross, left Him at His command when He sent them home. So when Jesus came to the end, He was truly all alone. No one was by His side to wipe the death sweat from His brow. No one was present to apply healing ointment to His many wounds. No one was even there to shoo away the Blue Bottle Syrian Flies that came to torment Him. The loneliness of Calvary was heart rending.

(C) *There was also the pain of misunderstanding.* For it seems like no one in the whole world understood why Jesus had come. His mother and step father did not even understand. His half brothers and half sisters certainly did not understand, they thought He was demented. His enemies did not understand, they thought He was competition for their King. And His friends did not understand, even they expected Him to ascend an earthly throne and that they would be given important positions and thus they would cash in from being His followers. Everywhere people misunderstood.

(D) *But greater than the pain of all this was the pain of God's wrath.*

For the scripture teaches us that, "He who knew no sin became sin for us." I tell you the truth, my little mind can hard-

ly conceive of that truth, that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who had never thought an evil thought, who had never done an evil deed, never spoke an evil word, became sin for me and for you. Again, the Bible says, "All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned everyone to his own way and the Lord had laid on him the iniquity of us all." Can you imagine it? Christ taking upon Himself all of your sins and all of my sins and all of the sins of every person in the whole world, becoming sin for us. Yes the Bible says, "Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law being made a curse for us. For it is written that cursed is everyone who is hanged upon the tree." What depth of anguish then did the Son of God suffer as He became sin for me and for you? God who cannot countenance sin on any occasion turned His back from this awful sight. And thus the anguished cry from the lips of Jesus, "My God, My God why hast thou forsaken Me?"

Occasionally, I have been asked by different individuals, if I believe that there is real burning, blazing Hell. I do believe it because of the pain Jesus suffered at Calvary, the anguish of Calvary will rise up to witness against any person who is so heartless and cruel to reject such a precious Savior Jesus Christ. There can be nothing but blazing torture awaiting such a soul. But is this all that we could say about Calvary? That it was just a place of pain?

If that's all we can say then there is no Gospel.

II. I am glad that there is more. For we can say that Calvary is a place of pardon.

(A) You remember there were two others crucified with Jesus. One on the right hand and one on the left. It seems that towards the end, one of these dying thieves gained some spiritual insight into the real nature of the Son of God, because he offered a prayer to Jesus, "Lord, when thou comest to thy kingdom, remember me." You will recall that Jesus at once answered the prayer of that dying thief, when He promised him, "Today thou shall be with me in Paradise." If nothing else had

happened at Calvary except the pardon that Jesus gave to that dying thief, it would give me a little bit of hope. I would think that if Christ would pardon a sinner like him maybe He would pardon a sinner like myself.

(B) I'm glad that there was not only a pardon for that dying thief, but there was also a pardon of the murderers of Jesus. Now you remember that Jesus prayed while He was on the cross, He prayed for the ones responsible for His crucifixion, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do." Do you believe that God answered the prayer that came from the dying Jesus? Do you think that God forgave the murderers of Jesus? I believe that He did, I believe it for two reasons.

First of all I believe it because Jesus said, "My Father always heareth my prayer." How could Jesus say so confidently that God always heard Him when He prays. Because Jesus had always lived perfectly according to His Father's will.

I believe it for another reason, I believe it because the Bible records the answers to prayer. The answer was given 53 days later, on the day of Pentecost, when Christ established His church. It was that day when the Gospel was preached for the first time. At the conclusion of that first Gospel sermon, the murderers of Jesus heard this accusation found in Acts 2:36, "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, who ye hath crucified, both Lord and Christ." So the murderers of Jesus were there on the day of Pentecost. Fifty-three days after Jesus had said that prayer, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do." How did the murderers of Jesus react when they heard this accusation, "You have crucified Him"? The 37th verse says, "When they heard this, they were pricked in their heart and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, 'Men and brethren, what shall we do?' " Then in Acts 2:38, Peter said to them, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus for the remission of sins and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." And in verse 41, "Then they that gladly received His word were bap-

tized and that same day there was added to them about 3,000 souls.’

The question is this, did God answer the prayer of Jesus? Jesus prayed, ‘Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.’ The Bible answer is yes. God did forgive them, Acts 2:41 says so. They gladly received the word and were baptized in the same day, 3000 of them. Why were they baptized? Acts 2:38 says they were baptized for the remission of their sins. What did Jesus pray for them? He prayed their sins may be remitted, ‘Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.’ God did answer the prayer of Jesus 53 days after He prayed it, when 3000 of His murderers repented and were baptized and their sins were remitted; just like Jesus had prayed they would be. So there was a pardon for the dying thief at the place called Calvary and there was pardon for the murderers of Jesus at the place called Calvary.

(C) Thank God there was a pardon at the place called Calvary for you and me. Notice in the 39th verse of Acts chapter 2, ‘For the promise is unto you and to your children and to all that are afar off even as many as the Lord our God shall call.’ That promise is ours, just like it was promised to the murderers of Jesus Christ. If we will repent and be baptized into Christ, we will have our sins forgiven just like they had their sin forgiven.

Water And Blood

I want you to notice with me how carefully the Bible explains God’s plan of salvation and how water and blood are joined together. In John 19:34, the Bible says, ‘One of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side and forthwith came there out blood and water.’ All through the Bible, God has joined blood and water in His scheme of redemption.

In the Old Testament dispensation, when the people gave animal sacrifices, they mixed blood and water and the ashes of a

heifer, and these were used as rites of purification. As the sacrifices were given, their sins were rolled forward for one more more year.

It looked forward to the coming of Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, who was to be slain upon the cross once for all. Thus, when Jesus Christ died as the Lamb of God as our sin's sacrifice, the scriptures perfectly record the fact that blood and water poured out of His heart. Jesus Christ gave us, in His own words, His plan whereby we can receive remission of our sins. It was His own command that we be baptized in water. In Matthew 28:19, in Mark 16:16, Jesus made it very clear that if we wanted to be saved, among other things, we were to be baptized.

Baptism is not a command of the church, it is a command of Jesus Christ. In Mark 16:16, He promised that, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." Some people say, "Well, do you mean to say that water will wash away our sins?" Certainly not! I have never preached that. Some people have falsely accused the Christian Church and the Church of Christ of believing that and it is a false accusation. The Church of Christ or the Christian Church has never preached or believed such a doctrine as that. We know that the water does not wash away sin, but we do know that when we have faith enough to obey Jesus and be baptized in the water that it is there that we meet His blood. And His blood washes away our sins. I want you to notice how the Bible makes this so clear. I want you to compare the teaching that we find in Matthew 26:28 with the scripture Acts 2:38 that we brought out. Notice in Matthew 26:28 Jesus said, "For this is my blood of the New Testament which is shed for many for the remission of sins." Now compare that with Acts 2:38, "Then Peter said to them, 'Repent, be baptized everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins.' " Is it the water that washes our sins away? No, it is the blood of Jesus Christ. But, how do we contact the blood? By obedience to Christ in the waters of Christian bap-

tism. Note again how clearly the scriptures explain this, for as we turn to I John 5 beginning with verse 5, "Who is he that overcometh the world, he that believeth that Jesus Christ is the Son of God? This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth. For there are three that bear record in Heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one. And there are three that bear witness in earth, the spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one." It is by the divine commandment of Jesus that we are to be baptized in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit and these three are one. When we are baptized in the water, the blood of Jesus forgives our sins and we receive the spirit. And the spirit and the water and the blood are also one.

Far dearer than all that the world can impart was the message that came to my heart. How that Jesus alone for my sin did atone and Calvary covers it all.

The Stripes that He bore and the thorns He wore, told His mercy and love for ever more. And my heart bowed in shame as I called on His name and Calvary covers it all.

Calvary covers it, my past with its sin and stain, my sin and despair, Jesus took on Him there and Calvary covers it all.

III. So Calvary was a place of pain, Calvary was a place of pardon, and thank God Calvary was a place of promise. Will you think with me for a moment of the exceeding great and precious promises that are ours, because of Calvary?

(A) First, the promise that our sins can be forgiven. Now, we have been talking about pardon, but let's think further about the meaning of that word, let's talk about forgiveness. What does it mean to be pardoned by God or to be forgiven by God or to have remission of sins, as the scripture puts it in Acts 2:38? Forgiveness by God, what does that mean?

A Dream

I read a story one time about a Christian who dreamed he had died and he was carried to the next world. As he was borne along, an angel came and noticed that he was terribly sad and so the angel questioned him, "Soul, why so pensive and so sad?" The soul of the Christian responded, "I am worried about my sins, I am sad because I do not know what I will say to God when I stand before Him and He asks me about all the sins that I have committed." And the angel smiled and said, "Why Christian have you forgotten that God has buried your sins, now rejoice you are saved, your sins are all buried by God." But in a little while the angel returned and found the soul of the Christian still very sad and the angel questioned again, "Soul, why are you so pensive and so sad when all of your sins have been buried." This time the soul of the Christian responded, "Where did God bury my sins." Now he was worried about those sins being dug up, resurrected, brought back, he would still have to give account for them. This time the angel smiled and said, "Didn't you know that God has forgotten where He buried them."

Did you ever stop to think that we have a forgetful God? That's one of God's attributes and that's why He is so much greater than we are as human beings. When God forgives us, He forgets our sins. As human beings, we are not that good. We can forgive, but it seems like we can never forget, and that's the way it so often happens when you wrong somebody and you go to them and say, "I'm sorry. Will you forgive me?" They say, "O.K., but I'll never forget it." Sometimes we often wonder how much forgiveness there is when there is an answer like that. Maybe you have said the same thing yourself. I have often said, "I'm glad God has not commanded us to forget, because, I guess, we can never do it." Now we can forgive and we must forgive, if we do not forgive those who have wronged us, God will not forgive. But to forget, as human beings, we find it im-

possible. I have had people to wrong me and I want to forget and cannot, but God can do the impossible. What is impossible with men is possible with God. He has promised, "Your sins and iniquities I will remember no more." That is the first promise we have because of Calvary.

(B) Secondly, we are promised help in living the Christian life. The fellowship of God, the fellowship of Jesus, the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. Jesus Himself promised, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end." God has promised, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." Have you ever known what it is to be lonely? I have many times. In my travels, I have often been all alone traveling through the night and nobody in the whole world really knew where I was. But, even in that hour of loneliness I was never really alone, because God was with me and Jesus was with me and the Holy Spirit was with me.

No One Attended the Funeral

One time when I was preaching at Catlin, Illinois, I was called upon for a funeral service. The man that died was 91 years old. The only two people to come for the funeral were the undertaker and myself. It seems that the old man outlived his wife, all of his children, all of his relatives, all of his friends, and because of very bad health, had spent the past several years in a nursing home. Nobody even knew him. Apparently nobody cared. I thought "how sad", but then I thought, "Well, if he is a Christian, he was not alone." That is really a beautiful promise to know that we'll never be alone. God is with us. He will never forsake us.

(C) Then we have another promise because of Calvary. We are promised a home in heaven where we can be with our God, our Savior, with our Christians friends and in great joy forever and ever and ever. This home can be best described by the words of Jesus Christ found in John 14. "Let not your hearts be trou-

bled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also."

My House Burns

It was December the 11th, 1970, the final night of our revival meeting at Latonia, Kentucky. I was really looking forward to that last sermon because afterwards, I got to go home to spend the Christmas Holidays with my family. When we finished eating, it was very late and I drove over to the house where I was staying with an elderly couple. I quietly entered, hoping I would not awaken them, and I planned to pack up everything and be ready to leave bright and early in the morning and drive straight through to my home in Miami, Oklahoma. It was mid-night as I was busy packing when the phone rang. I grabbed it on the first ring, hoping it would not awaken my host and hostess. My wife's voice came from the other end of the line. Whenever the telephone rings at midnight, it's usually bad news, because her first words were these, "Are you standing up?" I said, "Yes, why?" She said, "You better sit down." So I did and I said, "Honey, what's wrong?" She said, "Our house is burning." I would never be able to tell you how awful I felt and I had no idea how awful she felt. I don't even know what I said from that point on in the conversation. I know it was terrible driving all those miles home, wondering how things would be. I knew just about what it would be like, because I've seen other people burned out and I would help people at times like that.

We Were Blest

When I arrived home, it was just about as bad as I thought it

would be. I went into a terrible state of depression for the next few days. There was so much to do and we were very fortunate in many ways. We found a small apartment where we could move our family and continue to live a half-way normal life. The third day after the fire, I was over at the house just rummaging around through the ashes, trying to make a list for the insurance agency and trying to salvage what we could, trying to talk to all the people that came. Any of you that have been through it know exactly what it's like. I was depressed at the end of the day, I was so tired and discouraged, I went over to the apartment and plopped down in the old chair we had in the living room. My five children were all lying down on the floor in front of the TV. I let my head slump over on my chest and I really felt sorry for myself. My little boy, Timmy, who was 10 years old at the time, noticed how distressed and discouraged I was. So, he climbed up into my lap and I didn't pay any attention to him. After a few minutes, he put his arms around me and started hugging me. I still didn't pay any attention to him. And then he said, "Daddy, wouldn't it be great if you were a millionaire, then you could buy us a new house, clothes, new furniture, we wouldn't have any worries; would we?" He thought that was going to cheer me up. I just said, "Yeah, that would be great, Timmy," and I pushed him off on to the floor and I went on feeling sorry for myself.

We Are Millionaires

In a few minutes, I suddenly realized how wrong my attitude was and how wrong I treated Timmy and so I straightened myself up and put a smile on my face. I said, "Children listen to me." They all looked at me wondering what was going to happen. I said, "I want to tell you something, did you know that we are millionaires?" Well, my little girl, Teresa, jumped up and clapped her hands with joy and said, "Oh, Boy!" And

Timmy jumped up and was wide eyed and said, "Are we really?" But, my three older sons just looked at me like I was crazy, they didn't say anything. I said, "WE really are millionaires. We have a God in Heaven who loves us very much and we have a Savior, Jesus Christ, who died for us upon the cross and even now He is preparing for us a home in Heaven and no fire will ever burn it. We are multi-millionaires."

Come Claim Your Treasure!

I don't know whether it made an impression upon the children or not, but it surely made an impression on me. I have never forgotten it and I know that it is the truth. If we have Jesus Christ as our Savior, then we are multi-millionaires. All the treasures of Heaven are ours. If you are not a Christian, I know that Jesus Christ loves you, His love is so great that He died for you upon the cross and I'm asking you tonight to accept Him as your Savior. Won't you come to Calvary, just like they did back yonder, not to crucify, but to confess His wonderful name. Won't you come to Calvary, not to spit upon Him in derision as they did, but to be buried with Him into Christian baptism. Won't you come to Calvary, not to mock Him, but to become part of His church, to crown Him King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

Oh, tonight the call is given, Jesus loves you, God loves you, Heaven is prepared for you, if you just accept Jesus Christ as your personal Savior and obey Him. Would you do it? Let us stand together and sing the invitation. We hope and pray that you come in the first verse.

If I Were the Devil

I want to preach to you on a subject that I consider to be very important for this time in which we are living. If I were the devil. I would like to read from I Peter chapter 5 verses 6-11. "Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time, casting all your anxiety upon Him, because He cares for you. Be of sober spirit, be on alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. But resist him, firm in your faith knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world. And after you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you. To Him be dominion forever and ever. Amen."

Joking About the Devil

I'm sure that many of you used to watch the Flip Wilson television program. How many times did you hear him make that remark, "The devil made me do it"? Everybody would

roar with laughter. Well, the Apostle Paul tells us that we should not be ignorant of the devil's devices. I want to talk to you on this subject of the devil. Many jokes are made about the devil and yet the devil is no joke.

The World Turns to the Devil

A short time ago if I would have spoken on this subject to university students, well they would have laughed, but not today. Today, university students want to know about the devil. They are studying about witch craft and about the occult. I have traveled to Haiti many times. Haiti is a place where the devil is worshiped. Voodooism is the religion of those poor, superstitious people who live on that island. But, it is not just the poor, ignorant, superstitious that are thinking about witchcraft and the occult today, it is also the rich, the intelligent, the highly educated. The word "occult" that we hear so often, what does it mean? It means hidden knowledge, secret art, unexplainable phenomena. Occult bookshops are engaged in a tremendous business throughout the western world. Ritual robes, amulets, special incense made from herbs, crystal balls, and best selling books on the subject are on sale everywhere. Some bumper stickers that I have read say, "I am a warlock". Motion pictures on the subject of the devil are proliferating. A monthly magazine called, "The Occult Trade Journal" is now being published. An American airline is offering physic tours of Great Britain. In Germany, the most intellectual and sophisticated nation of the world, it is reported that there are 3 million satan worshipers and 7 million satan sympathizers. In France, there has been a revival of the black mass and the black magic. Here in America, we do thank God for the young people who have been turning to Jesus Christ in record numbers, but at the same time a satanic revival has been taking place in young people. Recently, in Miami, Florida a 22 year old girl stabbed to

death a 62 year old man. She stabbed him 46 times. She was convicted of man slaughter and was given a 7 year sentence. After her conviction, she smiled and said a prayer to the devil and thanked him for her light sentence. She then talked to newspaper reporters and told them she enjoyed the murder that she had committed. Many people do not know they are turning to satan. They are being deluded, because according to Jesus Christ, Satan is the greatest liar of all times. He is called the father of lies. He is called a deceiver, not just those of the ignorant and the poor like those in Haiti, but he is also deceiving lawyers, doctors, and educators, and even some clergymen have been caught up in this revival of satanism. All of you know that there is a satanic bible that is being used today.

There are still some people that would deny the existence of the devil. There are others who would simply try to identify the devil with some living person. The common conception created by many liberal Theologians is that the devil is somebody who disagrees with me. My friends, the devil as he is revealed to us in God's Holy word, is a living being with definite characteristics. He is described as the angel of the bottomless pit. The Bible calls him, "The prince of this world", "The prince of darkness." In our text, I Peter 5:8, he is called a "roaring lion", a "deceiver", a "liar", and a "serpent". It is amazing the misconceptions that people have about the devil.

The Complaining Church Member

Have you ever heard the story about the preacher who had a big problem? Most preachers do have problems, this preacher did have a big problem. One of the church members went out the door after every service complaining. That is one of the big problems preachers face. This complainer was really bad, he'd always go out the door, shake hands with the preacher and in a whiney voice he would say, "Well, Preacher, it was a pretty

good sermon, but . . .”. Then he would start in and just rip that preacher’s sermon to shreds. It was giving the poor preacher an inferiority complex and it reached the place where he didn’t even like to stand at the door and shake hands because he always had to face that same old grouch. The preacher said, “This has got to stop! I have got to put an end to this griping someway, somehow.” He decided on a plan. He would preach on Heaven because how can anyone complain about Heaven? So he worked about six weeks and he finally got his sermon worked up on Heaven. He stood up the next Sunday morning and he preached on the subject and he preached it so beautifully that everyone in the congregation wished they could go to Heaven right away. If he ever preached a sermon, it was a good one that day. When he went back to the door, he couldn’t help but congratulate himself because he knew it was a good sermon. He stood there and waited on the people to come out and shake hands and they just heaped the compliments on him that day, “Good sermon, Preacher. My that was great preaching today, Brother. Oh it was beautiful how I want to go to Heaven.” But, all these compliments went in one ear and out the other because he was waiting on the old grouch. He was just about to have a heart attack waiting on this old griper to come, because he thought, “I wonder if his face will crack when he smiles for a change. I wonder how it will seem to hear him say something good instead of something bad like he always says.” He stood there waiting and waiting and the people kept coming and he thought, “Is he ever going to get here?” Finally, before he had nervous prostration, the man showed up. The last one to come out the door. The preacher stood there expecting something nice for a change. The old grouch walked up and it was the same old thing, “Well, Preacher, it was a pretty good sermon, but . . .”! The preacher said, “But what? What could possibly be wrong with that sermon today?” The old grouch said, “You never did explain to us how when I get to Heaven am I going to get my coat on over my wings!” Well, the preacher lost his temper and

said, "Where you are going you are going to have to get your hat on over your horns!"

Is the Devil Ugly?

Now, I think that is just about the conception that most people have of the devil. They think the devil has horns coming out of his head and maybe a pitchfork tail and that people would be frightened to death if they saw the devil. Do you think he looks like that?

The Drunken Husband

I heard about a housewife. That is exactly how she thought the devil looked. She also had a problem. Her problem was her husband came home drunk every afternoon. That would be a terrible problem, worse than the preacher's problem. The housewife thought, "What can I do to stop my husband from this horrible drinking?" She finally decided on a scheme. The next afternoon she looked out the window and there he came wobbling down the sidewalk drunk as usual. So, she put her plan into operation. She ran to the closet and put on the devil's suit that one of the children wore for Halloween. She put that costume on. It had a pitchfork tail, horns sticking out the top, it was an awful looking outfit. She put it on including the mask and she ran outside and hid in the bushes by the front porch. As her husband came wobbling up the front porch she jumped out in front of him and said, "BOO! I'm the devil!" He stood there for a moment and wobbled around then he stuck out his hand and said, "Pleased to meet you. I married your sister!"

The Devil Is Handsome!

Well, that is the way some people picture the devil. Sort of

like the church member that tormented the preacher. Horns sticking out the top. Or, like the housewife, the red devil suit. Do you think the devil looks like that? Do you think he is ugly? Do you think he has horns and fire shooting out his mouth? Do you think if you met the devil you would be afraid? I don't believe that is what the devil looks like at all, not at all. I believe that the devil is handsome, attractive, alluring, and when you meet him you are not frightened at all, you want to put your hand in his hand, you want to go where the devil wants you to go, you want to do what the devil wants you to do. He is such a deceiver that he makes wrong look right and right look wrong. He is such a deceiver that the Bible calls him the "god of this world". In II Corinthians 4:4 the scripture says, "In whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God should shine unto them."

A Dog

The devil is compared to a dog. I know that the dog is supposed to be a man's best friend. Some of you are dog lovers. So, I say this with fear and trembling. But, you know what these dogs are like that sneak up behind you and when you least expect it, "RUFF!" and then they grab you. That is the kind of dog the devil is.

A Snake

The devil is compared to a snake. What is any worse than a treacherous water moccasin? Or rattle snake? Or copperhead? They lie and wait and when you least expect it, they reach up and bite you and poison you. That is the kind of snake the devil is.

In the book of Job, God teaches us that the devil is a living personality working and operating in this present world on human beings like you and me. Yes, since I am a human being I am one of the tools through which the devil has sometimes worked to accomplish his purposes. Since you are a human, you are also one of the tools through which the devil has sometimes worked.

The First Lie

In the beginning, do not forget that it was the devil who caused the world's first man and woman to hear a lie, to believe a lie, to obey a lie, and that constitutes the first sin, the first mistake. The mistake that God has been trying to correct ever since, namely to get us to hear the truth, to believe the truth, and to obey the truth, that we may be brought back along the same road which we went to ruin and to destruction. Please notice with me that the world's first woman had no fear of the serpent until the devil used that serpent for the first temptation. We see that sin was begun by the devil in a cunning, insidious, unsuspecting manner as he approached Mother Eve there in the Garden of Eden and said, "Hath God said, 'Thou shalt not'?" Don't you see how clever the devil is? He didn't begin by simply denying God's existence. Neither did he begin by denying God's word. He began by simply questioning God's word, "Did God say not to do this?" That is the same way the devil works today. He simply puts a question mark after the word of God. Behind every sin, behind every lie, behind every crooked deed, and every denial of the Lord Jesus is the leering visage of that evil one, who long ago approached Mother Eve in the Garden of Eden and simply questioned God's word. Now if I were the devil, that is what I would do. I would continue to meet men and women, boys and girls at every milestone and at every turn, at every precipice and I would put a question mark by the word

of God.

I. I WOULD GO TO SCHOOL

You know how I would start out if I were a devil. I would get in the public schools. I'd make sure there was at least one school teacher in every public school in America who was an atheist, who would stand up in the class room and question the word of God. If I were the devil, I would have the teacher do it like this: I'd have the teacher say, "Boys and girls, do you really believe that the Bible is true? Do you really believe that God made the Heavens and the earth like the Bible says?" And all of our boys and girls would say, "Yes, teacher, we believe in the Bible." If I were the devil I would have the teacher laugh and say, "Well, we can't believe everything that is in the Bible, because after all there are a lot of fairy tales, allegories, legends, and things we know aren't true, because they aren't scientifically possible. Now boys and girls, do you really believe when the Bible says that God created Adam and Eve and put them in this Garden of Eden, is that the way everything came to pass? Do you really believe that?" Of course, our boys and girls would say yes. If I were the devil, I would have that school teacher say, "You know boys and girls, science has proven that is not true. Science has proven that earth flew off the sun and it took several million years to cool down and in the cooling process great cracks appeared on the earth's surface and that's where our lakes and rivers and oceans came from. Then after a few more million years there was finally a one celled amoeba that came from nothing. That one cell divided and became two and the two divided to four and finally there was a tadpole. That little tadpole went swimming around having a great time, then one day a tadpole flipped up on the bank and scratched its stomach on the sand and grew legs and arms and became a monkey. Then for millions of years our ancestors were monkeys and they swung around in the trees by their tails having a great time. Until, one

day a monkey took a walk and he saw his reflection in the water, he didn't like it so he picked up a sharp stone and shaved the hair from his face and stood up on his hind legs and became a man. So boys and girls, that is where we came from. Science has proven that we evolved from monkeys therefore we cannot believe the Bible." If I were the devil, that is what I would have the atheistic public school teacher teach our children. Isn't that about the stupidest thing you've ever heard of in all your life? Why not even the monkeys believe a stupid tale like that.

The Monkey's Viewpoint

Three monkeys sat in a coconut tree one day discussing things as they're said to be.

Said one to the others—

"Now listen you two, there's a certain rumor that can't be true — that man descended from our noble race!

"Why the very idea is a dire disgrace!

"No monkey ever deserted his wife or starved her babies or ruined her life — and you've never known of a mother monk to leave her babies with others to bunk — or to pass them on from one to another till they scarcely know who is their mother.

"And here's another thing a monkey won't do — and that's to build a fence around a coconut tree forbidding all other monkeys a taste — allowing all the coconuts to go to waste!!! Why if I did build a fence around this tree, starvation could never force you to steal from me.

"Here's another thing a monkey won't do — that's to go out at night and get on a stew — or use a gun or a club or a knife to take some other monkey's life!

"Yes, man descended the ornery cuss — *but brother he didn't descend from us!!!!*"

There is the monkey's viewpoint. Even the monkeys don't believe that stupid tale of evolution. Isn't it ridiculous? It is intellectually dishonest for the school teacher to stand up and

teach the theory of evolution to our children for a fact. Evolution has never been anything except an unproved theory, but these school teachers are so intellectually dishonest that they have taught it for a fact. That is really criminal. If I were the devil, that is exactly what I would do. I would begin in our public schools and undermine the faith of our boys and girls by teaching that ridiculous tale of evolution. Of course all of the boys and girls would not believe that. Those who have Christian parents and those who are firmly grounded in the word of God would be able to stand up against this atheistic teaching.

II. I WOULD GO TO HOLLYWOOD

But if I were the devil I would not give up. I would have a few more tricks up my sleeve and the next thing I would do is to go to the directors out in Hollywood. I would offer them millions and millions of dollars if they would put this one little thought in their movie script over and over again, "How about a drink?", "How about a high ball?", "Wouldn't you like a shot of gin or a glass of whiskey?" Yes, in every movie made in Hollywood I would include those scenes of liquor drinking. I would do my best to undermine Jesus Christ and His church, by suggesting everything immoral that I could think of through the movies. I would be sure to put out a lot of the X movies and the R movies, because that is the main thing the young people want to see. Older people think that it's just the adults that are going to those movies. But what a shock it is to find out that it is the young people.

X-Rated Movies

They started showing those low-down, filthy, vulgar movies in our little town of Miami, Oklahoma. Our preacher put a stop to it very easily. He went down and spoke to the manager of the

theater. He said, "Is it true that you have to be 18 years or older to see these low down, filthy, vulgar, vile movies that you are showing with an X after them on Saturday night?" The theater man was so embarrassed and said, "Oh preacher, we're so ashamed that we have to show such trash, but it is what the people want to see. We've got to give the public what they want." Our preacher said, "Never mind about your excuses you just tell me is it the law that they have to be 18 or older?" The theater manager said, "Oh, yes that's the law." Our preacher said, "Good! Next Saturday night two of our church ladies are going to be standing here at the ticket counter. They know every kid in town, even their birthdays. You better not break the law next Saturday night." Our preacher had been watching and the kids lined up for over two blocks to get in those X movies. They were letting them in, almost every kid going in was under 18 years old. Well, the next Saturday night our two church ladies took their stand at the ticket counter and they sold two tickets that night. Everybody else that lined up were under age. Two people, that was all that got in. That ended the X movies in Miami, Oklahoma.

I believe it is time for Christian people to take a stand. I think it's time for members of the church to help protect our young people against this evil that has invaded our land. There is no doubt about it that the devil is using curiosity through the use of that R and X to attract the minds of the young people. They want to know, "What is this that I am forbidden to see?" When they put that X and R that is just an invitation for them to want to go and they will try every way possible to get in to see if it can possibly be any more filthy than the last one. Oh, how the devil can corrupt the minds of people through those filthy films coming out of that cesspool called Hollywood, California.

III. I WOULD GO TO CHURCH

But if I were the devil I would not give up even on the filthy

movies. The next thing I would do if I were the devil would be to come to church. Did you know the devil attends church? Oh yes, the devil attends church more regularly than the church members, because the devil never misses a service. If I were the devil I would be sitting right beside you, unseen, but I would be whispering to you. I would say, "Listen, in a little while when they sing that invitation to go down and accept Jesus, don't you do it! Don't you go to the front! Why, you'd have to be perfect, you could never live up to it and besides you are young, you have years and years to prepare and think about meeting God. Don't you go down there because you wouldn't be able to smile or laugh any more or have any fun, you know, Christians have to go around frowning all the time. Don't you go down there because you are a sissy if you go down there! You big Sissy!

Repentance Not Necessary

Of course, I wouldn't be able to convince everybody with these arguments. There are some who would truly and sincerely step to the front to accept Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. But if I were the devil, I would walk right down here to the front with you. All the way down I'd be whispering, "You don't have to repent. It's not necessary to repent of your sins. You can go right on hating. You can go right on gossiping. You can go on cursing and taking God's name in vain. You can go right on drinking and gambling. You can continue to do the same old sins that you have been doing all along. The only thing that is important is to join the church."

Baptism Not Necessary

Of course, I wouldn't win everyone with an argument like that. Some would sincerely repent of their sins and come to the front to accept Jesus as their Savior. But do you think I would

give up? Oh no! If I were the devil, I would start arguing with you saying, "You don't have to be baptized. You can be saved without baptism. Now that you have gone forward you are saved. There is nothing more to do, so don't let them talk you into being baptized."

Of course, I wouldn't win everyone with that argument, because lots of people would read the word of God on the subject of baptism. They would read for example Jesus teaching in Mark 16:16, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." They would read what the Holy Spirit said through Peter on the day of Pentecost, "Repent and be baptized everyone of you in the name of Jesus for the remission of sins." They would read what Ananias said to Saul of Tarsus at the time of his conversion, "Why tarriest thou? Arise and be baptized and wash away thy sins calling on the Lord." So some people would say, "I am going to be baptized. I know that Jesus commanded it. I know that it is necessary."

Immersion Not Necessary

So, if I were the devil, I would say, "Okay, okay but you don't have to be put under the water. Have a few drops sprinkled on your head, that will be just as good. It is not necessary to be immersed to be baptized."

I wouldn't win everyone with that argument, because lots of people would read in the scriptures about how Jesus was baptized in the Jordan and "came up out of the water". Many would turn there to Acts 8 and read how they went "down into the water and came up out of the water". They would read in Romans 6:4 that we are to be "buried in baptism". So many people would go ahead and be baptized in the Bible way.

Be Good In Front of the Preacher

But if I were the devil, I wouldn't give up. I would be waiting

right there for you on the edge of the baptismal waters. Even as you came up after having put all your sins away through the blood of Jesus, I would say, "Now that you're a Christian, the only thing you really need to do is be good in front of the preacher. As long as you make the preacher think you are a good Christian then everything will be fine." Isn't it amazing how many people practice that kind religion? Just be good in front of the preacher or be good in front of the elders or the main members of the church and the rest of the time you can live like the devil. I heard about a mother who was always drilling this thought into her children. "Now children, you must be good in front of our minister, because we want our preacher to know how much we love God in this house. Now children, whenever the preacher calls at our house you show him God's Book. Now children, when the preacher comes, I want you to be sure and say your prayers." Well, one day the preacher called quite unexpectedly. The little 8 years old boy was in the backyard playing in the sand pile. He had no idea that the preacher was within ten miles of the place. While the preacher was having a lovely visit all at once there was a piercing scream that rang through the air and the poor mother shuddered, because she could hear him coming from all the way in the backyard shouting, "Oh boy, oh boy, Mom, look what I got. I saw this old, dirty, filthy rat running through the garden so I grabbed a 2x4 and I whopped him over the head. Oh just look at him Mom! I caught him by the tail and I smashed him all to pieces with my feet. Look at this bloody mess!" By then he was in the living room face to face with the minister. He knew that he'd pulled a boo-boo. But he quickly recovered, he tenderly laid the rat down on the floor, walked over to the coffee table and got the Bible and said, "Until God took his soul home to glory"!

Little Sins Okay

If I were the devil that is exactly what I would teach people. I

would say, "Oh, you must be good in front of our preacher. You must be sure and be very religious, but then the rest of the time you can do as you please." In other words, if I were the devil I would tell people that it was alright to commit little sins. I would say, "You don't have to go to church every Sunday. If the preacher says anything about you being absent, just tell him your big toe ached and you didn't feel like coming. Tell him your parents made you go too often when you were young and now that you are grown up you don't want like to be obligated." If I were the devil, I would tell people that it was okay to cuss a little bit especially if you hit your thumb with a hammer. I'd say it was alright to lie a little bit. Somebody knocks on our door and you don't want to see them, well, just send one of your children to the door to say, "Mama's not home". You'd be surprised how that one can backfire. I knocked at the door one day and the sweetest, blonde haired girl answered the door. She had a smile a mile wide and she said, "Mama says she's not home"! I was so glad that mother got caught in her lie. That's such a terrible thing the way parents will teach their children to tell lies. If I were the devil well I would say, "It's alright to take a glass of beer now and then. Of course, not in front of Brother Joe, but my goodness whoever respects God enough to know that he will care."

Tithing Not Necessary

Here's another thing that I would do if I were the devil, when the preacher preaches on tithing and when he says, "Now folks, quit cheating God." If I were the devil I'd say, "Don't let the preacher get into your pocketbook. Don't let him get you in this money business. Look at all the things you buy with the tithing money. You've been wanting a new automobile, well this tithe would more than make the payments. You need some new clothes, while this tithe money will purchase these clothes.

You've been wanting to redecorate your house, well you could borrow the money pay it back with the tithe money. Well, you've called yourself a Christian all these years without really paying God what you owe Him, now don't be a fool about it. What if the Bible does say, 'Bring all the tithe into the storehouse.' So what! What if Jesus did say in Matthew 23:23 not to leave the tithing undone. What if the Bible does say there in I Corinthians 16:2, 'Upon the first day of the week let each one of you put aside and save, as he may prosper, that no collections be made when I come.' So what, nobody knows the difference but you and God. Even if you fall \$2000 behind in your tithing, God's not going to send an angel from Heaven to garnish your wages, at least not yet."

Have A Church Fight

Here's another thing if I were the devil, I would beg members of the church to get angry with one another and to get peeved with the preacher and to quit attending. Do you know why the devil stirs up fusses like that in the church? Because if he can get people to quit attending and they don't meet Jesus around the Lord's table on the first day of the week, what happens? They backslide. Jesus plainly said in John the 6th chapter, "If you do not eat My flesh, if you do not drink My blood you have no life in you." One of the main things the devil tries to accomplish in the church is to stir up a little fuss now and then and get somebody to lose their temper and have somebody quit, so that he can claim one more backslider.

Time Is Running Out

Oh, if I were the devil, there are so many more things I would do, but time forbids me from mentioning them.

Remember this, the devil is working against tremendous odds and time is running out on him and has been running out ever since that day Jesus asked His disciples, "Whom do men say that I am?", and Simon Peter answered, "Thou art the Christ the Son of the living God." Jesus said, "Upon this rock I will build my church and the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it." Now the devil, who represents the very gates of Hell, realizes that he cannot win against Jesus.

Do you believe there is a God? James says, "Thou doest well." The devil also believes and trembles. Little wonder that John writing there on the island of Patmos off the coast of Greece, prophesied, "And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and false prophet are and shall be tormented day and night forever more." The warning words of the scriptures are watch and pray for ye know not the day nor the hour when the Son of God shall come. That day, that hour, that minute, that second the curtain will fall across the world's vast stage of eternity and life's little play will be ended and God will carry out His promises. Truly the devil is a roaring lion and he walketh about seeking whom he may devour.

A True Story

Years and years ago I was holding a revival meeting at Heltonville, Indiana and there was a delegation from Mooresville who were there in the audience and some of the people verified the truthfulness and the accuracy of this true life story of little Johnny.

Johnny Came Forward

The Christian Church of Mooresville, Indiana was in revival

meeting and little Johnny heard the Gospel, he was faithful in Sunday School and he decided he wanted to be a Christian. When the invitation was extended, Johnny stepped out and started to go down to the front, but there was one man in this church who did not believe in children becoming Christians and this man reached out and grabbed Johnny and pulled him back and he said, "You are too little! You don't know what it's all about; wait until you are older." And he held him back all through the invitation. Johnny was very upset. He was 10 years old, old enough to hear the Gospel, to understand, to believe. He was very upset, but he came back the next night and he listened to the next sermon. He believed with all of his heart what the preacher preached and he wanted to accept Jesus and become a Christian. Once again, that second night he stepped out and started to go down and that same man grabbed him again, he said, "You are too little! You do not know what you are doing, wait until you are older." Johnny was very disappointed, but he came back the third night. He listened again to the preaching of God's word, he believed it and he really wanted to be a Christian. He stepped out and started to go down and again that same man grabbed him and held him back again. But that night, Johnny began to cry and he left the service crying like a baby. He was so bitterly disappointed. Most of the members of the church were also very upset, but nobody did anything about it. Nobody had the courage to go to this man and show him how wrong he was. Instead they stood around and whispered in little groups. Finally the last group left the building, the lights were extinguished, the windows were closed, and finally the door. As this last little group started to walk away from the building, they started to cross the road, little Johnny was on the other side of the road lying in a ditch. That night when he had run out of the building, crying, he had crossed the road and stumbled and fallen in the ditch. He was so broken hearted that he had laid there all that time crying his eyes out.

To Hell With the Church

Now that the last group was leaving and he saw them coming across the road he thought they had seen him. So his attitude changed. He jumped up red and hot with anger and he scooped up two hands full of gravel and he threw the gravel towards the people and the church house and he screamed, "To Hell with the church. If the church don't want me, I don't want the church." Then he ran down the street crying his eyes out.

The Worst Criminal

What happened to little Johnny? My friends, I am sorry to tell you that is the true story of the life of John Dillinger, one of the worst criminals that we've ever known in the United States. A bank robber, a murderer, who was finally shot by an officer of the law in Chicago, Illinois. To think when John Dillinger was a boy, he was regular in Sunday School and he wanted to be a Christian, but somebody held him back.

The Devil's Trick

If I were the devil, that is the main trick I would use on you tonight. I would try to hold you back and keep you from coming down here to give your life to Jesus. One way or the other I would try to hold you back, if nothing else worked I would say, "Wait until tomorrow night. There's no hurry. You don't need to go down there tonight. There's plenty of time."

Another Voice

There is another voice calling you tonight, and that is the

MY FAVORITE REVIVAL SERMONS

voice of God. God loves you. God speaks the truth. God wants you to be saved. God says, "Come now and accept My Son Jesus." The devil hates you. He is your enemy. He is a liar. The devil says don't go, wait awhile longer. It's up to you on whose voice you are going to obey.

The idea for this sermon came from James Rutherford, Sr.

How to Have Peace of Heart in This Space Age

Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful.

Colossians 3:15

“I’ve Got Troubles!”

In Cincinnati, Ohio there is a large skyscraper called Carew Tower. All who have visited Cincinnati have noticed that skyscraper. At the top of Carew Tower there is an observation platform where visitors can go and view the always fascinating sights. You can look, on the one side, at the Ohio River flowing down carrying the busy river traffic. Barges and small ships are always on the Ohio River. Then, as you let your eyes roam around from the observation platform, you can see that great city of Cincinnati laid out on seven hills, just like Rome, Italy. It is a marvelous beautiful sight to go out there on a clear day.

Some time back, there was a young man who went to the observation platform of this great skyscraper that towers above the city of Cincinnati. He was a troubled young man. He had no peace of heart and he tried to leap over from the top of that platform and commit suicide. Fortunately, someone restrained

him and the police came and he was taken down to police headquarters and there he was questioned. One of the policemen, who was on duty, put to the young man this simple question and it was reported by a newspaper reporter in our papers. The policeman simply asked the young man, "Why did you do such a terrible thing?" The young man bowed his head and tears streamed down his cheeks as he said, "I've got troubles. I've got troubles."

Everyone Has Troubles

As I read that story in the papers and thought about that troubled young man, it seemed to me that this was a picture of this entire world of ours in 1982. Every place that you go and every direction that you look, people have troubles. I would not expect sinners to have peace at heart. I would not expect the man who drinks alcohol to find any peace of heart and I would not expect liars to have any peace of heart and I would not expect those who indulge in illicit, adulterous affairs to find any peace of heart. I would not expect the drug users and the drug pushers to find any peace of heart. Frankly, the thing that really troubles me is this; I find many Christians, who are really dedicated to Christ and the church, who seemingly have not found any peace of heart. At the best, they express it like this; "Life is an up and down experience."

An Airplane Ride

I have often compared it to an airplane ride on a hot and sultry day. If you have ever had the experience of being depressed, discouraged, down on the ground where it is hot and sultry and then getting into a light plane and climbing up above the clouds where it is cool and delightful and then from that

place of peace and solitude looking down on the white, fleecy clouds below and then a few moments later landing and being back in the hot, sultry conditions once again, then perhaps you can appreciate those who describe life as an “up and down” experience.

I wonder how many of you have ever thought of your own life as an up and down experience? Maybe one day you are up in those clouds in a cool, refreshing air, that God provides, where everything is delightful and then the very next day you find yourself down, defeated and discouraged and perhaps you have asked yourself the question, “What is the secret of having peace of heart? How could we so live that we might have this peace that the Bible talks about here in Colossians 3:15?” Notice that it says, “This is your responsibility as a Christian.” It is our responsibility to so live that we will have this peace of heart that comes from Jesus Christ. It is not only a responsibility, but notice that it is also your privilege as members of His body.

The Secret?

What is the secret of having peace of heart? Some people would tell you that it is:

A. Political Freedom. There are lots of people in Haiti, who would say, “Let us elect our own government like you do in the U.S. and then we would have peace of heart.” If political freedom would bring peace of heart, then every American would have it. We elect our own officials from the mayor to our president, and yet right here in America, you will find just as many unhappy, afraid people as you would in any other country of the world. Some people would say:

B. “Give us education and then we would be happy.” In India education is highly prized and the average Indian would move Heaven and earth to get an education. Here in the U.S. we have one of the finest educational systems in the entire world.

The average high school student in America knows more about science than the greatest scientist did in the days of Aristotle. Our heads are crammed full of knowledge, but our hearts are empty. If we have knowledge and nothing in our hearts then we will find that education by itself will not bring peace of heart. Some people would say:

C. *“Give us a higher standard of living.”* I remember an African preacher who once told me that if he just had a motorcycle, he would be happy. That would be real living. Recently that same African preacher, who now has a motorcycle, wrote me a letter and it was a tear jerker. “My motorcycle is broken and my tires are worn out”, he said, “I can’t pay the insurance, the gasoline is too expensive. Can you help me, because I can’t use the motorcycle.” He has more troubles now that he has the motorcycle than when he was walking and he has found out, just like we found out here in this country, that higher standards of living, having a “push button economy”, doesn’t necessarily bring us happiness. Some people would say that:

D. *Fame and Fortune* “would do it” or “pleasure and power” will do it. Yet, frantic, frightened Americans spent 125 million dollars on fortune tellers last year. They could not face tomorrow. They had the fortune, fame, pleasure, and power, but they had no peace of heart, so they had to go to the fortune teller to find if they were going to live or die or what was going to happen.

Jesus Is the Secret!

I am sure that all of us that are Christians agree that Jesus Christ is the secret to peace of heart. The Bible plainly says so, “Let the peace of heart which comes from Christ.” We know that Christ is the answer, we know that Christ is the secret to this peace of heart, but how are we going to obtain this peace of heart in our lives? The Bible says this is your responsibility.

There are 3 things that we are going to do if we are going to have this peace of heart that comes from Jesus Christ.

RETREAT

I. First of all we are going to have to retreat from those things that are wrong. Please notice verse 8 of Colossians 3, "But now is the time to cast off and throw away all of these rotten garments of anger, hatred, cursing, and dirty language. Don't tell lies to each other. It is your old lives with all that wickedness that did that sort of thing now it is dead and gone."

General Timinshinko of the Russian army will probably go down in history as the greatest general of strategic retreat of all times. Perhaps some of you may remember that during WWII, it was General Timinshinko that led the armies of Russia all the way from the Polish border clear back to Stalingrad and yet in all of this time of retreating, retreating, retreating for hundreds of miles, he managed to keep his forces together so that when the time came to attack and go forward, he was able to drive them straight in the heart of Berlin. He obtained that tremendous victory for Russia because he knew when to retreat.

Now there comes a time in our lives when, if we are going to have peace of heart, that peace that comes from Jesus Christ, we must then know what to retreat from.

A. We are to flee from pride. Dr Stuart Holden, the great golfer, was once asked this question, "Holden, what is your handicap?" Without any hesitation he responded, "Myself". Well, it was not the answer that the questioner had expected, but nevertheless it was a true answer. I am my own handicap and you are your worst handicap. Proverbs 6:17 says, "These six things dost God hate yea seven are an abomination unto Him." Number one on the list of things that God hates, is a proud look.

B. Then the next thing is strife. Do you get angry easy? Are

you ready to blow your top because somebody disagrees with you? Are you ready to kick down the door? Are you ready to put up your dukes and fight? If you are going to get angry every time something doesn't go to suit you, naturally you are not going to have peace of heart.

Some years back, I remember a revival meeting that I was called to conduct at a place near Springfield, Illinois. I found a real nice preacher and a preacher's wife that I was to work with during that revival meeting, but I couldn't help notice, as I first met them that they were terribly unhappy. They had no peace of heart. It was very obvious and I wondered why, because I found that this preacher and his wife loved God. They studied His word every day and they had a prayer time together and while I was there, they invited me to share in the prayer time with them. It was obvious that they both loved the church and both of them worked hard for the church. It didn't take me very long to find out why they had no peace of heart. I was awakened the first morning that I was there and they were quarreling about who was going to get up and warm the baby's bottle and feed the baby. When the quarrel died down, they had another one about who is going to fix breakfast. When that quarrel died down, they started quarreling about who we were going to visit that day and that continued on for two or three hours as they looked over the prospect cards and they debated it back and forth. I noticed that even as we walked up the church steps into the service, they quarreled about what songs we were going to sing during the song service that night. Strife was robbing that husband and wife of the joy that they would have otherwise had known in the service of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul plainly says to the Christians at Colossae, "Away with these things", meaning retreat from these things, get away from these things or as it states, "Cast off and throw away these rotten garments of hatred, anger, cursing, and dirty language." We have no time in Christian life for pride and no place in the Christian life for strife.

C. Then there is that green eyed monster that always rears his ugly head in the church, envy. Isn't it astounding that any member of the boby of Christ could be envious of anybody else! Some are envious because someone can play the piano better than they can play the piano or because someone can sing solos better than I can sing solos or because somebody gets the leading part in the choir cantata and I didn't get the leading part or because this member gets to do such and such in the Christmas play and I didn't get to do it and it goes on and on and on.

D. If we are going to have peace of heart there is the business of gossip. Every place that you go there is always someone ready to bend your ear. "Have you heard the latest about so and so? Now whatever you do, don't repeat this because it might not be true, but oh it's so awful?" It is no wonder that people don't have peace of heart if they repeat gossip or listen to gossip. One great evangelist said that "every gossiper should be hung by his tongue, but all who listen ought to be hung by their ears." Don't do either one. Don't tell it, don't listen to it because if you do, you won't have any peace of heart!

E. Evil thoughts. In the 5th verse it plainly names, "sexual sin, impurity, lust, and shameful desires." Cast off and throw away these rotten garments because you will never have peace of heart if you allow your mind to be down in the gutter. In other words, guard your thoughts. Be careful of what you read, be careful of what you hear, and be careful of what you see.

"Advance to the Rear!"

I heard a rather amusing story about a fellow who was over in the trenches during WWII. He was very frightened and I suppose most people were frightened who were in the trenches. The sergeant gave the order to charge. Everybody knew that if they came up out of those trenches and charged against the Germans

they were going to be mowed down by machine gun fire. This one fellow was very much a coward anyway. When the sergeant said, "Charge", the boy came up out of the trench and he was retreating. The sergeant caught a glimpse of him over his shoulder and he said, "Where are you retreating to?" The buck private shouted out, "Sarge, I'm not retreating nowhere, I am just advancing to the rear!" The frightened private may have had the right idea after all. In the Christian life there comes that time that we must retreat. In the Christian life retreat from these old, rotten garments is the same thing as advancing.

STAND

II. There is another word that comes out of this text that spells out the secret of having real peace of heart and that is the word "stand". Verse 10, "You are living a brand new type of life that is continually learning more and more of what is right and trying constantly to be more and more like Christ who created this new life within you." If we're learning more and more about what is right and we are trying to be more and more like Christ, if we find out that somebody doesn't like us, then we'll just pray for them. We won't tell anybody. Somebody slaps you down on your right cheek, so you get up and knock their block off? If you are trying to learn more and more about what is right and you are trying more and more to be like Christ then you turn your other cheek. So, we forgive our enemy and forgive those that speak against us and those that spitefully use us and persecute us. In other words, we take a stand for that which is right and we refuse to compromise.

A Football Game

It reminds me of something that happened back when I was

a senior in high school at Miami, Oklahoma. Our Miami "War Dogs" won the football championship that season for the northeastern section of Oklahoma and never will I forget that final game. It was played on Thanksgiving day afternoon before 2,000 Miami fans who came out to cheer. We were playing Sand Springs, Oklahoma and there came that point in the game where they were right down on our goal line. At that crucial moment of the game, the cheerleaders began leading the Miami fans in that familiar chant, "Hold that line, hold that line, hold that line" and as the cheerleaders cheered and jumped up and down and shouted and yelled at the top of their voices, they led the Miami fans in that chant until it seemed that the very ground beneath our feet was quivering. Every player took heart, every player determined to stand like a brick wall. Consequently, Sand Springs failed to make that crucial touchdown because not a player would give an inch.

The Game of Life

Since then, I have often pictured myself out in the "game of life" playing on the "Christian team" for the Lord Jesus Christ. There comes that crucial time in the game of life when the devil is right there tempting and pushing and suggesting, "just give an inch." We cannot! We must take our stand for that which is right.

A Furnace of Fire

It makes me think about those 3 Hebrew children in the Old Testament, Shadrack, Meshack, and Abednego. The king put up a gold idol and announced that everybody had to bow down and worship the idol. Shadrack, Meshack, and Abednego said, "We will not bow to the idol." The king said, "If you don't

bow to the idol I will throw you in a furnace of fire and you will be burned to a crisp." Shadrack, Meshack, and Abednego gave one of the most courageous answers of all time, they said, "Go ahead, throw us in the fire. Maybe we will burn, maybe God will save us. We don't know what will happen to us but there is one thing we know and we want you to know, we will never bow to the idol." Because they would not compromise, because they took their stand, God protected them miraculously from the flames. A fourth man walked with them in that furnace of fire and He was the Son of God and not even a hair of their head was singed.

A Compromiser?

May I suggest that if your life has been an up and down experience and if you have not found this peace of heart which comes from Jesus Christ then perhaps you have been a compromiser. Maybe your feet have been taking you places that you should not go. Maybe your mind has been thinking thoughts that you should not think. Maybe your hands have been touching things that you should not handle. Maybe your ears have been listening to things that you should not hear. Maybe your tongue has been speaking things that you should never say.

ADVANCE

III. There is a third word that comes from this chapter. Notice verses 12 and 13, "Since you have been chosen by God who has given you this new kind of life and because of His deep love and concern for you, you should practice tender hearted mercy and kindness to others. Don't worry about making a good impression on them, but be ready to suffer quietly and patiently and gently and ready to forgive. Never hold grudges,

remember the Lord forgave you so you must forgive others.” *It seems to me that section of scripture is saying that you must GO FORWARD in Christ if you are going to have peace of mind.*

Riding a Bicycle

Learning to go forward is often a difficult lesson. It must have been very difficult for me when I first learned to ride a bicycle. I learned when I was 5 years old. I just begged and begged for my daddy to teach me to ride a bicycle and he kept telling me I was too small. But I had an aunt who was several years older than I and she had a girl’s bicycle. So, daddy got me up on the bicycle and gave me a great big shove. I was able to balance that bicycle perfectly, but I just stood there and coasted, my daddy said, “Push the pedals, Reggie”, but by that time I had lost the momentum and fell over. Well, I cried and my daddy came and he dusted me off and he said, “See, I told you you are too little to ride a bicycle.” After the tears were dried and the bruises and wounds quit hurting, I started in again and I said, “Daddy, I know I could do it if you would just give me one more chance”, so I begged and begged and finally he tried again. He gave me another big shove and again I was able to balance that bicycle perfectly, but as soon as the momentum died down, I fell over even while he kept shouting, “Push the pedals, push the pedals.” I found out that you have to keep going forward in order to keep riding a bicycle.

The Christian Life

The very same thing is true if you are going to have peace of heart in the Christian life, we must go forward in Jesus. To go forward requires:

A. Daily Bible Study, II Tim. 2:15.

B. Constant Prayer, I Thess. 5:17.

C. Worship of God, Acts 2:42.

I guarantee you that it will test your Christian growth to the maximum if you practice what these two verses, 12-13, have taught us: "Tender hearted mercy. Kindness toward one another. Don't ever worry about making a big impression on anybody. If you have to suffer just suffer quietly and be patient and be gentle and be ready to forgive and don't ever hold any grudges." That is difficult but if you will learn to do it, then you will be going forward in the Christian life and it will make you strong in Jesus and you will begin to experience this peace of heart which comes from Christ.

The Angry Father and Son

It was a cold, wintery night, there was snow on the ground. A father and son sat by the fire side reading. The father was reading the evening newspaper, the son was reading a novel. The fire began to die down and the room grew chilly, so the father spoke to his son and said, "Go get a stick of wood and put it on the fire." The boy just sat there reading and pretended not to hear his daddy. [Did you ever do that? It is amazing to me how children can never hear a thing, they are deaf when you want them to do something that requires work, but when you don't want them to hear what is being spoken, if you whisper in your wife's or husband's ear they will say, "What was that?" Isn't it amazing!] The father had a quick Irish temper and he jumped to his feet and he said, "You heard me. Go get the stick of wood or get out of this house." The boy had inherited some of his dad's temper and he jumped up and grabbed for his coat and said, "Okay, if that is the way you feel about it, goodbye!" He slammed the door and the house shook and he left.

Two weeks went by, two long, dreary weeks. The father sat there trying to read and the tear drops would trickle down his cheeks because he was wondering, "Where is my son? I wonder

if he is warm, I wonder if he is well, I wonder if he has any food to eat? I wonder if he will ever come back? All of these thoughts were going through his mind and then he began to envision what might happen if the boy were to come back. "I'll rush and greet him and put my arms around him and hug him and I'll say, 'Son, I forgive you' and I'll never say another scolding word to him as long as I live." He thought, "No, that wouldn't be right. I have to enforce things around here. If he is going to live in this house, then he has got to live by my rules." He was debating back and forth what he would do and he thought, "If that boy comes back I am going to go get the leather strap and even though he is 19 years old, I am going to peel the hide right off his back." Just then there was a knock at the door. He jumped up and ran to the door and there stood his son, not the proud, angry, defiant, disobedient, rebellious son who had stomped out and slammed the door two weeks earlier, but a very humble boy who was sick and cold and hungry. He stood there with his head hanging low and he said, "Dad, I am terribly sorry about what I said, please forgive me. Dad, will you let me come back home? Dad, I am hungry, I am sick, I have got a terrible fever. Would you let me come back?" For a moment the father stood there and his fatherly instincts overwhelmed him to the point that he almost reached out and grabbed that boy and hugged him, but then better judgment took hold and he straightened himself and got control of his emotions, he looked his son right in the eye and he said, "Son, nobody in the whole world knows how much I love you, only God knows, and only God knows how much I want you to come back home. But, if you really mean it and if you are sincere, that stick of wood is out there on the wood pile and as soon as you go get it and obey me then you are welcome to come home."

A Final Appeal

Dear friends, I am suggesting, of course, that if life is an up

and down experience and if you have not enjoyed that peace of heart which comes from Christ then perhaps there may be a stick of wood out on the wood pile somewhere. Maybe it is stubborn pride, maybe it is strife and anger that you keep allowing to well up and take over. Maybe it is envy, maybe it is gossip, maybe it is the love of money, maybe it is lust, but whatever it is you have to get rid of it. You have to lay it aside as our text tells us and have nothing to do with all of this rotten wickedness and then go forward in Christ to have peace.

Reggie Thomas was chosen to be the speaker for the Youth Banquet at the North American Christian Convention in 1954 at Long Beach, California. He preached this message. Since that time he has preached this message hundreds of times in many nations around the world.

Let Heaven Fill Your Thoughts

In Col. 3:2-4, Living Bible, we read, "Let heaven fill your thoughts. Don't spend your time worrying about things down here. You should have as little desire for this world as a dead person does. Your real life is in heaven with Christ and God. When Christ, who is our real life, comes back again you will shine with Him and share in all of His glory." Look at verses 13 and 14, "Be gentle and ready to forgive. Never hold grudges. Remember, the Lord forgave you so you must forgive others. Most of all, let love guide your life for then the whole church will stay together in perfect harmony."

It is amazing what will happen if you let thoughts of heaven fill your mind and if you will let love guide your life because love can accomplish the impossible.

Pinocchio

When my daughter, Teresa, was 3 years old, Pinocchio came to town. All of the children wanted to go see Pinocchio and I promised them that they could but when Saturday came Teresa had a fever and I said, "Sorry, you can't go." She started to cry

like girls will do and I said, "Sorry, you can't go." She begged like little girls will do and I said, "Sorry, you have a fever." Pretty soon Teresa climbed upon my lap but I didn't pay any attention to what was going on because I was reading the paper. I felt a little arm slip around my neck but I paid no attention because I was reading the paper. Then another arm went around my neck but I still didn't pay any attention. Then I was smothered by kisses and the paper was knocked to one side as the kisses continued and then Teresa made a triumphant announcement, "My sweet Daddy is going to let me go see Pinocchio." Isn't it just amazing and marvelous what love will accomplish?

The Missing Link

The Bible says, "Most of all let love guide your life for then the whole church will stay together in perfect harmony." We Christians are all members of the same fraternity. We Christians are all united through Jesus Christ, the head of the body, the church. We Christians are all related in the same interests. We Christians all have communion with each other every Lord's Day. We Christians are all going to the same heavenly home where we are all going to spend eternity and, therefore, we Christians ought to love one another with a very, very special affection.

Love is the missing link in the world of 1983. I also believe that love is the cure-all medicine for this sin sick world of 1983. Love for country is the foundation of the nation and any nation minus the love of her citizens is headed for self destruction. Love for each member of the family is the basis for the home and any home minus the love of the family members equals emptiness. Love is the very reason for salvation. "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."

Love is the very test of salvation. I John 3:14 says, "We know that we have passed from death unto life because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death."

I. Jesus set the example in His own life. In John 13:23 we read, "Now there was leaning on Jesus' bosom one of His disciples whom Jesus loved." It was a well known fact that Christ had a very special loving relationship with this one disciple even above His loving relationship with the others. In John 21:20, "Then Peter turning about seeth the disciple whom Jesus loved following which also leaned on His breast at supper and said, 'Lord which is he that betrayeth Thee?' " Who was this disciple that Jesus loved? We know that it was the apostle John. We have another example of Jesus, our loving Savior, in Luke 7:44-47. "And He turned to the woman and said unto Simon, 'Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house and thou gavest me no water for my feet: but she washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Thou gavest me no kiss: but this woman since the time that I came in hath not ceased to kiss my feet. My feet with oil thou did not anoint: but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment. Wherefore I say unto thee, her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little.' " When Jesus came into the house of this Pharisee who was so self righteous, he showed no love, he did not even afford the common courtesies of the day. Then a prostitute from the street came in and got down on her hands and knees and washed Jesus' feet with her tears. She wiped His feet with the hairs of her head, she kissed His feet, and Jesus received the love that the prostitute gave to Him and forgave her sins. Oh, what a loving Savior was Jesus. What a marvelous example He has left for us as to how we should demonstrate our love for one another. In John 11:5 the Bible says, "Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus." This is with reference to that little family in Bethany where Jesus went to visit so often. Everybody knew that He loved Mary and Martha and Lazarus and

everybody knew that Mary and Martha and Lazarus loved Jesus. So affectionate and loving was Jesus that when Judas came to betray Him, he betrayed Him with a kiss!!

II. Another marvelous example is the apostle Paul. Oh how affectionate was Paul. He learned to love from Jesus. Time after time Paul wrote to the Christians and told them how much he loved them. He wrote to Timothy, "My dear beloved son." He wrote to Appia, to Luke and to Tychicus and to all of those he said, "I love you." He called them "dearly beloved." He wrote to the Christians at Rome, at Corinth, at Philippi and expressed that he loved them. In Acts 20:1 the Bible says, "After the uproar was ceased, Paul called unto him the disciples and embraced them." In Acts 20:10 when Eutychus fell asleep under Paul's preaching and dropped down out of the third story window and fell dead on the ground the Bible says that Paul went down and "embraced him." In Acts 20:37 when Paul told the elders of the church at Miletus goodbye the Bible says, "They all wept sore and they fell on Paul's neck and kissed him." Jesus said, "By this shall all men know that you are my disciples if you love one another." There was such love in the New Testament church that over and over again Paul admonished the members of the church to kiss one another with a holy kiss. In Romans 16:16, I Cor. 16:20, II Cor. 13:12, I Thess. 5:26 and I Peter 5:14. In other words Paul said "*demonstrate your love.*" Let everybody see it. Isn't that what Jesus was saying when He said, "By this shall all men know that you are my disciples if you have love one for another."

III. Ways we can demonstrate love. Read to a person who has bad eyesight. Visit a shut-in and take a copy of The Lookout or the Christian Standard with you. Take a person who needs transportation to the shopping center or to the doctor. Call on someone who has been bereaved and express your sympathy. Take church literature to someone who is not able to attend church so that they can read it. Visit someone who is in the hospital. Invite somebody to dinner. Go mow the grass for

an older person. Take a dish of food to a house where there is illness. Provide transportation to the church for someone who can't come otherwise. Send a birthday card to a church member. Mail a gift to some church member who is serving in the armed forces. Send a sympathy card to someone who has lost a loved one. Write a Bible college student and send them \$5.00. Tell your Sunday School teacher that you love her or that you love him and appreciate their teaching. Help clean house for somebody that is sick and doesn't feel like cleaning their house. Give used clothing to a family that is in need. Look for a way that you can use your hobby or your special talent in church work. Telephone an absentee and don't say, "Where were you", but say, "I love you and I missed you Sunday and I just wanted to call because I love you." Offer to take care of the children for a young mother so that she can have the afternoon off to go to something. Clip an item from the newspaper that is good and share it with a friend. When missionaries come to the church, invite those missionaries to your home to stay over night. Find a boy who has no dad and take him to a ball game. Share flowers from your yard with shut-ins. Invite some foreign student that lives in the city to come to your home over a holiday.

Shocking Advice!

A certain woman came to her preacher for counseling and she said, "Preacher, my husband and I have fallen out of love and we are getting ready to get a divorce and I need your counsel. Preacher, I absolutely hate my husband and I want to hurt him in the worst way possible. Now, what is your advice?" Well, the preacher thought for a moment and without the woman realizing it, he used reverse psychology on her and he said, "You really hate him?" She said, "Yes, I really hate him." She said, "In fact, I would murder him if I could get

away with it.” She said, “What do you think that I could do to hurt him most of all and not have to go to jail over it?” The preacher said, “Well, I tell you what,” he said, “I know how you can do it. Start demonstrating love for your husband.” She said, “No, I hate him.” He said, “Now wait a minute and let me tell you my suggestion. Hear me out.” She said, “Okay.” He said, “You start telling your husband every day when he comes home from work, ‘I love you darling’ and you meet him at the door, you throw your arms around him, you give him a big kiss, you prepare his favorite meal for him. All evening long you offer to put his slippers on while he sits in his easy chair, you serve him popcorn, you do everything that you can think of that is kind and loving and after about 6 months of this, you know what is going to happen? He is going to love you so much and then you spring the news, ‘I am going to divorce you’ and you will just kill him.” He said, “That is the way that you can do the most harm to your husband that I can think off.” Well, she got to thinking about that, so she did it. Well, about 6 months later she came back to see the preacher and she said, “Preacher, you really gave me good advice and I came to thank you for it.” He said, “Okay, are you ready to divorce him now?” She said, “Divorce him? Why preacher I have fallen in love with him. He is the dearest most wonderful man in the whole world and I just wanted to thank you for preventing the divorce.”

I want to encourage each member of the church to put that same advice into practice with reference to the church. You have said, “I am just sick and tired and I just want to quit.” For the next 6 months I want you to attend every Sunday morning for Sunday School, I want you to participate in the Sunday School lesson, I want you to tell the teacher how much you love him or her. I want you to come to church every Sunday morning and study your Bible and listen to everything that is preached in the sermon. I want you to come back on Sunday night and be there every Wednesday evening and participate in our Bible

study and prayer meeting. I want you to come on Thursday night and go visiting the unsaved and try to win them to Christ. I want you to get really active and participate in every phase of the life of this congregation and then every time you meet any member of the church I want you to throw your arms around that member and say, "I love you." I want you to do that for 6 months. Now at the end of the 6 months I want you to up and quit because that will really hurt us. But you know what will happen? You will never quit if you do that. If you start demonstrating your love to everybody by the end of the 6 months you are going to be so much in love with everybody and with this church and with the whole program of the church that nothing can ever keep you away. Oh dear friends, do you want the church to be that kind of a church? Then, I encourage you to be that kind of a member.

WHY DON'T WE?

It is the tale of a man who might have been I, for I dreamed one time of journeying to that metropolis — the City of Everywhere. I arrived early one morning. It was cold, and there were flurries of snow on the ground. As I stepped from the train to the platform, I noticed that the baggageman and the redcap were warmly attired in heavy coats and gloves, but oddly, they wore no shoes.

My initial impulse was to ask the reason for this odd practice, but repressing it, I passed into the station and inquired the way to the hotel. My curiosity was enhanced by the discovery that no one in the station wore shoes. Boarding the streetcar, I saw that my fellow passengers were likewise barefoot. And upon arriving at the hotel, I found the bellhop, the clerk, and the habitués of the place were all devoid of shoes.

Unable to restrain myself longer, I asked the ingratiating manager what the practice meant.

“What practice?” said he.

“Why,” said I, pointing to his bare feet, “Why don’t you wear shoes in this town?”

“Ah,” said he, “that’s just it. Why don’t we?”

“But what is the matter? Don’t you people believe in shoes?” said I.

“Believe in shoes, my friend? I should say we do. That is the first article of our creed — Shoes. They are indispensable to the well-being of humanity. Such chilblains, cuts, sores, suffering, as shoes prevent! It is wonderful!”

“Well, then,” said I, bewildered, “why don’t you wear them?”

“Ah,” said he, “that’s just it. Why don’t we?”

Though considerably nonplused, I checked in, secured my room, and went directly to the coffeeshop and sat down by an amiable-looking gentleman, who likewise conformed to the conventions of his fellow citizens — he wore no shoes. Friendly enough, he suggested, after we had eaten, that we look about the city. The first thing we noticed upon emerging from the hotel was a huge structure of impressive lines. To this he pointed with pride.

“You see that?” said he. “That is one of our outstanding shoe manufacturing establishments.”

“A what?” asked I in amazement. “You mean you make shoes there?”

“Well, not exactly,” said he, a bit abashed, “we talk about shoes there, and believe me, we have one of the most brilliant young fellows you have ever heard. He talks most thrillingly and convincingly every week on this great subject of shoes. He has a most persuasive and appealing way. Just yesterday he moved the people profoundly with his exposition of the necessity of shoe-wearing. Many broke down and wept. It was really wonderful!”

“But why don’t they wear them?” said I, insistently.

“Ah,” said he, putting his hand upon my arm and looking

wistfully, "that's just it. Why don't they?"

Just then, as we turned down a side street, I saw through a cellar window a cobbler actually making a pair of shoes. Excusing myself from my friend, I burst into the little shop and asked the shoemaker how it happened that his shop was not overrun with customers. Said he, "Nobody here wants my shoes. They just talk about them."

"Give me what pairs you have ready," said I eagerly, and paid him thrice the amount he modestly asked. Hurriedly I returned to my friend, and proffered them to him, saying, "Here, my friend, some one of these pairs of shoes will surely fit you. Take them, put them on." But he only looked embarrassed; in fact he was well-nigh overcome with chagrin.

"Ah, thank you," said he politely, "But you don't understand. It just isn't being done!"

"But why don't you wear shoes?" said I.

"Ah," said he, smiling with his accustomed ingratiating touch of wisdom, "that's just it. Why don't we?"

And coming out of the City of Everywhere back into the Here, over and over that query rang in my ears: "Why don't we? Why don't we? Why don't we?"

The Threat of the Ordinary

Living Bible Colossians 3:5 reads like this: “away then with sinful earthly things. Deaden the evil desires lurking within you, have nothing to do with sexual sin, impurity, lust and sinful desires. Don’t worship the good things of life for that is idolatry.” How would you describe spiritual conditions in the days of Noah? The Bible says in the book of Genesis that the people were morally depraved. The imagination of their hearts was only evil continually. Now again I ask how would you describe the situation in Sodom and Gomorrah? Moses in the book of Genesis describes cities of iniquity whose inhabitants were moral degenerates. In fact, he tells us there were not 10 righteous people in the entire city of Sodom. In both cases society was corrupt. People were of the lowest kind. So wicked that our Holy God could no longer allow them to live.

Now by way of contrast notice how Jesus described conditions in Noah’s day and life in the city of Sodom. Luke 17:27, “they did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage until the day that Noah entered into the ark and the flood came and destroyed them all.” And then life in the city of Sodom was described like this in verse 28, “they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded.” I

submit to you that these things are not sinful things. They are the good things of life. They are the things that every generation has engaged in from the beginning of time. Eating, drinking, planting, buying, selling, building, getting married. Every generation has always been engaged in these things "the good things of life."

Does that mean that Moses contradicted Jesus or that Moses told a lie when he wrote in Genesis and said that the people in Noah's days were morally depraved and that the very imagination of their hearts was only evil continually and did Moses tell a lie again when he described the people in the days of Lot and the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah as being cities of iniquity filled with moral degenerates. No, Moses did not lie and Jesus did not contradict Moses. The thing we must recognize is that these two passages of scripture complement each other. We must recognize that these good things of life had so consumed their life that they had no time left for God. The good things of life had crowded out the heavenly. The good things of life had crowded out the spiritual and when God is crowded out, Satan takes over.

I am quoting from "Today's Child" re-printing television ratings from 17 years ago. A summary by the National Association for Better Radio and TV and here are the startling results of this summary. Programs rated objectionable for children: Abbott and Costello, Bat Masterson, Astro Boy, Brave Stallion, Candid Camera, Casey Jones, Colt 45, Daniel Boone, Dennis the Menace, Flipper, Have Gun, Greatest Show, Hop-A-Long Cassidy, Kit Carson, Laramie, Lone Ranger, Marshall Dillon, Maverick, Popeye, Porky Pig, Rawhide, Rin-Tin-Tin, Riverboat, Robin Hood, Roy Rogers, Sea Hunt, Red Skelton, Three Stooges, Wagon Trail, Wild Bill Hickock, Wyatt Earp, Yancy Derranger and Zane Gray Theatre. 17 years ago these programs that are now being played at Sunday school picnics were rated objectionable for children. Considered highly objectionable: Cheyenne, Hawaiian Eye, Man from Uncle, Ramar the Jungle,

Superman, Voyage to the Bottom of the Sea, Wanted Dead or Alive and Shenanigans. The National Association for Better Radio and TV objected to Robin Hood because that program justified unlawful behaviour. Maverick implied that gambling was an acceptable profession. In Popeye physical power settles all problems. Red Skelton's off colored jokes were obviously not for children or for adults. What would the National Association for Better Radio and TV say about Dallas or Soap or Three's Company or the Dating Game or Bosom Buddies or Dynasty or some of the adulterous soap operas that are shown every afternoon? Beware, for television is certainly one of the "good things of life."

We in this assembly this morning are probably not too greatly bothered or tempted by the gross sins of the devil. I sincerely doubt that murder, armed robbery, immoral actions bother most of us. What does bother us? What threatens us? It is the good things of life. The eating, drinking, buying, selling, marrying, planting and building.

I. The good things are the things that threaten us as individuals. Think just a minute how little time that we devote to spiritual things and how much time we devote to physical and material things. What is the result? Bible reading and prayer are neglected. We cry, "We don't have time to pray," and why don't we? Because we are busy worshipping the good things of life. Think how much time we spend to take care of our bodies and how much money we spend on food and clothing and shelter and how little of our money we spend on spiritual matters. Think about our talents. We have talents to use at the school, at our favorite club, and at our favorite lodge, and then we say, "We have nothing to use in the church," and why friends? We are so busy worshipping the good things of the world, eating and drinking and getting married and buying and selling and planting and building. Isn't it amazing how our automobiles generally want to take us someplace on the Lord's Day. Isn't that worshipping the good things of life? Our motor

boats, motor homes, all of the great sports events, hanggliding contests, and the fishing expedition are held on the Lord's Day.

II. Collectively, the church is constantly being threatened by the good things of life. We talk about church attendance. The members of the church who constantly pull the attendance down are not engaging in drinking and wicked deeds, they are worshipping the good things of life. It is recreation, business appointments, and family get togethers. These good things have crowded in on the Lord's Day so the Lord is crowded out by the eating and drinking and the buying and the planting and the building and the selling. We talk about church work, singing in the choir, teaching in the Sunday School class, working with the young people, committees functioning as they should, the sick in the church and the unsaved being visited. You know as well as I do that all these go begging not because church members are engaged in wicked practices but because church members are engaged with the good things of life. We talk about church finances. Church members are not limited because they have spent so much on evil things but because we have spent so much on the good things of life.

A number of years ago I held a revival meeting at a mid-western town of 500 in population. Everybody in town had their own well in their own yard and the church had a well in the church yard. Then they decided to put in one of the good things of life. They put in the water tower and they laid pipes. In doing so, they had to tax the population to raise the funds to pay for the good things of life. When the tax bill came to the church the trustees called a meeting and they said, "We won't pay it. It's not right to tax the church." They notified city hall. City hall sent back a message to the trustees of the church and said, "Oh yes, you will pay it. All property owners are sharing equally in this because everybody is benefiting from it. You will use the water and so you will pay the taxes." The trustees held another meeting and they said, "Don't pipe the water into the church because we don't want your old water." But they neglected to

tell the ladies of the church and they were getting ready for their mother-daughter banquet. The ladies thought, "Won't it be wonderful, we are going to have running water and so no longer will we have to go out to the church well and pump the water and carry it and heat it on the stove. We will have hot and cold running water and it will be so easy to make the tea and coffee and wash the dishes afterward." The president of the Women's Council was elected to go down to city hall and tell them to hurry and connect the church as quickly as possible.

The mother and daughter banquet was a success and they were all really happy. It was so easy to do the dishes with that hot and cold running water. But at the first of the month a utility bill arrived from city hall. The trustees got the bill and asked, "Who authorized city hall to put that water in the church?" They began their questioning of the church members and it soon came to light that the president of the Women's Council had done it. The trustees held a meeting with the president of the Women's Council and they informed her in no uncertain terms that they had decided that there was to be no water in the church building. The trustees called city hall and said, "Shut off the water."

The ladies had their next meeting and discussed the situation. They decided that the reason the trustees didn't want water was because they didn't want to pay the monthly utility bill. The ladies decided, bless their hearts, we will pay the bill. They called city hall and told them to turn the water back on and, "send the bill to us." That very week the trustees held their annual meeting to inspect the premises. Nobody knows what made them do it but one of them turned the spigot in the kitchen and water came out!!!

They had an emergency meeting at the city hall and told them, "We have told you three times before and we are not telling you again, cut that water off and leave it off!"

Meanwhile, the ladies had their monthly meeting and decided to have a meal together. They went into the kitchen to fix

their lunch and they turned on the spigot and there was not a drop that came out. They were so angry that they stormed up to the preacher's office and they said, "We are quitting the church." The preacher said, "Don't do that! What is the matter?" They said, "There is no water in the kitchen!" The preacher said, "I have some tools in the trunk of my car, I'll turn the water on if you won't quit the church." The ladies were happy again!

But when the trustees found out about it they fired the preacher! The next Sunday morning the Bible School superintendent got up in front of the church and he told what the trustees had done. People got so angry that they fired the trustees and they rehired the preacher! They got into one of the worst church fights imaginable all over a little simple good thing of life like water!!

III. The whole point of Jesus' teaching in Luke 17 is this: Jesus is coming back again. The world is going to come to an end. The sad thing is that when He comes back again everybody is going to be busy worshipping the good things of life and they are not going to be ready for His coming. The disciples had asked Jesus, "When is the end going to occur?" Jesus answered by saying, "The world is going to go on as it is. People are going to continue to be occupied with the same little old things that they have always been occupied with. They will not be concerned with the coming of the Lord and when He comes and catches them unprepared, they will be cast into outer darkness where there is weeping and wailing.

Once I knew a man who was a deacon in our Lord's church. A very consecrated, God fearing, growing, serving, working deacon. He had a lovely family. He helped with the youth program on Sunday evening, attended the prayer meeting on Wednesday evening, and he made evangelistic calls. But, this deacon decided to build a house. There is nothing wrong with building a house. There is nothing wrong with eating and drinking and buying and planting and getting married and all of these

other good things unless you worship them!!

As he started building the house he decided that he would have to do some Sunday work. That kept him from fulfilling his responsibilities with the youth program, it kept him out of evening worship. People went to him and said, "We missed you last Sunday night." He got very angry and said, "I am building a house." As time went on he decided he would have to miss church on Sunday morning as well. Again people were discouraged and worried and concerned and they went to him and they said, "We missed you on Sunday morning." He got very ruffled and said, "I am building a house. When I finish the house then I will come back to church."

Time went on and he began to drink. This deacon had never touched a drop of alcohol in his life. He was ashamed to face anybody. Time went on and he took up with another woman. He lost his wife and his children and in disgrace he left the community.

Some years went by and one day the telephone rang. It was a doctor who said, "Preacher, do you know?", and he named this ex-deacon of the church. The preacher said, "Of course, he used to be a deacon in our church. Where is he?" The doctor said, "In the hospital. He is asking for you." With all haste he made his way to the hospital to see the ex-deacon of the congregation. When he stepped into that hospital room, he did not even recognize the man who had once been such a faithful dedicated Christian servant. The ravages of sin had so changed the ex-deacon that his facial features were different. He looked so hard. The preacher called him by name and immediately the man recognized his preacher. He began to weep uncontrollably. He sobbed out, "Oh preacher, I want you to pray for me. If I die I am going to hell and preacher, I don't want to go to hell. Preacher you know that I love Jesus. You know I had a good family and you know all of the years that I served the Lord in the church. Preacher, I never meant for any of this to happen." But it did happen. Why? Because he began to worship the good

MY FAVORITE REVIVAL SERMONS

things of life. Do not worship the good things of life for that is idolatry.

Are the O Rings in Place?

A few months ago, an Eastern Airlines jet departed the Miami International Airport bound for Nassau in the Bahamas. This airplane, an Eastern Airlines L1011 carried 172 souls aboard. Just a few minutes out of Miami, they lost all power and the plane began to plummet down toward the water below. All of the people on board including the pilots thought that they would surely die. Through the skill of the pilots, they were able to establish a glide. The pilots finally managed to start one engine and they were able to make a straight in approach to the Miami International Airport and landed without harming a soul. In the investigation that followed, federal officials in Miami determined that the cause of the power failure in all of the engines was the absence of the critical 'O' rings on the metal chip detectors. This allowed the engine oil to seep out and the engines quit. Two mechanics were blamed for this negligence. One mechanic was blamed for the failure to replace the critical 'O' rings and the other mechanic was blamed for not catching the mistake. The mechanic's union is going to court to fight to keep these mechanics from being fired.

There are other people who might have failed to do something to that plane and it would not have been so serious.

For example, the people who clean the airplane between flights, they could have failed to do their job and no danger would have resulted. The people who bring food on board the airplanes could have failed to do their jobs and there would have been no danger just a little nuisance to the passengers. But, for the mechanic to fail to install the critical 'O' rings borders on being far more than negligent. Those two mechanics are very fortunate that they do not have the deaths of 172 souls on their conscience.

Even as that airplane took off with a plane load of passengers bound for a happy vacation and suddenly returned back to earth, so we see souls take off for heaven. Time after time, we have watched them come down the aisles of this church joyfully. We have witnessed their baptisms and our own hearts have sung for joy as we greeted them and welcomed them to the congregation. We have expected such great things. A few weeks later or a few months later, we have witnessed those same souls come crashing back to failure and we cry out "what is wrong?"

Just as federal officials investigated that L1011 to find out what was wrong, we should investigate why so many souls fail to be faithful in living the Christian life.

The answer is found in Acts 2. What happened to these souls that took off for heaven with such an outburst of joy on the day of Pentecost? They continued to be filled with joy. They continued to be faithful. Why were they faithful? Why are Christians today not faithful? The answer can be found in the 42nd verse which is our text. "And they continued steadfastly in the Apostles' doctrine and fellowship and in the breaking of bread and in prayers." There are the critical 'O' rings of Christianity!!

The Church of Christ is compared to a city four square. It is compared to a field hedged in on four sides. It is compared to a building with just one door to enter. One does not get a proper view outside of the city, outside of the field, or outside of the building. You have to be on the inside before you can see the beauty of the temple. Let us look at the church of our Lord

Jesus Christ as we examine carefully these four dimensions.

I. The first dimension of the church — the first critical ‘O’ ring if you please — if we are going to make the successful flight from earth to heaven is the width of the church. The width of the church is seen in its doctrine. The doctrine of Christ’s church is very narrow. Jesus expressed it like this in Matthew 7:13 and 14, “Enter ye in at the straight gate, for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction and many there be which go in thereat because straight is the gate and narrow is the way that leadeth to life and few there be that find it.” Does that mean that it is hard to get into the church? No, it is very easy to get into the church. Is it hard to understand a Christian life? No, it is very easy to know how to live a Christian life. The doctrine is narrow by contrast to the broad way that most people take which leads to hell. What is the Apostles’ doctrine? It is two fold. First, it is the doctrine of salvation. Secondly, it is the doctrine of Christian living. In Acts 2, it is quite clear.

The doctrine of salvation was the preaching of Jesus Christ. Peter preached from the prophets proving that Jesus Christ was the Son of the Living God and the Savior of the world. The doctrine of salvation involved believing this teaching that was preached about Jesus. It involved the repentance of sins committed. It involved the commitment of the life of Christ in Christian baptism and the purpose of that baptism was to remit all sins. It involved the doctrine of receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit whom we need if we are going to live the Christian life. Every example of conversion in the book of Acts follows that same doctrine. There was only one doctrine.

What about the doctrine of the Christian life? This is also a very, very narrow doctrine. It can all be summarized in Galatians 5. There are some do’s and some don’t’s. Let us consider the don’t of Christian living. Galatians 5:19-21 says, “Now the works of the flesh are manifest which are these, adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies,

envying, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God." Here are the do's. "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit." This is the Apostles' doctrine and the New Testament says that these first members of the church were successful because they installed that critical 'O' ring. They continued steadfastly in the Apostles' doctrine. II Timothy, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine." It is profitable for doctrine. Why? "So that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." Romans 16:17, "Now, I beseech you brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which you have learned and avoid them for they are such that serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple."

II. Let us examine the second dimension of the church. The depth of the church is seen in the fellowship. What is fellowship? Shaking hands? The holy hug? The holy kiss? That is not the primary meaning of 'fellowship'. The primary meaning is the paying of money into God's treasury that the kingdom of God might advance. It means giving our entire lives daily as a sacrifice for the kingdom of God. Fellowship means the depth that God's people are willing to go to see the kingdom of God succeed and in Acts 2:44 and 45, we see the depths of fellowship. "All that believed were together. They had all things common. They sold their possessions and goods and parted them to all men as every man had need." They had such deep fellowship that they actually sacrificed all that they had showing their love for one another that the kingdom might succeed.

III. The third dimension of the church is the length seen in

the breaking of bread. “And they continued steadfastly in the Apostles’ doctrine” is the ‘O’ ring #1, fellowship is ‘O’ ring #2, and breaking of bread is ‘O’ ring #3. It is a lengthy procedure. Christ began the breaking of bread and He said that we were to do it until He comes again. It has been going on for almost 2,000 years and it is going to continue to go on until Jesus comes. Why? Because it is very important that we meet every Lord’s Day and break bread. Jesus put it like this in John 6:53, “Verily, verily I say unto you except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, have eternal life and I will raise him up on the last day for my flesh is meat indeed and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood dwelleth in me and I in him.” I meet around the Lord’s table every Lord’s Day because I need to be there. I cannot do without this spiritual food. I need the body of Christ. I need the blood of Christ because I need the spiritual strength that Christ gives to me when I remember Him around the Lord’s table. May God allow us to be so concerned about this critical ‘O’ ring that we will forget about fishing on Sunday and golfing on Sunday and everything else on Sunday that keeps people from God’s house.

IV. The fourth dimension is the height of the church — prayer. “And they continued steadfastly in the Apostles’ doctrine and fellowship and in breaking of bread and in prayers.” What happened to the church when they got into trouble? They prayed. When the Apostle Peter was in prison, the church met in Rhoda’s house and they prayed. What did God do? He answered their prayers and miraculously released Peter from the prison and he went out and preached the gospel elsewhere. What happened to the Apostle Paul when he met with the elders at Miletus on his way to Rome? He was concerned about the church because the wolves were entering the church. Paul prayed with the elders. They wept and they hugged each other as they prayed together and God answered their prayers. What

happened to Lydia when she needed to be saved? She prayed about it and Paul came and told her what to do to be saved. When the sick people were ill in the church, what did they do? They prayed and they were healed. The prayers of a righteous man availeth much. Jesus Himself demonstrated His own personal need by praying. He met the cross in Gethsemane as He prayed and He offered forgiveness to those who crucified Him on the cross as He prayed for them.

In a little village near Warsaw lived a German peasant whose name was Dobry. Because of adverse circumstances, he had become delinquent in paying his rent and the landlord was threatening to evict him. All his pleadings for an extension of time had been in vain and the next day he and his family were to be turned out into the snow. Hearing the church bells chime for evening prayer, Dobry and his loved ones knelt to ask the Lord to supply their needs for they were at the end of all human resources. After prayer, they rose to their feet and sang an old hymn: "Commit thou all thy grief and ways into His hands."

As they finished singing, they heard a strange tapping at the window. Opening it, they found a raven that Dobry's grandfather had tamed many years before. It held in its beak a ring of great value set with many precious stones. An investigation disclosed that it had been lost that day by the king who was traveling through that town. Dobry returned it and the king rewarded him with a large sum of money sufficient to build a house of his own.

To commemorate that wonderful event, a plaque was prepared on which was a carved raven with a ring in its beak and underneath the stanza of the hymn they had been singing when the bird pecked at their window. Dobry recognized it even as the prophet Elijah had been divinely fed by the fowl of the air, he too, had been rescued by a raven in answer to prayer. God is a prayer hearing and prayer answering God.

Are the 'O' rings in place?!

Shedding Innocent Blood

In Proverbs 6:16-17 the wise man Solomon tells “There are six things which Jehovah hateth; yea, seven which are an abomination unto him: haughty eyes, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood. . . .”

Each day in America 3,500 human lives are put to death. The victims will die without benefit of trial or counsel. They are executed by techniques more cruel and inhumane than any horror movie ever portrayed. These deaths occur in abortion clinics and hospitals throughout our land. Conspirators in this atrocity include willing mothers, medical doctors, government social planners and Supreme Court Justices. These victims are not convicted criminals, they are innocent unborn human babies. One and a half million of these youngsters will die in the United States this year. It is estimated that between 40 and 55 million abortions will be performed throughout the world. In the face of this, Pharaoh’s extermination of the Hebrew boys was but a ripple on the ocean of time. The slaughter of the babies of Bethlehem by Herod did not equal one abortion clinic’s daily quota.

In Genesis 9:5, God’s Word says, “And surely your blood

of your lives will I require. At the hand of every beast will I require it, and at the hand of every man. At the hand of every man's brother will I require the life of man." Life is sacred in God's sight. In Deuteronomy 27:25 the Bible says, "Cursed be he that taketh reward to slay an innocent person. And all the people shall say, Amen."

On January 22, 1973, the Supreme Court of the United States of America in a case known as *Roe v. Wade*, made a ruling that no state may forbid an abortion prior to birth, if in the opinion of one licensed physician, an abortion is necessary to preserve the life or health of the mother. Very few people would argue with the Supreme Court when they said, "The mother's life." But what about the word 'health' — the health of the mother? By the court's definition, the health of the mother has come to mean the physical, the emotional, the psychological condition of the woman, and even the age of the woman. In other words, anything that is relevant to the woman. The opinion of the Supreme Court then is that a woman can have an abortion if the baby is to cause any kind of distress in her life or in the life of the family. Since the Supreme Court made that ruling on January 22, 1973, there have been in excess of 8 million babies killed in the United States of America. According to the Supreme Court, it is legal to kill the baby any time during the nine months that the mother is carrying the child. Many, many babies have been aborted that were fully capable of living independently of their mother, had it not been for that cruel process of death that was brought about by the injection of a chemical into the mother, or by an actual knife that cut the baby to pieces. Abortion is not a pretty picture.

There has been a book written by a lady named Jean Staker Garton, and in her book she tells this true story. She says, "All of our children were in bed. The late night television news was over, and I was putting the final touches to a presentation that I was going to teach to medical students the next day at UCLA. As I reviewed some of the slides which might be used in my

presentation, there appeared on the screen the picture of an abortion victim, aged 2½ months gestation. Her body had been dismembered by the long handled knife of the surgeon as he used it in the D&C abortion procedure. Suddenly, I heard another person near me. I turned to find that, unexpectedly, my youngest son had silently entered the room. My little boy stood there aghast at the picture on the screen, and he cried out with great sadness, 'Mommy, who broke the baby?' If a small, innocent child can see that it is murder, how do adults miss the truth?"

By manipulating the English language, Americans have been conditioned to accept abortion. Watch TV and every time they talk about abortion, they will use one or more of these phrases. You notice your newspapers, and every time a pro-abortionist writes a column in the newspaper, they will use this language. (1) Every woman has a right to control her own body. (2) Every child a wanted child. (3) Termination of pregnancy. (4) Freedom to choose. (5) A fetus is not a person. Those are the 5 key phrases that are used again, and again, and again. You have heard every one of them on TV time without number. Let's examine those 5 key phrases a little bit more closely.

(1) Every woman has a right to control her own body. Is that true? Well, of course it is not true. None of us, men or women, have a right to do whatever we want to do with our own body legally. You do not have the right to take your own body and put it behind the steering wheel of an automobile without a license. And, you are subject to arrest and imprisonment if you do. I pray that you don't drink, but if you do drink, you have no right to get behind the wheel of an automobile with your body and drive while drunk. If you do, they will take away your license and they will lock you up in jail for it. If you should develop chicken pox, you have no right to bring your body into the classroom, Sunday School, classroom at college or anywhere else. I hope and pray you do not take drugs. If you do, you are violating the law. You have absolutely no right, and it is against

the law, to abuse your body with drugs. I guarantee you that not a one of us has the right to take our naked body and parade down Main Street. My individual rights and your individual rights are not absolute at any time. In the case of pregnancy there are two bodies that are involved. Now suppose that a woman did have a right to do as she pleased with her own body, she wouldn't have a right to do as she pleases with the baby's body that she is carrying.

(2). Every child a wanted child. The pro-abortionists are saying, "If a couple does not want the child, wouldn't it be better to terminate the pregnancy than to bring forth another unwanted child into the world." But I wonder how many of us would be here if we had been wanted. How many of you as parents have wanted every child that you brought forth into the world? Or, were you surprised on a few occasions. I have heard some people say, "Well, we had an accident." I wonder how many of us are an accident. But, if children come along that weren't expected, that we weren't particularly wanting, we accept those children. And what happens, we fall in love with them and we raise them up as our children. Recently, a professor at UCLA Medical School brought this situation before his students in the classroom. He said, "Now here is a problem. I want you all to vote on it. The father has syphilis. The mother has tuberculosis. They have already had 4 children. The first child was born blind; the second child died; the third child was born deaf; the fourth child was born with tuberculosis, and now the mother is pregnant with the fifth child. What do you think?" All of the students in the classroom at UCLA voted . . . this would be justifiable cause for termination of pregnancy — abortion. After they voted, the professor said, "Congratulations, students, you have just murdered Beethoven. Because those are the true circumstances of the family history of Beethoven." Just suppose that Beethoven's mother would have aborted him. Think of what the world would have been robbed of. All of the marvelous music that that genius composed for

our enjoyment.

(3) Termination of pregnancy. How many legs would a sheep have if you called a tail a leg? Now, if you said 5, you're wrong, because calling a tail a leg doesn't make it a leg. Society frequently employs linguistic deception in order to call something what it is not. During the Vietnam war, we called it police action and that was supposed to soften the blow. Body count — well that was the number of Americans that were killed every day. We said, "Oh, everybody feels better because it is just a police action and it's just a body count." Termination of pregnancy is another classic example of linguistic deception which allows society to deal with abortion in the abstract. It is a phrase which disguises the truth by implying that it is simply a victimless procedure as uncomplicated as turning off the lights. You simply make the lady unpregnant. Now, that is far more acceptable to society and it softens the conscience of the society rather than to say — poison the baby, mutilate the baby, shred the unborn baby to pieces. You can call the pre-born human being a blob if you want to, or you can label his violent premeditated death termination of pregnancy if you want to call it that. But, calling a sheep's tail a leg doesn't change it. And calling it termination of pregnancy does not change the fact that it is murder.

(4) Freedom to choose. Oh my, we love that. We are Americans, we believe in freedom. What's wrong with that? Freedom of choice. That's what we are allowing women when we follow the Supreme Court's ruling and allow them to terminate their pregnancy if that is what they choose. For those who favor abortion, they are simply trying to get the silent majority of Americans to be neutral on the issue and if they can get us to be neutral, why they are going to win. They don't mind if we say, "Well, as for myself, I wouldn't have an abortion, but I support the rights of others to choose an abortion if that's what they want to choose because we live in a free society." Do you think it would be wonderfully broadminded of someone if they

said, "I would not choose to enslave a black man, but if others want to make a slave out of him, why I reserve the right of choice for everybody because this is America." Or how tolerant would you think it was if we were to say, "Well, I would not put the Jews in the gas chamber myself, but I support the right of others to choose to put Jews in the gas chamber if that is what they want to do." Did you watch *Holocaust*? Can you imagine Adolf Hitler and the German people slaughtering 6 million Jews in the gas chambers? How inhuman can anybody be? But what about we Americans? We have done worse than Nazi Germany. We have murdered not 6 million but 8 million babies. Eight million since 1973.

(5) A fetus is not a person. The Bible says a lot about that. In Isaiah 49:1 and 5: "The Lord called me from the womb." Every life is sacred to God, and in the Bible there are many occasions when God called a person from the moment of their conception. The Apostle Paul said in Galatians 1:15, "God set me apart before I was born." When Elizabeth heard Mary's greetings, Luke 1:41 says, "The baby leaped in her womb." The baby was inside the mother, but the Bible doesn't call that baby fetus. The Bible calls it a baby.

In Genesis 9:5 and Deuteronomy 27:25, we read, "Cursed is he that takes reward for slaying the innocent." I ask you, what does a doctor do who deals in abortions? He takes money, a reward, and he kills babies. What is that but taking a reward for killing an innocent being. That means that all of the doctors who engage in abortions are cursed, they are damned, they are hell bound.

Maloa Varnell, one of the dearest and most loved and longest members of Hickory Valley Christian Church, gave me this article and asked me to read it tonight. I am glad to do it because I think that it is the best way that I can sum up this sermon.

Oct. 5; Today my life began. My parents do not know it yet.

SHEDDING INNOCENT BLOOD

I am as small as the pollen of a flower, but it is already. I will be a girl. I will have blonde hair and blue eyes. Nearly everything is settled already, even that I shall love flowers.

Oct. 19; I have grown a little, but I am still too small to do anything for myself. My mother does almost everything for me, though she still does not know she is carrying me under her heart. But is it true that I am not yet a real person? That only my mother exists? I am a real person, just as a small crumb of bread is still real bread. My mother is, and I am.

Oct. 23; My mouth is just beginning to open. Just think — in a year or so I'll be laughing, and later I'll start to talk. My first word will be "Mama".

Oct. 25; Today my heart began to beat. It will beat softly for the rest of my life, never stopping; after many years it will tire, it will stop, and then I shall die.

Nov. 2; I am growing continually. My arms and legs are taking shape, but I must wait a long time for these tiny legs to raise me to my mother's arms, before these little arms will be able to conquer the earth and befriend people.

Nov. 12; Tiny fingers are beginning to firm on my hands. How small they are; one day I'll strike my mother's hair to my mouth and she'll say "Oh, dirty".

Nov. 20; Only today that doctor told my mother that I am living here under her heart. How happy she must be. Are you happy, Mother?

Nov. 25; My mother and father are probably thinking about a name for me; and they don't even know that I am a little girl, so they are probably calling me "Andy". But I want to be called Barbara. I am growing so big.

Dec. 10; My hair is growing. It is bright and shiny as the sun. I wonder what kind of hair my mother has?

Dec. 13; I am almost able to see, though it is night around me. When Mother brings me into the world, it will be full of sunshine and overflowing flowers. I have never seen a flower, you know, but more than anything I want to see my mother. How do you look, Mother?

Dec. 24; I wonder if my mother hears the delicate beat of my heart? Some people are born with sickly hearts, and then the gentle fingers of the doctor perform miracles to make them healthy. But my heart is healthy.

It beats so evenly; tup-tup-tup-tup. You shall have a healthy

daughter, Mother.

Dec. 28; Today my mother killed me.

Anonymous

When I preach to the drunkards, I don't expect them to go out of the service and say, "Well, I'm going to burn in hell forever because I once got drunk." I expect the drunkard to repent, to turn to Jesus and seek forgiveness and not drink any more. When I preach to the thieves, I don't expect them to go out and say, "Well, I'm going to burn in hell forever because I once stole." I expect the thief to repent and turn to Jesus and be forgiven. I don't have the slightest doubt in my mind that I am speaking to ladies tonight who have had an abortion. But, I don't want you to leave this service and think, "Well, I am going to go to hell and burn forever because I had an abortion." Abortion is no worse than any other sin. It is murder, but those who murdered Jesus were forgiven when they repented of their sin of murder and accepted Jesus as their Savior and were baptized. Oh, I pray that whatever sins we have committed that we will repent and accept Christ and be saved. And that we will make up our mind to live a Christian life henceforth. That is the Bible solution to this problem or any other.

Always Be Thankful

A number of years ago, I received a letter from some friends. They told me about problems that they were having with their oldest son. Among other things, he was involved in drugs and they said, "Please pray for our son." I wrote back and said, "I will be praying for your son", and I did. Things did not get any better, they got worse. This family wrote me another letter and they told me how the condition had worsened. Their son was not only involved in taking drugs, he also had become involved in selling them and they said, "Pray for our son", and I wrote back and said, "I will", and I did. Time went on and they wrote me again and said, "Now our son is stealing things in order to purchase drugs and he has been caught and put into jail. Pray for our son", and I did. Time went on and they wrote me another letter and they said, "Things are worse. Our son has now had a mental breakdown and is now in the mental hospital. Pray for our son", and I did. At that time, we moved to Chattanooga and I started ministering. These people were not members but right away they came and spoke to me. The father buried his face in his hands and he said, "I don't know what to do. I don't understand why God has not answered prayer." I

said to this father, "Have you ever thought about thanking God?" and he looked at me like I had lost my mind. I cited him this verse of scripture; Colossians 3:15 "always be thankful". I said, "I know it sounds ridiculous but the Bible says to do it anyway." I referred him to some other scripture like I Thessalonians 5:18, "in everything give thanks for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you." I also referred him to Ephesians 5:20, "giving thanks always for all things unto God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." I pointed out Philipians 4:6, "be careful for nothing but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving that your request be made known unto God and then and only then will the peace of God keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus our Lord." This father said, "I don't feel thankful." I said, "I am not asking you to feel thankful. I am asking you to give thanks to God because this is the will of God in Christ Jesus." And he said, "That would be hard to do. My son has been in drugs, has been arrested for thievery, is now in the mental hospital, and you're asking me to give thanks?" I said, "Yes, that is what the Bible says. It says always give thanks."

We find it easy to thank God when things are good. When something good comes our way we say, "Praise the Lord", but I Thessalonians 5:18 says, "in everything give thanks." "In everything give thanks." We need to take this verse literally and seriously. "In everything give thanks unto God for this is the will of God concerning you in Jesus Christ." That means everything — good, bad, and indifferent.

As that father and mother sat in our parsonage three years ago, the father had his face buried in his hands and he said, "It is almost impossible for me to do that." I said, "Will you do it anyway?" He said, "I will try." The boy ran away and they called me immediately and I asked, "Did you give thanks?" and they said, "We are trying." He went into the Army and got hold of more drugs and I asked, "Did you give thanks?" and they said, "Yes, we are thanking God but we don't

understand.” Then the boy disappeared and they contacted me again by telephone and I asked, “Are you thanking God?” They said, “Yes.” Two weeks ago I received a letter from the father and mother and the letter started out, “Praise the Lord. Our son has returned in his right mind. He has a job and he is going to church. God has truly performed a miracle in his life. He has finally answered our prayers.”

Dear friends, I want to submit to you that I believe with all of my heart that it was only because they had faith enough to thank God in everything that God released His power in such a way that their prayer was answered. Any doctor, any psychiatrist will tell you that you will be a healthier person, healthier physically, healthier mentally, healthier emotionally, healthier socially if you will exchange thanksgiving for complaining.

Now I am convinced as I study the word of God that thanksgiving in everything releases the power of God into a situation and enables that situation to work out for your good and for God’s glory. I am also equally convinced that many of our dilemmas and difficulties and situations that we face are not being solved because we are trying to solve them ourselves instead of trusting God to do it.

I believe we limit God by our unbelief. You remember that Jesus entered into a certain city and the Bible tells us, a strange thing, Jesus could not do many mighty works in that place. Why? Because of their unbelief. In Matthew 17 when the disciples faced failure they asked Jesus, “Why did we fail?”, and Jesus responded, “Because of your unbelief.” The Bible teaches us that when we believe God by expressing thanksgiving, it is like putting gasoline on a fire. There is an explosion. When you express thanks to God in everything there is an explosion of divine power and God moves into action. My thanksgiving to God in everything releases the ability of God to work in my life in difficult situations. Thanksgiving in everything is the highest form of submission to the will of God. Thanksgiving in

everything is the highest expression of faith in God.

It doesn't take much faith for me to thank God and praise God when things are going good and smooth but when the clouds darken, when I cannot find my way out of the dilemma, then I began to praise God and thank Him anyway, this is the highest form of expressing my faith and confidence in God. That thanksgiving releases the ability of God in my life and is why the apostle Paul says over and over again "in everything give thanks". If you will take your concordances all the way through the Bible, I am sure that your Bible study will lead you to the realization that this is one of the most frequent commandments in the word of God.

If disaster comes into my life am I to be thankful? Yes, that is what the Bible says. If tragedy strikes my family, am I to be thankful? Yes, that is what the Bible says. When we find ourselves in situations where there is no escape and we are miserable and we have tribulation and there is sickness and persecution is being heaped upon us, we are to thank God. You say, "That is impossible." Yes, I agree, however, God never commands us to do anything that is beyond our obedience. We can do it by the power of the indwelling spirit.

I. Fact 1 — God controls every circumstance that comes into your life. Everything that comes to us must be strained through the filter of God's will. You say, "Wait a minute, Satan is our adversary. Can't Satan bring a disaster? Can't Satan even bring death?" Yes, he can do that. He has done it many times. He did it to Job for one example but remember that everything that happened to Job even though the devil did it it had to be strained through the filter of God's will before it reached Job. God was in control and is in control of the smallest detail. Jesus said, "The very hairs of your head are numbered and no sparrow can fall to the ground without the Father taking notice."

Jesus stood before Pontius Pilate and Pilate said, "Don't you know that I have the power of life and death?", and Jesus said, "You have no power except it be given to you of God."

The remarkable thing is that God gave Pilate power to crucify the Son of God. In I Corinthians 10 God states that one of the reasons that He destroyed so many Israelites is because they murmured. They complained. No circumstance comes into our lives except God allows it. Now please notice and don't misunderstand what I am saying. I did not say God caused it. I am not saying that God would cause anybody to be sick or that God would cause death or accidents or tragedy or that God would cause anybody heartbreak. I know the devil does all of these things but I am saying that God allows it to happen. Everything that happens even horrible tragedies God allows to happen and so for us to grumble and gripe would be for us to grumble against God because everything God has allowed and therefore strained it through the filter of His will.

II. God uses every circumstance to accomplish His purpose in our lives if we allow Him to do so. God's plan for your life is that you will be saved and that your life will be changed to conform to the image of Jesus Christ His Son so that you will be presented in His presence spotless and perfect. In Philippians 1:6 the Bible says, "Being confident of this very thing that he which has begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." When Jeremiah went down to the potter's house, God said, "I want you to observe the potter." This is what I am trying to get you to do, observe the potter. God is the potter. We are the clay. The wheel is rolling and it is the wheel of human circumstance. God's hand is upon that wheel of human circumstance and He is using those things to create out of each one of us the image that He wants in our lives. If we will have the faith to accept these two facts, God is in control and God uses things to accomplish His purpose, we can start laughing at the devil. "Alright Mr Devil you brought sickness in my life, you brought difficulty to my life, but Mr Devil, you are not going to have the victory because you see, the Lord has the power to change this evil that you brought into my life and make it into good." II Corinthians 1:8 and 9 Paul gives an ex-

planation for all the trials that he went through. He says, "I have been distressed, I have been afflicted, I have been forsaken. Why? In order that God may keep me to trust Him." Did you know that the trials and difficulties that you are going through can be used by God to increase your faith and teach you to trust Him and God can even change bad things into good in your life and bring blessings if you will just have faith to thank Him in all things?

Do you remember Ruth in the Bible? It is one of the greatest love stories ever written. Talk about "when it rains it pours". Look at that poor girl! She married a fellow from a foreign land and then he up and died and left her a widow. Then there was a famine in the land that got so bad that she left and went with her mother-in-law to live in her country. She was poor and the only way she could make a living was by going out into the fields and becoming a gleaner. A gleaner was a person who after the harvest was past went through the fields picking up the leftovers. You would think that Ruth would have done a lot of complaining. "Why did God allow my husband to die? Why did God allow famine to come to the land? Why has God allowed me to be so poor that I have to go out and be a gleaner?" But, Ruth did not spend her time complaining. Ruth trusted God and so God was able because of the faith of this fine woman to accomplish His own purpose. One day while she was out in the fields gleaning, she met a rich man named Boaz who was a relative of her dead husband. They fell in love. She married Boaz. She became the grandmother of King David and thus the ancestor of our Lord Jesus Christ.

In everything give thanks and if we will, we will release the power of God because when we give thanks in everything that is the highest form of faith and then we allow God to do a wonderful work in our lives.

Some months ago, Brother Vic Bond, a beloved member of Hickory Valley Christian Church, suffered a terrible heart attack. He was right here in church services Wednesday night

ALWAYS BE THANKFUL

when the heart attack began. His wife rushed him to Diagnostic Hospital where he lay critically ill for a long time. There appeared to be no hope. Time after time when I went to the hospital, his wife would tell me, "No hope!" When I would step into the room he was often too weak to even lift his hand to shake hands but the first words that he would always speak were these, he would say, "Thank the good people of the church for their prayers." Then if he had strength he would say, "I love everybody at Hickory Valley Christian Church." Then he would say, "I love my Savior. If I don't make it, it is okay because I know that I am going to heaven." Day after day all I ever heard from Vic Bond was thanksgiving. I believe that God was able to take a very hopeless situation and restore him because Vic expressed thanksgiving. It is God's command. It is God's will. It'll change your life. It'll release the power of God. It will change the church if in all things we give thanks regardless of the circumstance.

Let's Evangelize the World Now!

And he said unto them, Thus it is written and thus it behooved Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day; and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And Ye are witnesses of these things.

Luke 24:46-48

Recently in Kansas City, Missouri, a small boy, Timothy Adams, 6 years of age was loitering on his way home from kindergarten. The time had reached 5 p.m. His mother, Mrs. Paul Adams, called the police 90 minutes after kindergarten had let out. Suddenly there was a booming thundering voice from the heavens that shouted, "Timothy Adams, go home. Timothy Adams, go home." Within minutes policemen, William Dycus and James Treece, in a police helicopter saw a boy streaking for home. By 5:15 p.m. Mrs. Adams called the police again and reported the safe arrival of her 6 year old who had run into the house, wide-eyed and excited, announcing, "A big voice in the sky just told me to come home." Mrs. Adams told the police that she did nothing to clear up for her son the mystery of the origin of that great voice in the sky. The story of Timothy is so

typical of a 6 year old boy! Knowing little boys, Timothy probably became so involved with playing with his friends that he had forgotten all that his mother and daddy had said about coming straight home from kindergarten. It's not that he had forgotten that anything had been said, it's just that he had gotten involved in things with friends and had temporarily forgotten. Isn't this just as typical with the adult world? We get so involved with things and friends that we forget about the teachings of Almighty God. There is only one basic difference between Timothy's big voice in the sky and ours. Timothy heard the voice, remembered, obeyed and went home. We hear God's voice and we remember and we continue to ignore it. Our Lord Jesus Christ who has all authority, both in heaven, and on earth, has commanded us to evangelize the world (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:16). This command is repeated in our text (Luke 24:46-48). The thrust of my message today is to appeal to you to heed the commandment of our Lord Jesus Christ, just as urgently as Timothy Adams heeded the command of the "big voice in the sky."

According to the latest issue of the Horizons Magazine we now have nearly 2000 missionaries of the Christian Church and Churches of Christ — more than we have ever had before. But there were 210 foreign countries in the world and our almost 2000 missionaries of the Christian Churches are serving in 50 countries of the world. This means we need missionaries in 160 more countries.

We are rich here in America — we are 7% of the world's population, but we own 51% of its wealth. We have 74% of the telephones; 71% of the trucks; 57% of the world's automobiles; 46% of the world's electrical energy; we have 30% of all the Christian preachers in the world. But this is not good, dear friends, it's bad. We are in the same danger as the rich young ruler that Christ advised to "Go thy way and sell what you have and give to the poor" (Mark 10:21).

It is so sad that having all of these riches we are not using

them to evangelize the world as Christ commanded us to.

“Let’s Evangelize the World Now” — how much more timely could this subject be? The population explosion, threatened nuclear destruction, emergent nations, racial turmoil, moral and theological revolution — all of these cry out for the living Christ.

I. Why Evangelize? In Christian obedience, the word of the Master is binding. Nothing has happened in this space age to alter in the slightest the command of Jesus Christ to preach the gospel to the whole world. But what about the realization of this subject?

Is it not absurd to think that the globe with its 4 billion human beings, multiplying at about 2% a year can be evangelized within this generation?

Moreover, the growth of the church in the recent decades has been terribly slow. At the turn of the century Christians were estimated at 35% of the world’s population. Now, seven decades later, the proportion has fallen to about 30%. If the rate of decline continues by the year 2000 Christians will only be 20% of mankind. And yet, friends, I believe that we can achieve what the title of this message suggests — **LET’S EVANGELIZE THE WORLD NOW**. I believe that we can realize this worthy goal because, for one reason, of the kind of age that we are living in and the kind of a commission that we are laboring under. For the first time in human history the majority of mankind can now be reached almost instantly. No part of the earth is more than 48 hours travel time from any other part. Modern means of communication and travel make the evangelization of the world in a single generation more possible now than ever before. And consider the kind of a commission we Christians have — Jesus Christ never promised His followers that the whole world would be converted through their efforts, but He ordered them to take His message to the whole world and to do it in the power of the Spirit. The greatest single factor inhibiting the evangelization of the world is the narrow concept of Christian witness that per-

vades practically all churches. The basic reason why Christianity is being out-distanced by the population is that most church members consider evangelism the business of professionals rather than the responsibility of every believer.

We must evangelize the world of this generation because there may not be another generation.

What do we mean by evangelize? The late Archbishop of Canterbury, William Temple, who died in 1944 gave this definition of evangelize — "To evangelize is to so present Christ Jesus in the power of the Holy Spirit that men shall come to put their trust in God through Him, to accept Him as their Savior and serve Him as their King in the fellowship of His Church." During the years that I taught personal evangelism at Atlanta Christian College in East Point, Georgia, I used to give the students in my classes this definition of evangelize — "To evangelize is to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ to the unconverted everywhere according to the Will of God."

At this moment in history the world of men is drastically divided; language against language; nation against nation; color against color. In the midst of all of these divisions the church must sound the clear note that God sees all men as a single race. Racism is wrong, precisely, because all men must own Adam as their father, even as all believers must recognize that God fashions the new man created in Christ Jesus, the second Adam from above with utter indifference to race. Through the incarnation God has intervened for the salvation of lost men and to His Church He has committed the proclamation of the one gospel to the whole human race. The gospel is God's good news to men — the message of the cross. It proclaims that men "who all have sinned and come short of God's glory" need the Savior. At its heart is the truth that God's only Son lived a life of perfect obedience in the flesh for the penalty of man's sin in his body on the cross through His atoning death and resurrection freely offers reconciliation with God to the world of sinners — this is God's only gospel. Evangelism is the single task of the

church — everywhere and always we are to preach the one gospel whose relevance to the whole human race is assured by our Lord's great commission.

II. How shall we, then, evangelize the world now? Here we get into the realm of methods. An apology could be offered for nearly all the methods of evangelism used today, but the fact that we are losing ground exposes them as relative failure. Nearly any method will achieve some success. Some would argue that Christian literature is the way to do it; others would argue for radio; many would argue for television; many would argue for institutional evangelism and of course, there are those who would say church building evangelism is the only way to do it. Brethren, I may not prefer your method and you may not prefer my method, but the one thing that we must do is to use whatever method we personally believe in and get the gospel to the people. Let's not argue and debate and cause divisions over what method shall be used in evangelizing the world — let's use all of the methods, but let's do it now. Some can use the radio, some can use television, some can use an airplane, some can use an automobile, some can use a bicycle, some can use tracts and books, some can use the Bible college, some can use a Christian hospital, some can use a Christian school, some can use the evangelistic meeting in the church building, in a tent or in the city hall. There are many methods of reaching people. As far as I am concerned all of these methods are good as long as by some method we get the life-saving gospel to the dying world. After Pentecost, a handful of men, most of them uneducated, went out to preach and in a few generations the world was turned upside down for Christ. What did they have that we do not have? Why was their witness so effective? They were a tiny minority confronted by the hostility of the Jews and the ridicule of the pagan Gentiles, but men were converted — the church was established and Christians helped bring about the tremendous social changes. Did these uneducated and ordinary men have something we have lost or perhaps have failed to use? It is true

that these men had been with Jesus and they in their hearts and on their faces revealed the sign of redeemed men — men who had a personal experience with the risen Savior. They had had the privilege of seeing, talking with and even touching the One they knew had been crucified and buried. But through simple faith we can have this same experience. Christ can be just as real to us as he was to them and Christ can transform our lives as He transformed their lives. We have the same God these men had — He may be dead for some, but we know Him personally and we are aware of His promise to be with us. He is the God of whom the psalmist said, “From everlasting to everlasting thou are God” (Psalm 90:2). He is the One of Whom Isaiah wrote, “The Lord is the everlasting God, the creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable” (Isaiah 40:28). We have the same risen Lord.

The resurrection was an ever recurring theme in the preaching of the disciples — Christ had risen from the dead and His resurrection was the crowning proof of the validity of the cross. How much do we stress this fact? Have we permitted the scientific approach of our day to blunt supernatural religion, that naturally has supernatural manifestations? Is our God so small that we look at Him through a test tube or seek answers about Him from a computer? We have the same gospel which the apostle said “is the power of God unto salvation to everyone who has faith” (Romans 1:16). It is this same gospel that Paul summed up in this wonderfully simple and clear statement, “That Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures and that he was buried and was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures” (I Cor. 15:3,4). It is the same gospel that today brings conviction, conversion and redemption whenever and wherever it is preached — not to all men (nor did it in our Lord’s time) but to all who heed the Spirit’s call. We have the same Holy Spirit; the one who was the power behind the apostles’ preaching and who is able and willing to make our preaching and teaching effective if only we will place programs,

organizations, personalities, activities and methods in their rightful secondary place. The disciples were commanded to stay in Jerusalem until the Holy Spirit came upon them and they were baptized with His power. This was the equipment necessary for fulfilling the Lord's command to make disciples of all nations. Our failures today may stem largely from our forgetting that "it is not by might nor by power but by my spirit, saith the Lord of hosts" (Zechariah 4:6). We have the same Holy Scriptures which continue to be the sword of the spirit wherever used and believed. The difference today is that we have the complete revelation of the divine truth; the early disciples only had the Old Testament and to this they referred for authority and for what they knew to be divine truth. We have the Old and the New Testament in which is revealed the Christ. We have the same privilege and power of prayer — direct communication with the throne of grace where there is help and guidance and blessings for all who seek it.

Since we, like those men who went out to shake the world for Jesus Christ, have all these assets, why has the cause of world evangelization lagged? The inevitable conclusion is that we are not making use of what God has provided — weak in faith, distracted by world conditions, sophisticated to the point of disdaining the simplicity of the first century approach. (Sometimes even feeling, perhaps, that we need not heed our Lord's command to preach the gospel to all nations because maybe the people are already saved.) We are guilty of disobedience or of unwillingness to give our all to Christ and go as He commanded to tell all men that Christ has the answer to personal needs as well as those of the entire world. It can be done. The world can be evangelized now with assets we have from God, it can be done.

It is not an impossible task. Constantly we hear the cry — it is impossible to evangelize the entire world. A dramatic increase in the number of babies born throughout the world does threaten to engulf those of us who are seeking to bring men to

the new birth through faith in Jesus Christ. A frightening population explosion is upon us. By A.D. 2000 there will be between six and seven billion people on the earth. The size of this increase alone is one of evangelism's greatest challenges. Possibly the increase will be modified by such things as birth control, war, and extensive epidemics. In any event, the percentage of Christians to the total population is going to decrease unless some new evangelistic impulse is felt. Formerly it took four to five hundred years for the world population to double. Now it will only take thirty-five years. But in the face of all of this, I still maintain that we do not have an impossible task, we simply have an untried task. Those of us who call ourselves Christians have not really tried with our whole heart to evangelize the world now. Suppose we would resolve to spread the story of the Gospel of Jesus Christ as rapidly as we can spread gossip. Most people can spread the juiciest morsel of gossip that you have ever heard in less than fifteen minutes. Suppose we started telling the story of Jesus — one person telling it to another person, taking fifteen minutes to tell the story; then suppose those two people told the story to two others in the next fifteen minute segment and all who were told the story of Jesus would continue telling it. Do you realize that in just eight hours time this entire world of more than 4 billion persons could be told the story of Jesus Christ? This is why I say it is not an impossible task — it is just simply an untried task.

In his book, *Journey to Eternity*, M.F. McKnight tells the story of a former member of the Church of Christ who was persuaded two years ago to become a Jehovah's Witness by two of their workers who knocked on his door and taught him their doctrine. While talking with him about the differences between his present beliefs and the Bible, the man said, "Do you mean to tell me, after I was in the Church of Christ for 16 years and know better, that you are obeying Jehovah God's command to preach the gospel to the whole world? I know approximately how many workers you have in the foreign countries. Further-

more, I know the attitude which many members of the Church of Christ have, relative to preaching the gospel to the entire world. That attitude can be summed up in these words — ‘let someone else do it, we are too busy to be very much concerned.’ You know what I am saying is the truth. During all my years in the Church of Christ, I seldom heard of members going from house to house like the early church did and like Jehovah’s Witnesses do, I can tell you right now of people I know who live within a half a block of Churches of Christ who have never once been told what the Church of Christ stands for. A typical member of the Church of Christ whom I knew said, ‘Let’s put up a building, hire a preacher, have one or two meetings a year and all those who really want to hear the truth will come to our services and be taught.’ I will admit that the picture has changed somewhat since I stopped attending the Church of Christ, but you know that what I am saying is still true to a great extent. Jehovah’s Witnesses do not own many meeting places; those we do own usually are very plain and inexpensive. The fact is, that less than 5% of the total money collected is used for housing expense. The major portion of it is used in publication of what we believe to be the good news of Christ’s Kingdom. While you in the Church of Christ are at ease in Zion, meeting several times a week in your luxurious buildings we are going from house to house throughout the earth telling people of Jehovah God. We are the only ones preaching in every nation under heaven, including Russia. Even if, as you say, the Church of Christ is the one true church, I will still take my chances on the outside because you are not obeying the first commandment of the One Whose name you hypocritically wear.”

Oh, how Satan has deceived us on the subject of evangelism. Many preachers say *sit and listen*, “Be still and know that I am God,” meditate and read your Bible. Dear friends, I believe in meditation as much as anyone. I know that we as Christians must study the Bible; but on the subject of evangelism Jesus said, “go” — not sit and meditate. Satan deceives us and says

build church buildings — if people want to be saved, let them come to the building and hear the gospel of Christ. Now I believe in having nice church buildings. It was my privilege while minister at Catlin, Illinois to work with our congregation in building what I consider to be one of the loveliest church buildings in America today. But on the subject of evangelism Jesus said “go.” Recently I was holding a revival meeting and a minister from another country who is serving in the United States spoke after we had made several personal calls and had obtained some decisions for Christ. “I never had this idea of evangelism before. In the country where I came from we always just invited people to attend the services, but we never spoke to them about their personal need of Christ, we never tried to win their soul, we thought that we would be too much pressure.” This man said, “I can see that we have not been going about it in the right way and perhaps this is one of the reasons why we have so few Christians in the country where I am from. Perhaps this is why there are so many more Christians in America because you are willing to go and ask people to commit their lives to Christ.”

III. When evangelize? Let’s do it now — today there is only one missionary to slightly more than 700,000 people. If we divide the missionaries between the world’s population, but the distribution of this total force of missionaries is very uneven. There are no missionaries in China with seven hundred million to possibly a billion people. The missionary force is increasing but not fast enough to fulfill the great commission. North America has become the key sending base and this situation is likely to continue indefinitely. In the last hundred years the number of non-Christians in the world has more than doubled, although Protestants in growth have more than kept pace with population, they are still a minority of the world’s population. Christians in the United States face a great evangelistic opportunity since this country will have approximately one hundred fifty million more people by A.D. 2000. However, the rate of

growth for 1965 was the lowest since the United States is among those nations most inclined toward birth control, the net increase by A.D. 2000 may be smaller than the estimate based on recent birth figures.

In a recent issue of the U.S. News and World Report the striking and thought-provoking question was asked, "Whose Century — will it be Russia's; will it be Europe's; will it be America's?" The magazine's conclusion seemed to think that it would be America's Century. Of course, they were looking at this question from a material point of view. Who will produce the most commodities and goods, who will have the highest standard of living? Whose century will it be from an ideological point of view? There are three great ideologies in the world in this century — Christianity, Catholicism, and Communism — each beginning with the letter C — each fighting desperately to defeat the others — each wanting the people of the world to accept its terms and yield to its philosophies. As far as numbers in worldly power are concerned, Communism and Catholicism are far out in front. The Communists control some one billion people. There are only about five million Christians without the taint of denominationalism. This is a ration of 750 to 1. The Catholics have some 500 million and that's a ratio of approximately 350 to 1. These odds look overwhelming, but they are far from it. In 1901, the Communist Party was born with 17 supporters. In 1917, this party had grown to a membership of 40,000 and with this comparatively small number, it conquered the vast country of Russia and now effectively controls the lives and property of over a billion people. How did the Communist Party make such a phenomenal growth without God and truth. There is only one answer — dedication. The supporters of the Communist Party were so dedicated to the purpose and aims of their ideology that they let nothing stand in the way of success. When duty called to their party they were willing to give up pleasure, vacations, jobs and even homes and many gave up life itself for the cause they espoused. We admire such complete

dedication.

When Christ ascended into heaven at Mt Olivet, he left twelve dedicated men to carry on His work and spread the Word to every nation. We love to read about, tell about — the dedication and self-sacrifice of these twelve dedicated men. They were hated by the world, ridiculed by scorners, imprisoned by officials, beaten and disowned by society. Oh, how we love to tell it! Yes, we admire their dedication, but we do not follow them. We choose rather beds of ease. We dedicate ourselves to pleasure and comfort instead of self-sacrifice. If we Christians who have the truth of God's and the power of His grace became as dedicated as the Christians of the first century and the Communists of the 20th Century, there will be no doubt whose century this will be. Let us not withdraw like beaten dogs from the arena where we must fight against ideologies of men. Cease your whimperings and complainings about the tremendous advances of Communism and Catholicism. "Put on the whole armor of God" (Ephesians 6). "Be steadfast, unmovable with a fervent faith that will not be quenched by the icy waters of adversity, and our faith like the faith of our fathers, will overcome the world."

The word "evangelist" is used three times in the New Testament. The word "Gospel" meaning Good News, is used 76 times. "To preach the Gospel" is used 24 times; "to give Good Tidings" is in 5 references; "to preach" in 19 references (and usually it means preaching Christ). Now this means that there are 127 references in the New Testament to the sounding forth of the saving grace of Christ to a dying humanity. This is the inescapable duty of the living church to the world at this hour. Preach the GOSPEL!!!

Today there are many people who spend all of their time on peripheral areas. They may be important, but the primary mission of the church is evangelism, winning others to Jesus Christ. There are five million Christians in the world. That is not very many in a world population of three billion. But we have a far

greater percentage today than the early church had at Pentecost. They had only 120 Christians to go out and win the world. They didn't have automobiles; they didn't have airplanes; they didn't have the printing press; they didn't have even Bibles. They had no churches, no seminaries, no schools. They didn't even have a well-trained clergy. These men had spent just three years with Jesus. Of course, that is plenty, but they did not have university degrees before they went to Jesus' seminary. They were just ordinary businessmen and fishermen and laborers, but they had something that we seem to be missing. They had the power of the Holy Spirit. They had disciplined lives. They had commitment and dedication. They were willing to deny themselves and take up the Cross, and they were willing to die in Roman arenas. They died. They were torn asunder. They were cut apart. But they kept on preaching this Gospel. No wonder they turned their world upside down!

We need to get back to where we are willing to be fools for Jesus' sake. We have become too sophisticated, too respectable. The men who followed Jesus were in the jails and in the prisons. They were on the streets and among the people working, sitting where they sat.

Lloyd Douglas called it "a magnificent obsession." The people of Jesus' day accused Him of being beside Himself. They called Paul mad.

It seems strange that we can get all worked up over sports and pleasure and drink. We can scream like a tribe of wild Indians over the Beatles. But we must not show any fervor or enthusiasm to win others to Jesus Christ.

Let us reaffirm our determination to evangelize the world in our generation. We could do it — energized and filled by the Holy Spirit, with a holy conviction that Christ is the Way, the Truth, and the Life, and that there is no other way.

In 1968 my family and I went to Africa to evangelize in the nations of Rhodesia and Zambia. We often heard the name of David Livingstone. All of my life I have heard of David Liv-

ingston — the great missionary, the explorer, the adventurer — the man who walked over 29,000 miles opening up the interior of the dark continent of Africa to missionary work. During our tour of Rhodesia as we were progressing to the Batonga people, where Jack and Peggy Pennington lived such a lonely life working among some of the most primitive people that are left on the earth today. We came to Victoria Falls — this spectacular sight — twice as large as Niagara Falls in our country, was discovered by the famous missionary explorer, David Livingston who came down the Zambezi River in 1855. As we stood there at Victoria Falls absolutely overawed by the sight, by the roar of the water falls, we saw this huge, imposing statue of David Livingston and it was here that Jack Pennington told us the story of the death of this famous missionary. It was David Livingston's practice to kneel by his bedside each night before retiring and pray to God. On the night of his death he was so ill that he could hardly move. His faithful servants never knew how he managed to do it, but somehow he got out of bed, knelt by his bedside and started praying to God, and in the morning the servants found him in this position — he had actually died in prayer. David Livingston's faithful servants cut out his heart and they buried his heart in Africa. The reason they did this was that they loved the man and David Livingston loved them and they reasoned, "It is only fitting that the heart of a man should be buried in Africa because his heart belongs to Africa." They, then, reverently picked up his body and carried it over a thousand miles to the ocean where they put it on a ship and the body of David Livingston was then taken back to London, England where it was buried in Westminster Abbey — the only person ever to be buried in Westminster without a heart. As we stood there at Victoria Falls and heard this touching story, I thought to myself, when I come to the end of my life and my body is buried, where will people say my heart was. Oh, I pray that I might live my life in such a way that people say my heart is in evangelism. I want to see the world evangelized *now!*

LET'S EVANGELIZE THE WORLD NOW!

A LOVE FOR SOULS

Lord, give to me thy love for souls
For lost and wandering sheep,
That I may see the multitude
And weep as Thou didst weep.
Help me to see the tragic plight
Of Souls far off in sin
Help me to love, to give, to go,
To bring the wandering in.
From off the altars of thine heart
Take Thou some flaming coals,
And touch my life, and give me
A heart on fire for Souls.
O fire of love, O flame divine,
Make thy abode in me,
Burn in my heart, Burn evermore,
Till I burn out for thee.

—Unknown

This message was first preached at the North American Christian Convention in Detroit, Michigan in 1969.

It was printed in the Christian Standard, Jan. 28, 1979, and is used in this book by permission.

God's Plan for World Evangelism My Heart's Desire

“When I enter that beautiful city, far removed from earth’s sorrow and fear; I want to hear somebody saying: I’m here because you invited me here. When to welcome me over the river, the loved ones of earth shall draw near, I want to hear somebody whisper, I’m here because you invited me here. When at home in those mansions eternal the saved of the nations appear; I want to have somebody tell me, I’m here because you invited me here. When the glad hearts of Heaven are ringing, with music so tender and clear, I want to have somebody singing; it was you who invited me here, to this happy home I might not have come, had you not invited me here.”

Somebody once asked Lyman Beecher, probably the greatest of all the Beechers, this question, “Mr Beecher, you know a great many things, what do you count the greatest thing a human being can be or do? And, without any hesitation, this famous man replied, “The greatest thing is not that one shall be a scientist, as important as that is; nor that one shall be a statesman, vastly important as that is; or even that one shall be a theologian, immeasurably important as that is; but the greatest of all,” he said, “is for one human being to bring another to Christ Jesus, the Savior.” Surely he spoke wisely and well. The supreme ambition

for every Christian should be to bring somebody to Christ. This is my heart's desire. The supreme method for bringing people to Christ is indicated in the story of Andrew, who brought his brother, Simon, to Jesus. The supreme method for winning the world to Christ is the personal method, the bringing of people to Christ one by one, that is Christ's plan. When you come to the Holy Scriptures they are as clear as light that God expects every friend He has to go out and see if he can win other friends to this same great side and service of Jesus. "Ye shall be witnesses unto me", said Jesus, "both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and to the uttermost parts of the earth." The early church went out and in one short generation shook the Roman Empire to its very foundation. It was a pagan, selfish, sodden, rotten empire. Yet, in one short generation that early church had shaken the Roman Empire from the center to the circumference and kindled the Gospel light in every part of the vast domain, and they did it by the personal method. I say that every Christian, no matter how humble, can win somebody else to Christ.

I. I want to use three simple words that spell success in leading souls to the Lord Jesus Christ. The first simple word is "GO". You find this word in the instructions of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ as they are written in Matthew 28:19. Jesus said, "Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit." How do we Christians usually read the scripture which is familiarly called the Great Commission? Ordinarily, we read it like this, "Go ye therefore, but if you do not want to go you can teach a Sunday School class as a substitute and let somebody else go for you." Some Christians read it like this, "Go ye therefore, but if you are afraid to go, you can paint a church building as a substitute and let somebody else go for you." Probably more Christians say it this way than any other, "Go ye therefore Preacher. We all know it is your job. That's why we are paying your salary." There is just one thing wrong with all of these various renditions of the scripture as church members ordinarily read it — **THEY ARE**

NOT IN THE BIBLE!

The Los Angeles TIMES on December 25, 1957, carried an article by George Gallup of Gallup Poll fame, stating that in 1957 some 25 million Americans made one or more calls in the interest of the church; 30 million homes in America were visited, or about 60% of the homes in America received at least one call. This means that 40% of the homes in America did not receive a single call from any church member. This is the way the various groups showed up in the survey: The Baptists were number one. The Catholics were number two. The Methodists were number three. The Lutherans were number four. The Jehovah's Witnesses were number five. The Presbyterians were number six and the Christian Churches were listed number seven in the number of total visits made in the year 1957. What a tragedy! We have the pure simple truth of the word of God and yet we are so selfish with it! Six other groups were more willing to go and tell others than we were willing to go.

The Bible is as plain as the nose on your face; Jesus expects every friend He has to go and tell somebody else. What would you think of a person if they had an incurable disease and then found a doctor that was able to cure that disease; then suppose you contracted the same disease and would go to this friend and say, "Please tell me quickly the name of the doctor that cured you of this terrible disease, I have it and I want to be cured also"? Then suppose your friend would say, "I'm not going to tell you." You cannot imagine such a thing, can you? You can't imagine anyone being that selfish, you can't imagine anyone committing murder, because that is what it would be if they had knowledge that would save you and would refuse to give you that knowledge. My friends, I submit to you that many are guilty of spiritual murder, for many, many Christians have the knowledge that would save people and yet they are not willing to share it with anybody else. Why is it that the best personal evangelists in the church are usually new Christians? The converted drunkards, the converted harlots, the converted liars; these are people who

are most anxious to go and tell others about the Lord Jesus, but those who have been members of the church for years, who have the knowledge, are not willing to go. The old time members of the church are the ones who say, "Everybody knows the church doors are open. If the sinners want to be saved, let them come to the church house and hear the Gospel and be saved." Dear friends, there is not a single verse of scripture in all the word of God that says that sinners should come to the church house and hear the Gospel and be saved. Every verse of scripture in the Bible that pertains to the subject says that Christians are to GO to the sinners.

Three or four years ago the New York TIMES reported on an incident in Kew Gardens, New York. Kitty Genovese, a pretty young woman of 28, drove home from work late one night. It was 3:20 in the morning. She parked her car in the lot next to her apartment house. As she started towards her apartment door she saw a man at the far end of the parking lot. She immediately made her way toward a police call box. She got as far as the street light and a man grabbed her. She screamed, lights went on, windows were opened and voices were heard. Later, police determined that 37 people watched. The man stabbed Kitty Genovese and she screamed, "He stabbed me! Please help me!" One man called out, "Let that girl alone," and the assailant walked away. Miss Genovese got up and started towards her apartment. The man came back and stabbed her a second time. She screamed, "I'm dying! I'm dying!" But no one lifted a finger to help her or even bothered to call the police. The assailant got into the car and drove off. Miss Genovese crawled around to the back of her apartment. The assailant came back and stabbed her a third time. This time it was fatal. One of Miss Genovese's neighbors finally called the police. They arrived in two minutes, but she was dead. Assistant Chief Inspector, Fredrick Luffen, later told the New York Times reporter, "The assailant had three chances to kill this woman during the 35 minute period. He returned twice to complete the job. If we had been called when he first attacked, the

woman might not be dead now." The neighbor, who finally did call the police, did so after considerable hesitation because he said, "I didn't want to get involved." Another neighbor was asked why she didn't call the police. She said, "I didn't want my husband to get involved." A man who witnessed the attacks without coming to Miss Genovese's aid was asked why. He said, "I was tired and went to bed." Before you condemn these people too much, I ask many Christians if perhaps you are not guilty of the same thing. All around you, men and women, boys and girls are being starved to death spiritually by the devil. They are crying for help, but you are not willing to go and visit them because you say, "I don't want to get involved in the calling program of the church", or "I'm tired and want to go to bed", or "I'd rather stay at home and watch TV." Dear friends, if this world of 1972 is going to be evangelized, you must be involved; you must be willing to obey the orders of Jesus and GO.

II. The second word that will spell success in My Heart's Desire, which is to lead others to the Lord Jesus, is the word "TAKE". Take the word of God to the unsaved. Back in the Old Testament, Psalm 126:6, we read what is commonly called the Great Commission of the Old Testament: "He that goes forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him." In Matthew 28:19 Jesus said, "Go and teach all nations." What are we to teach? We are to teach the word of God. Or as Paul said in Romans 1:16, "For I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth; to the Jew first and also to the Greek." As you go you are to take the word of God, the word of God which is the power of God unto salvation will convict those whom you visit of their need of Jesus Christ. The word of God will convince them of their need of Jesus Christ, and the word of God has the power to bring them to Jesus Christ.

I hear people say, "I can't win anybody to Christ because I'm not smart enough", "I can't talk to them", "I'm not talented

enough”, “I’m not handsome enough.” My friends, these are excuses. Leading souls to Jesus Christ is much like farming. Who has the biggest crop in farming? Is it the smartest farmer? Is it the most handsome farmer? Is it the most talented farmer? Not necessarily, the man who usually has the biggest crop in farming is the farmer who works the hardest, who plows up the most ground, who sows the seed, who cultivates the soil, and who is available in the time of harvest to bring in the crop. I’m sure it would be good if you were intellectually able and handsome and talented, but all of these things put together would not be able to lead even one soul to Jesus Christ. I remember learning this lesson so well long ago. I was 17 years old and was holding a meeting at the little town of Afton, Oklahoma. For two weeks I preached the word of God. We would go to the nearest creek where the old, white-haired minister, A.Z. Matthews, would bury the people in baptism. At the end of this two weeks revival, 40 souls had been saved. You can imagine how a 17 year old high school boy would feel about this. I was on the clouds. The last night of the revival meeting my father and mother came down to take me back home to Miami, Oklahoma. On the way home that night, my dad spoke just the right words to me, sobering words they were; words that brought me back to earth again. He said, “Reggie, remember that your sermons did not save those souls. Please remember that those 40 souls were brought to Christ because of the power of the word of God. It was the Holy Spirit working through the Bible that you preached that brought those people to Christ, not Reggie Thomas.” All through the years I have not forgotten those words that my father spoke to me so long ago. If I want to fulfill My Heart’s Desire, to bring people to Jesus, I must simply TAKE the word of God.

III. The third word that brings success in leading people to Jesus Christ is the word “BRING”. We find this word in the Gospel of John chapter 1 verses 41 and 42. Speaking of Andrew, it says, “He first findeth his own brother Simon.” That is, Andrew found Simon, his brother, and he said unto him, “We have

found the Messiah, which is, being interpreted, the Christ. And he brought him to Jesus." Notice that Andrew brought Simon Peter to Jesus Christ. How did he do it? It was done by the personal method. There is no substitute for personal work. Every businessman understands the importance of personal work. Oh, that the church of the Lord Jesus Christ would understand that the personal method will win. Many times I hear people saying, "What's wrong with the church?" Friend, there is nothing wrong with the church. Many times there is something wrong with the members of the church who have to be petted by the preacher, and cuddled by the preacher, and fed lumps of sugar by the preacher. I will tell you that whenever there is anything wrong with the church members, I know that they are not out doing personal work. Whenever I find a member of the church of Jesus Christ who is out trying to win souls to the Savior then I know that member is not going to have to be pampered by the preacher.

Jesus himself set the example in personal soul winning. He preached the great sermon on the New Birth to one man at night time. Jesus preached His great sermon on the water of life to one woman at the well. So Andrew, following the steps of Jesus, became a soul winner and rushed up to his own brother Simon and said, "We have found the Messiah." And he brought him to Jesus.

During the dark days of World War II it looked like Great Britain was going to lose in the fight. Night after night they were bombed by the Germans, but a brave handful of men took to the sky and began to fight back. These men were called the R.A.F. of Great Britain; R.A.F. standing for Royal Air Force. There wasn't much royal about this air force because they only had a few, old, broken down planes. But the men were great men, heroic men. Night after night they bravely fought back and because of the heroic efforts of the men of the R.A.F. of Great Britain, the tide of the war turned. As the tide turned, Sir Winston Churchill made one of his famous speeches. It was August 24, 1940, when Churchill paid tribute to the gallant men

of the R.A.F. and he said, "Never in the field of human conflict was so much owed by so many to so few." If you who are reading this message right now will make up your mind that your heart's desire will be to win somebody to Jesus, then there may be such a great host who will be redeemed in Heaven because of your efforts that someday the saved will be shouting, "Never have so many of us owed so much to so few." Dr. Andrew Murray has reminded us of this fact, "If there were only one Christian in the whole world and if that one Christian would work one whole year to win just one other to Christ, and in the second year if those two Christians would go out and work a whole year to win one other each to Christ and if all who were won to Christ would continue in personal evangelism taking a whole year to win just one other each to Christ, it would only take 31 years to win the vast population of this earth to the Lord Jesus Christ."

Many years ago a missionary was leaving the shores of our country to go to China. An 80 year old man, the father of the missionary, had come to tell his son goodbye. There were troops getting on board this same ship to go out and fight in some distant place. Some of the people who were standing there on the docks began to shout at the troops, "Give them hell!", "Give them hell!". The 80 year old man put his arms around his missionary son and whispered these words, "Son, you give them Jesus Christ!" This is my heart's desire, to give the world the Lord Jesus Christ.

I have wept for my child when he was fevered and ill, I've pleaded, blessed Lord, make him whole, but I am humble and sad as I call on His name, how long since I've wept for a soul? I wept for my loved ones now gone from this world, though they are with the Savior I'm told. Then from somewhere above, Jesus questions in love, how long since you've wept for a soul? I weep for the moments of pleasure I've missed, for the lack of life's gain and its gold, but before you condemn let me ask you my friend, how long since you've wept for a soul?

Christmas Is A Miracle to Believe

The other day I started downtown to Erlanger Hospital and made the mistake of going down Lee Highway. I got into one of the most horrendous traffic jams that I have ever experienced in Chattanooga. People were trying to turn into Brainerd Village Shopping Center, into Eastgate, into McDonalds, and trying to turn into everyplace! While all of these people were trying to turn, everybody else was trying to go straight ahead!! Finally, there was an accident. The police were there and an ambulance came. It was difficult. Everybody's tempers became short! What caused all this? All of that big traffic jam was caused by a little baby that was born half way around the world nearly 2,000 years ago! What a baby!!

Christmas is truly a miracle to believe. In the gospel of Matthew, it is stated like this, "Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost. Then Joseph, her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a public example, was minded to put her away privily. But while he thought on these things, behold the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for

that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins. Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us." The chapter closes by saying that Joseph had no relations with Mary until after Jesus was born. In other words, the Bible calls upon us to believe this miracle — Mary was the first surrogate mother in the history of the world!! There was no human father in connection with the birth of Jesus Christ. Mary was a virgin! The gospel of Luke presents this amazing miracle in the following words: Luke 1:26-35, "And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, name Nazareth, To a virgin espoused to a man named Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women. And when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be. And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end. Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man? And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." And so, Luke gives us the information that the seed that was implanted within the womb of Mary was done in a miraculous way by the Holy Spirit of God. The gospel of John explains this miraculous miracle like this: John 1:1 and 14, "In

the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” “And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.”

At the very heart of Christmas there stands the most amazing prodigious miracle of all times. The birth of Jesus Christ stands at the very heart of Christmas. That event represents the most remarkable occurrence, the most unbelievable happening in the entire history of this planet earth.

I. I cannot understand how anybody has any trouble believing the virgin birth. Barclay is one of the greatest of all writers about the Bible. He has written an amazing set of commentaries on the Bible. My own father loved to read Barclay above all other writers. But, as brilliant a man as Barclay was and as marvelous a set of commentaries that Barclay has written, he stumbles over the virgin birth of Jesus Christ. The virgin birth of Jesus Christ is a doctrine of the scriptures that cannot be questioned. It just boils down to this, you're either a believer or you are an infidel. Jesus was either born of the virgin Mary or else Mary was a fornicator and Jesus was an illegitimate from some immoral relationship. I believe with all my heart in the virgin birth of Jesus Christ and I don't know why anybody would even question it. God spoke the world into existence. If God could do all of that, and He did, then it was no problem for God to take a seed and implant it in the virgin Mary's womb and bring forth His only begotten Son into this world. I believe it!!

II. Christmas is the miracle of incarnation. God came to earth in human flesh! That is an amazing and an astounding miracle. It is amazing to me that God even loves us. I can't understand why He does love us as sinful as we are. Even more amazing is that God loved us so much that He came down here on earth to visit us. That is an amazing miracle! II Corinthians 5:19 puts it like this: “God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself.” The apostle Paul declared that the message of the manger was foreordained before the foundation of the world.

God called us according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before the world began. God's great plan was selected and ratified in heaven before Bethlehem was even a spot on the globe.

There are many, many legends about kings and rulers who have traveled incognito in order to taste the life of their people. But, Jesus came not incognito in order to taste, feel, touch, and smell the temptations of each one of us. Not only did God come to see what man's life was like here on earth, but God came to show us what He was like!! The scriptures say that He became flesh and dwelled among us and we beheld His glory.

For most of us death appears as something black and bleak and ugly, but not to Jesus. Repeatedly, Jesus pointed to the cross, "I am the good shepherd", He said, "and the good shepherd gives his life for the sheep." The manger, then, meant death. Bethlehem is spelled CALVARY. Any fair reading of the New Testament scriptures brings us to the fact that God came down as flesh for the purpose of dying.

During the earthly ministry, He used His divine power only to help others. Can you ever think of an instance when Jesus used His divine power to help Himself escape the hardships of life? I cannot. Always, He used His divinity to help others. So far as His humanity was concerned, He lived just as we live. He accepted all of the limitations of the flesh. He became hungry, tired, hurt and disappointed, and His heart was broken and He suffered rejection and finally the great miracle of allowing Himself to be nailed to the cross. This is the miracle of the incarnation that we are to believe at Christmas time.

III. God is involved with us personally. God loves us so much and He so much wanted to identify with us so that He might have sympathy for us in all of our problems. The great hymn writer, J. Lincoln Hall has expressed this miracle in these words.— "Does Jesus care when my heart is pained too deeply for mirth and songs? As the burdens press and the cares distress and the way grows weary and long, does Jesus care when my way is dark with

the nameless dread and fear as the daylight fades into deep night shades, does He care enough to be near? Does Jesus care when I have tried and failed to resist some temptation strong, when for deep grief I find no relief though my tears flow all the night long. Does Jesus care when I have said goodbye to the dearest on earth to me and my sad heart aches until it nearly breaks? Is it aught to Him, does He see? Oh yes, He cares. I know He cares. His heart is touched with my grief. When the days are weary, the long nights dreary, I know my Savior cares." This is the miracle to be believed at Christmas time.

Twenty-five years ago Louis Cassells wrote a modern Christmas parable.

Once upon a time there was a very kind and decent man, generous to his family, upright and honest. But he didn't believe the Christmas teaching that God became man. He said, "It doesn't make any sense to me." On Christmas eve his family left for church without him. "I'd feel like a hypocrite, I'd much rather stay at home." He settled into his chair to hear a thudding sound at his window. He found a flock of birds huddled miserably in the snow. They had been caught in a storm and tried to fly through his window. "I can't let these poor creatures lie there and freeze." Then he remembered the barn, it would provide a warm shelter. He trampled through the snow, opened the door and turned on the light but the birds didn't come. Food will bring them, he thought, so he spread bread crumbs in a trail to the barn. They simply flopped helplessly in the snow under his window. He tried shooing them into the warm barn. "They find me a strange and terrifying creature," he said to himself, "and I can't think of any way to let them know they can trust me." "If only I could be a bird myself for a few minutes, perhaps I could lead them to safety."

Just then the church bells rang out the glad tidings of Christmas. Then he sank to his knees in the snow. "Now I understand," he whispered, "Now I see why you had to do it."

The Holy Spirit and Conviction How to Know God's Will

The scripture for this sermon is found in John, chapter 16, verses 7 through 11, "Nevertheless, I tell you the truth; it is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send Him unto you. And when He is come, He will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin because they believe not on me; Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged." I want to ask three questions.

First, who is the Holy Spirit? Unless we know the answer to this, it will not do us any good to proceed with the topic. Do you know who the Holy Spirit is? If we are Christians, the Holy Spirit is our senior partner in the Christian life. Coming to us as the great gift of the risen Christ, He abides in our hearts to purify and to impell us for life and service. Without His help, the Christian life is impossible and only as we consciously lean on Him will our lives be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might. May I remind you then that the Holy Spirit is a person not a mere influence. Note that the personal pronouns, "He" and "Him" are constantly applied to the Spirit. John 16:7, "Nevertheless, I tell you the truth; it is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go

not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; But if I depart, I will send HIM unto you." Verse 8, "And when HE is come, HE will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment." Verse 13, "Howbeit when HE, the spirit of truth, is come, HE will guide you into all truth; for HE shall not speak of Himself; but whatsoever HE shall hear, that shall HE speak: and HE will show you things to come." Verse 14, "HE shall glorify me: for HE shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you." The Holy Spirit can do things that only a personality can do. Such as "speaking", John 16:13, "Howbeit when He, the spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth: for He shall not speak of Himself: But whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak: and He will show you things to come." Not only does He, the Holy Spirit, SPEAK, but He also INTERCEDES. According to Romans, the 8th chapter, the 26th verse, "Likewise the spirit also helpeth our infirmities: For we know not what we should pray for as we ought, but the spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." And the Holy Spirit can also be grieved, as only a personality can be grieved, for we read in Ephesians, chapter 4, verse 30, "And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption."

Now the second question, do you have the Holy Spirit? People have been variously classified: rich, poor, high, low, wise or ignorant; bound or free; friend or foe; Jew or Gentile; Protestant or Catholic; Liberal or conservative; but the Bible has another classification. Do you possess the Holy Spirit or do you not? It is most important that you do possess the Holy Spirit. From Romans 8:9 states very clearly, "But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, He is none of His." Acts, the 19th chapter, we notice this very question was asked on one occasion, "Do you have the Holy Spirit?" Now, on this occasion, when the Apostle Paul asked this question of certain disciples to be found in Ephesus, they answered. "Why, we didn't even

know that the Holy Spirit was given.” Today, when we ask people, “Do you have the Holy Spirit?” they do not reply like these disciples replied in the 19th chapter of Acts, people today know that the Holy Spirit has been given, but they seem not to know whether they have the Holy Spirit. We ask, “Do you have the Holy Spirit?” People say, “Well, I think so”, or sometimes they say, “I hope so”, or “I would like to think that I have it.” How can we know that we have the Holy Spirit? It’s so very important that we have the Spirit. If we don’t have the Spirit, then we are not a Christian. We can know that we have the Spirit in these ways: First of all, we can know that we have the Spirit if we have obeyed God’s plan for salvation. In Acts 2:38 Peter said unto them, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” Do you have the Holy Spirit? If you have done what Peter told the people to do on the Day of Pentecost, then you know that you have the spirit, because we have been promised the spirit if we will repent and be baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then we can know that we have the Spirit because the Spirit testified to the Lordship of Jesus. I Corinthians 12:3, “Wherefore I give you to understand that no man, speaking by the Spirit of God, calleth Jesus accursed and no man can say that Jesus is the Lord but by the Holy Spirit.” Then we can know that we have the Holy Spirit because he testifies to the fatherhood of God. In Romans 8:15, “For ye have not received the Spirit of bondage again to fear, but ye have received the Spirit of adoption whereby we cry, ‘Abba, father’.” And we can know that we have the Holy Spirit because He testifies to our own sonship. Romans 8:16, “The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.” Then we can know that we have the Spirit if we manifest the fruit of the Spirit. Galatians 5:22-23, “The fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, tenderness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance, against such there is no law.” Then we can know that we have the spirit if we go through life unafraid. II Timothy 1:7, “For God hath not

given us the spirit of fear but of power, of love, and of sound mind." So we know who the Spirit is. We see how we can know that we have the Spirit.

The third question — What does the Holy Spirit do for me? What does the Holy Spirit do for you? First of all, the Holy Spirit UNITES us to Jesus Christ and makes us priests of God. Ephesians 2:18, "For through Him, we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father." Secondly, the Holy Spirit ASSURES us of our POSITION as children of God. I John 4:13, "Hereby know we that we dwell in Him, and He in us, because He hath given us of His Spirit." Then thirdly, the Holy Spirit will TEACH us. I John 2:27, "But the anointing which ye have received of Him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, you shall abide in Him." And then fourthly, the Holy Spirit will LEAD us. Romans 8:14, "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." The Holy Spirit will help us to fight sin and give us the victory. Galatians 5:16, "This I say then, walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh." The Holy Spirit will help us in our prayer life. Romans 8:26,27, "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because He maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God." And then, of course, the Holy Spirit will one day raise us from the dead. Romans 8:11, "But if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwelleth in you."

Let us study number 4 of the 7 things that are listed that the Holy Spirit will do for you. The Holy Spirit will lead you. The title of the sermon is, "The Holy Spirit and Conviction." We all know what the will of God is concerning our lives as far as our

past sins. God's will is that we be pardoned of our past sins, that we be saved, that we be forgiven, that we be made perfect through Christ, so that we can someday stand before Him. "The Holy Spirit and Conviction" . . . I looked up this word, "Conviction", in the dictionary, and according to Webster's Dictionary, "Conviction" is the "state of being convicted, a doctrine, or proposition which one firmly believes, a state of being gratified by evidence." Now as we read in John 16:7-11, the Holy Spirit convicts in three areas. The Holy Spirit has come to convict us of sin, and if we are Christians, every one of us has been convicted of the reality of sin. This is something that many modern day men do not want to be convicted of, and do not want to accept. I remember the University of Cincinnati professor who made this statement, "We should not punish a man for the sin of adultery or murder any more than you would convict and sentence a man for tuberculosis or cancer." He went on to say, "Sin is not really sin, sin is social maladjustment." Now, it is the task of the Holy Spirit to reveal the fallacy of this position by convincing men of the reality of sin. I've been convinced of the Holy Spirit of my sins. The Holy Spirit convicts, secondly, in the area of righteousness. Not only does the Spirit show man His state of perdition but reveals at the same time Jesus Christ, whose righteousness and divinity approved by His resurrection and return to the Father's side. The Holy Spirit convicts thirdly, in the area of judgment. Logic is immediately seen here. Since Jesus was victorious over His greatest enemy, Satan, He will ultimately succeed in bringing judgment upon ALL of His enemies. Peter's Pentecostal sermon is a marvelous example of the convicting power of the Holy Spirit in the areas of sin, righteousness, and judgment. The Pentecostal crowd was convicted of sin as the Apostle Peter preached the rejection and the crucifixion of Jesus Christ by this crowd. Then they were convicted of righteousness by the Spirit as Peter preached that Jesus is resurrected and glorified before His Father. And then they were convicted by the Holy Spirit of judgment as Peter preached of the great and

notable day of the Lord, and as he cried out, "Save your selves from this untoward generation." Now, I want to try to show how this Holy Spirit convicts us, even as Christians. The Holy Spirit convinces us as Christians of God's will. For we read in Romans 8:14 that the Holy Spirit leads us, the Holy Spirit convicts us, even as Christians. The Holy Spirit convinces us of God's will. I believe that God has a purpose for every one of our lives. I believe that there's a work for Jesus, that none but you can do, and that your lives can be truly happy, peaceful, joyful, victorious, thrilling, only if you know God's will and do it. But to know God's will seems to be a major problem for most people. Ministers all over America are constantly asking the question, "Where shall I preach?" "Shall I preach in California, Florida, North Dakota, Texas, Tennessee, Georgia, or where shall I go?" "If I could only know what God's will was for my life, I would do it — I would go where he wants me to go." I hear Sunday School teachers constantly asking this question, "What is God's will for my life?" "Shall I continue to teach this class or do something different?" Elders and deacons ask this same question. "Is it God's will for me to be an elder or deacon or should I resign this position and do something else?" Young people are faced with this question always, "What shall I do with my life?" "Shall I be a minister, a missionary, a doctor, a lawyer, a nurse?" Oh, what is God's will? People want to know! And I would venture to guess that if the truth could be known, probably at least 95% of this very audience would say, "I would be so happy if I could just know for sure what God's will for my life is!"

I want to call your attention to the 25th Psalm, listen to the prayer the Psalmist prayed. Here is a man who really wanted God to lead him. He really wanted to know God's will. "Unto thee, O Lord, Do I lift up my soul. O my God, I trust in thee: let me not be ashamed, let not mine enemies triumph over me. Yea, let none that wait on thee be ashamed: let them be ashamed which transgress without cause. Show me thy ways, O Lord; teach me thy

paths. Lead me in thy truth, and teach me: For thou are the God of my salvation; on thee do I wait all the day. Remember, O Lord, thy tender mercies and thy lovingkindness; for they have been ever of old." Don't you see how this man pleads with God to be shown God's will? "Show me thy ways, O Lord", he prayed. "Open my eyes that I might see what you want me to see." "Lead me in thy truth." "Guide my steps, Lord." "Teach me thy path, direct my mind, that I might think in the way that thou wouldst have me think." I have found that most people in the world today are drifters. Life for the average person is very haphazard. Most folks do not know God's will or God's purpose. They do not feel that they are being led by God. They feel that they are living in a spiritual fog. Three weeks ago, I was invited to Corinth, Mississippi to speak for one week at the local high school in a spiritual emphasis week. They gave me an office at the school and the Juniors and the Seniors were invited to make appointments and to come by anytime that they pleased during the morning and/or afternoon and talk about any problem that they might have. During that week that I was at Corinth, I do not know how many teenagers came by the office during the day to counsel with me and to talk about their problems, but I do know this — that every single young person that came in to talk seemed to be in a spiritual fog. They wanted to know what God's will was for their life. They were trying to decide, trying to determine which way to go, what college to attend, what to be, how to spend their time in this world. Now to prove my point I want each of you to ask yourself this very pointed, personal question. "Am I quite certain, right now, that I am doing God's will?" Some of you may be filling station operator, some of you may be a grocery store keeper, some of you may be mechanics, some of you may be salesmen, some of you may be housewives, many of you are preachers, and preachers' wives, but I still ask you the same question; "Are you sure that what you are going to do is God's will?"

I shall never forget hearing W.R. Walker speak when he was

82 years old. He made a most remarkable statement. He said, "If I had my life for Jesus to live over again, I would not change any major decisions that I've ever made, because I never make a decision in my life without praying for God's will, for God's leadership. Therefore, every major decision in my life was just what God wanted me to do. I am convinced of it." I was amazed when I heard Brother W.R. Walker make that statement at the age of 82. At the time I heard him make that statement I was only 18 years old and I could think of many things in my life that I would change, even at the age of 18, if I had my life to live over again. But I have often thought about that statement that W.R. Walker made and I realize now how he could say such a thing. Brother W.R. Walker was being led by God's Spirit in his life as he walked with Christ, and being led by the Spirit being guided by the Spirit of the will of God. He would not change any decision that he had made. I'm sure that right now many people are thinking, "Why I have a problem that I am facing right now. Shall I resign the church where I am and go somewhere else, shall I go to the mission field, shall I do this or that? I would desperately like to know God's will?" Dr F.B. Meyer was out on a ship. He had made some kind of ocean voyage and was coming back home. It was night time and it was a stormy night. He was upon the bridge with the captain as the ship approached the harbor. The entrance was very, very narrow. Because of the roughness of the water and the narrowness of the entranceway, Dr Meyer became nervous and he finally asked the captain, "How can you guide a ship through stormy waters into such a narrow entrance as this harbor has without danger of wrecking the ship?" The captain said, "Why, it's very easy, do you see those red lights? I just keep maneuvering the ship around out here in open water until I get those three red lights in a straight line and when they are in a straight line, then I steer straight towards them, and that brings me safely into the harbor."

The Holy Spirit provides three red lights to guide us,

whereby we can be convicted and convinced of God's will for our lives.

I. The first red light, of course, is the Bible. Now you may be saying, "Well, how in the world can the Bible guide me?" In the first place, we need to remember that the Bible contains words dictated by the Holy Spirit. In II Peter 1:21, "For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; but Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit." When we read the word of God, then the Spirit begins to work on us, the Spirit begins to convict us, the Spirit begins to convince us, and guide us and to lead us, for these are the words of the Holy Spirit. And remember, according to I Corinthians 2:9-13, we need the help of the Spirit in understanding the word of God, dictated by inspiration of the Spirit of God, but as it is written, "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath entered into the heart of man the thing which God prepared for them that loved Him, but God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit." "For the Spirit searcheth all things, yea the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man save the spirit of man which is in him. Even so, the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God." Allen Redpath tells about how he was convinced that he ought to go into the ministry. He was a business man. Somehow he felt that he ought to give up his business and become a preacher, but he wanted to do God's will. He didn't want to make this decision on his own so he got out a piece of paper and he divided it in two columns. In one column he put down "Reasons why I should be a preacher." In the second column, "Reasons why I should NOT be a preacher." Then he began to study the Bible. Every day as he studied his Bible, if he found a scripture which would give him another reason for going into the ministry, for verifying any reason that he had already written down, why he thought he should go into the ministry, he'd write it down. If he found anything that would convince him that it was the will of God not to go in the ministry, he'd put that down in the other col-

umn. He studied his Bible for one full year and at the end of the year, he had pages and pages of scripture providing reasons why he should be a preacher and could not find one single scripture to convince him that he should not be a preacher. And so this was the way that God guided him to make this decision. Now I know, you and I, we think we know what the Bible says, and so when we are faced with a problem, faced with a decision, we want to know God's will and we want to be convicted and we want to be convinced, instead of turning to the Bible, we say, "Well, I know what the Bible says," and we overlook the first red light.

It reminds me of that fellow who got on a bus. He sat down and the man that he sat beside said, "Buddy, would you give me a light?", and he pulled out a cigarette and held it there and the man who sat down just looked straight ahead and didn't say a word. So the man repeated his request a second time. He held the cigarette out and said, "Would you give me a light?" and the man ignored him. Well, he raised his voice and sort of punched the other man and said, "Can't you hear me? I want to know if you have a match or a lighter. Will you give me a light?" The man looked straight ahead, didn't even change expressions. Well, this so disgusted the man who had made the request that he jumped up and pulled the cord and got off at the next corner and stomped away in disgust. The man who was sitting behind punched this fellow and said, "What's the matter with you? You're about the most unfriendly person that I ever saw in my whole life. He asked a very sane and sensible request. If you didn't want to give him a light, why didn't you say, 'No, I don't have a match', or 'I don't have a lighter', or 'I don't want to give you a light.' Why did you just sit there like that? Why didn't you say something?" And the man said, "Well, it's like this, when he asked me for a light, if I said, 'Yes, I'll give you a light' then he would have said, 'Thank you' and I'd have to say, 'You're welcome.' The next thing you know he'd have said, 'It's a nice day, isn't it?' and I'd have said, 'Yes, it's a nice day.'

Then he'd say, 'Who do you think is going to win the game?' Then I'd have to express my opinion and we'd get into a conversation over that and pretty soon he'd say, 'Let's get off at the next corner and I'll buy you a cup of coffee', and so I'd have to say, 'O.K.' We'd have a cup of coffee and I'd have to say, 'Come home and I'll have you for supper tonight' and so he'd say, 'O.K.' We'd go home and I have a beautiful 16 year old daughter and I'd have to introduce him to her and then he'd fall in love with her and he'd marry her and have a whole bunch of kids, then he'd go and die, and I'd have to raise the kids, and just think of all the trouble if I'd given him a light!" That's just about the way we have reacted to the Bible, so far as being convinced, guided, led by the Spirit of God. We have said, "We know what the Bible said", so now we have neglected that first red light. Somebody said that 90% of the trouble that most Christians have come from a neglect of Bible reading.

II. The second red light, the Holy Spirit, himself. When you become a Christian, you received the Spirit of Jesus Christ. One of the purposes of God's Spirit in your life is to guide you, to convict you, to convince you of the will of God. When I was 15 years old, I first believed that I ought to be a preacher, but I wasn't convinced, I wasn't convicted, so I waited, and I thought about it, and I prayed about it for a whole year. I was 16 years old and I felt a little more strongly I ought to be a preacher, but I still wasn't persuaded, and I waited another year. When I was 17 years old, the pressure of the Holy Spirit upon my life became so terrific I had no peace, I couldn't think about anything else. It was on my mind night and day. I prayed about it. I talked about it, I thought about it, and I was pressured! I made the decision, if this be God's will, I'll do my best, and immediately I had peace. This is the way God's Spirit helped to convince me of that decision. Whatever it is that we're trying to decide, we need to seek God's will and the Spirit will help us if we will recognize the pressure as it is brought to bear upon our life. Pressure from the Spirit, himself.

III. The third red light, "Outward circumstances." There finally comes a time when every door will be shut except the one that God has left open. When I was 17 years old, this is how the doors all shut, and the one door opened for me. I was so shy, and so bashful, and backward, I couldn't speak to anyone, I couldn't stand up and offer a public prayer, or make a public speech, or do anything else. As I walked down the street, if I saw someone coming I knew, I'd run and hide in the alley rather than speak to them. That's how backwards I was and I kept thinking to myself, "How could I be a preacher? It's a disgrace the way my personality is so warped that I can't even speak to people, or stand up in front of anyone." And yet, there is this pressure, tremendous pressure. All at once, out of the clear blue, one day my preacher, Russell Martin, approached me and he said, "Reggie, there's a little church out there three miles. It's had to close down because they don't have a preacher. I want you to go out there next Sunday and preach." The door was opened! I told him, "No, I couldn't do it." I made all kinds of excuses and tried every way on earth to get out of it, but he wouldn't take "no" for an answer. He'd help me get the sermon, he'd go out there with me, he'd do this, he'd do that. I went out and tried and 22 people showed up for that first service. He persuaded me to go back again and again. To bolster my courage, he sent my high school chum, Lloyd Cameron, with me and Lloyd would sing and I would get up and try to preach. After we went out there just a few Sundays, down the aisle came an old 71 year old woman, tears streaming down her cheeks. She had never accepted Christ, had never belonged to any church, and she said, "I want to become a Christian." I was so convinced, I was convicted, I believed that I was led by the Bible, by the Spirit, by outward circumstances.

When the Apostle Peter was in prison, it was not until he walked up to the iron gates that it became an open door. There are times in our lives when we wait, and we wait, and we wonder, and we read our Bible, and we pray for God's Spirit to

lead us, but we've got to wait for that open door, the outward circumstances. When all three red lights are in line, then we know.

Many of you have heard of Imogene Williams. She went to China originally. The communists ran her out, as they did all of our other missionaries. Then she went to Thailand. There she was working near Dr Dooley before his death. Imogene Williams became interested in the lepers and began to do work in the leper colony. One day a mother and father brought a 12 year old boy in to Imogene to be examined and she knew immediately that the child had leprosy. She knew the child would have to go to the leper colony so that he could get the proper medicines and treatment, but you can imagine how the parents felt when she told them that the child would have to go to a leper colony. The boy became hysterical, the parents said, "No! No! We will not do it!" and they took him back home. Two weeks later they came back, they realized he had to go. There were no "ifs" or "ands" about it. He had to go. He was so much worse and so they gave their child into the care and keeping of Imogene Williams. She took him to the leper village. There he began to receive the medicines. He responded and soon he was feeling fine. But he was very disinterested. He was homesick. He resented being there, he wanted to be back with his parents, but Imogene continued to work with this lad and took him through that year in school. Then the second year came. During the second school year, he seemed more anxious to learn. She began to make progress. Then he responded to the teaching of the Bible that she had been giving, and he indicated that he wanted to become a Christian. Imogene had the joy of seeing this boy accept Christ. Everything changed, he became a happy boy and he was so eager to learn in school and such a delight to work with. A few weeks after he became a Christian, Imogene happened to overhear this boy talking to one of the other boys in the leper village who was not a Christian. The boy who had become a Christian said, with enthusiasm, "You know, I'm glad I got

leprosy because if I hadn't gotten leprosy, I never would have become a Christian." He was happy because he had been convicted and convinced of God's will for his life.

The Lord once had a job for me, but I had so much to do, that I said, "Lord, you get somebody else or wait until I get through." I don't know how the Lord came out, no doubt He got along. But I felt kind of sneakin' like, for I knew that I had done Him wrong. And one day I needed the Lord and I needed Him right away, but He didn't answer my call at all and I could hear Him say, "I've got too much to do. You get somebody else or wait until I get through." So now when the Lord has a job for me, I never try to shirk. I drop whatever I have on hand and go do the Lord's work. For my affairs can run along or wait until I get through, for nobody else can do the work that God has for me to do. And nobody else can do the work that God has for you to do.





REGGIE THOMAS

Reggie Thomas has preached and directed evangelists crusades on six continents and nearly every state. He is currently director of White Fields Overseas Evangelism.

He is a graduate of Cincinnati Bible Seminary and has ministered to churches in Oklahoma, Illinois, Georgia, and Tennessee. He has served as a trustee with African Christian Mission, Rhodesian Christian Mission, Christian Television Mission, Dixie Christian Service Camp, South Pacific Evangelizing Fellowship, Atlanta Christian College and Revival Fives. In 1988 the Kevala Christian Bible College, Ayoor, India bestowed an honorary Doctor of Divinity Degree upon him in recognition of 22 years of dedicated evangelistic crusades worldwide and in appreciation of 13 trips to India.

Mr. Thomas and his wife, Esther, have eight children and eighteen grandchildren.