

Below is a series of lessons preached by W. D. McPherson at Moreland Avenue church of Christ in Atlanta, Georgia, between September 1960 and January 1962.

Brother Mac preached many years the Moreland Avenue church of Christ from December 1933 to January 1, 1972 except for two years he was president of Georgia Christian School in Valdosta in the early 1940s.

The last years of W.D. McPherson were spent in the town of Conyers, just east of Atlanta, where he continued to preach and serve the church there as long as health would allow.

These lessons were given to me by Skip Jackson, long-time member of Conyers and later when I knew him, a member at Buford church of Christ.

Scott Harp  
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## THE CHRISTIAN AS A SOUL-WINNER

The greatest joy in the Christian life is to have a part in bringing some lost soul to Christ. In Phil. 4:1, the apostle spoke of his children in the Gospel as his crown and joy. John, another apostle, said, "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in the truth." And it is in the Old Testament, where you would least expect to find it, that you read the beautiful words: "They that are wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars forever and ever." Dan.12:3. Does this not explain why many do not enjoy church membership? They have not discovered that the riches of Christian experience lie in the realm of service and the most rewarding service is to have fellowship with Christ in the saving of souls. It is the soul-winner whose face is radiant and in whose heart there is always a beautiful song.

Two Sundays ago, we began a program of evangelism which will be climaxed by a Gospel meeting beginning October 30th. The success of that meeting depends on the personal work we are willing to do in preparation for it. A harvest of souls does not come by accident, and visible results mean that someone has been at work. We frequently hear expressions of amazement that the 3000 on Pentecost should be baptized the first time they heard a Gospel sermon. I suppose no sermon ever resulted in so many baptisms, but there was nothing miraculous about it. The Lord Himself had done the ground work for those conversions during the three years of His personal ministry. There could have been no Pentecost had there not been three years of personal work.

The church today is not doing the effective work in soul-winning which was done in the New Testament age. We have the the very same Gospel the apostles preached and men who are able to present it - why are we failing? We have better equipment, more money, better means of communication. The answer is a lack of personal work. The greatest need in the Church today is for more Christians who can and will talk to people about their spiritual need and the Christ who can supply that need.

Soul-winning is not easy. It calls for a good knowledge of the Bible plus an understanding of human nature. It requires tact, perseverance, resourcefulness and courage. In fact, the demands upon a soul-winner are so exacting that unless there is a deep conviction of certain fundamental truths, he will soon become discouraged and quit. I know of no better way to inspire you to do personal work than to present these truths for your consideration.

### 1. SOULS ARE PRECIOUS TO GOD.

If we truly love God, we will love what He loves. God so loved that he GAVE, gave His only begotten Son, The Bible teaches that Jesus is none other than the Eternal God, creator and preserver of all things. Can you doubt the value of a soul when the Heavenly Father gave One so great and glorious as Jesus to redeem it from sin?

Think of the monetary value of all the property in metropolitan Atlanta, the homes, schools, business houses, churches, industries. The total evaluation of all these would not even begin to approximate the worth of a soul. This thought ought to make us very humble, but at the same time, it should impel us to become soul-winners.

### 2. SOULS GUILTY OF SIN WHO DIE IN THAT STATE ARE DOOMED to eternal suffering in Hell. Hell is such an ugly word; we shrink from using it. Many try to banish it altogether from their thinking, but refusing to recognize the facts will not change them in the least. If the Bible does not mean what it says about Hell, it does not mean what it says about anything. God's redeeming love is painted upon the lurid background of a dead and dying world. "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." Jno.3:16. Then consider the solemn declaration in 2 Thes.1:7: "When the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and the glory of His power." Do you not think that you are under obligation to help save a lost soul from eternal death?

### 3. THE GOSPEL IS GOD'S REMEDY FOR SIN.

"For I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God

unto salvation to everyone that believeth." Rom.1:16. "For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the Gospel."

4. THE GOSPEL IS POWERLESS TO SAVE MEN UNLESS IT IS PREACHED, taught, received into the heart. The Word is the seed of the Kingdom (Luke 8:11). However, seed must be sown to be able to germinate and bear fruit. The seed is the Word, the human heart is the soil, and the personal worker is the sower. If there is no sowing, there can be no harvest.
5. TO THE EXTENT OF YOUR ABILITY, YOU ARE AS RESPONSIBLE as anyone else in the Church to bring the Gospel to the lost. You cannot do everything, but you can do something, and God expects you to do that. When Jesus sent his disciples into all the world, he promised to be with them. That promise includes you. Do you believe it? If you look to him, depend on him, learn from him, YOU CANNOT FAIL.
6. IN NEGLECTING TO BRING OTHERS TO CHRIST, YOU ENDANGER YOUR OWN SOUL. Paul said, "Woe is me if I preach not the Gospel." If God would have dealt with Paul for neglecting his duty, do you think he will be any easier with us? Woe means misery, ruin, eternal shame.

Will you not meditate on these great truths? When properly received into honest hearts, they will give you a burning desire to win souls. I am convinced that that desire is already in the hearts of this congregation. Those of us who have had more experience in soul-winning are anxious to help you. An open door is before us.

LET US WALK IN AND WIN A VICTORY FOR CHRIST!

THE CHRISTIAN AS A SOUL-WINNER

Sermon preached by W.D.McPherson  
September 25, 1960

## A KINGDOM NOT OF THIS WORLD

"Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world." Jno. 18:36.

As you well know, Jesus was tried in two courts prior to his crucifixion. First, before the Jewish court, the Sanhedrin, and then before the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate. The verdict was blasphemy which under the Law of Moses was punishable by death. However, the Jews knew that such a charge would be laughed out of a Roman court, so when they brought Him to Pilate they invented a new charge: "This man says he is a king."

Pilate heard the evidence but was not impressed. He said, "I find no fault in this man." The Jews shouted, "Thou art not Caesar's friend." Pilate could see their hypocrisy. He knew well they cared nothing for Caesar, but he also knew that they were able to make trouble for him. Disloyalty to Caesar was a serious charge. So he put the question to Jesus, "Art thou a king?" Our Lord did not answer directly but implied the affirmative: "My kingdom is not of this world." (Jno. 18:36). In other words, "I am a king but no rival of Caesar. My kingdom is spiritual and heavenly. A man may be loyal to Caesar and at the same time a citizen of my kingdom."

While Pilate did not grasp the significance of Jesus' statement, he saw that He was no threat to Roman imperialism. Many things Jesus taught were dark sayings. A kingdom not of this world was not only dark to Pilate, but even to Jesus' disciples. No one in that iron age could conceive of a kingdom except in terms of military power, oppressive taxation, and ruthless tyranny. It is clear to us because we have the full teaching on the subject in the New Testament.

The kingdom of which Christ spoke is the church, the Body of Christ. Upon Peter's confession recorded in Matt. 16:18, Jesus said, "Upon this rock I will build my church." In Mark 9:1 he said, "There be some of them that stand here which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power." The power came on Pentecost when the Holy Spirit fell upon the waiting apostles, and that is just when the church was established. You will find it all in the second chapter of Acts. In that memorable sermon preached by Peter on that occasion, he announced, "Let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ." He is on His throne, reigning over His kingdom. Premillennialists say that Christ will not set up His kingdom until His second coming, but I prefer to take Peter's word for it. He was a Spirit guided man, and if Peter did not know what he was talking about, the Holy Spirit did.

Let us keep in mind that Christ's kingdom, the church, is not of this world. There are enough points of resemblance to identify it as a kingdom, but it is essentially different all down the line. Will you study with me some of its characteristics which set it apart and make it infinitely superior to all the kingdoms of this earth?

### 1. EVERY KINGDOM HAS A SUPREME HEAD WHO EXERCISES EXECUTIVE POWER.

Christ is the head of His kingdom and His power is absolute. Read Matt. 28:18. "All power (authority) is given unto me in heaven and on earth." When on the mount of transfiguration, Peter tried to divide loyalty to Jesus with Moses and Elijah, God's voice spoke from Heaven saying, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased, Hear ye him." Matt. 17:5. He is a King without a rival. After his humiliation on the cross, "God highly exalted Him, and gave Him a name which is above every other name: that at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow, of things in Heaven and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus is Lord to the glory of God the Father." Phil. 2:9,10.

Almost without exception, the kings of this earth won their crowns by conquest. Think of Alexander, of Caesar, of Charlemagne, and Napoleon. Rivers of blood were shed in their conquests. They mounted their thrones over the prostrate bodies of women and children. Jesus is also a conqueror, but not of this sort. He waged battle against the enemies of our souls, he robbed sin of its sting and the grave of its victory. Then, leading captivity captive, he was crowned at God's right hand, bringing life, liberty and joy to all who believe on his name.

### 2. A KING RULES OVER TERRITORY CALLED A REALM.

The kingdoms of this world have definite boundaries, such as rivers, seas, mountains. There are no such limitations to the kingdom of our Lord. It is not located in Europe, Asia, or America, but in all of them. The realm over which He reigns is the human heart. Wherever men and women are to be found who have yielded their hearts in obedience to the Gospel and are walking in the Truth, there is the kingdom of Christ.

He has no standing army, although the saints are often compared to soldiers. He has no system of taxation, because his subjects gave all when they became citizens. His capitol is in Heaven. We are here on outpost duty - occupying until he comes. One day he will return to take his subjects to live with him forever in the new Jerusalem.

3. EVERY KING RULES BY LAW.

The kingdom of Christ is no exception, but there is a remarkable difference between his law and the law of men. Human legislation is imperfect; often unjust and oppressive. The laws of men must be continually appealed or amended. The law of Christ is perfect. James 1:25 calls it "a perfect law of liberty". Since all of this is true, it cannot be changed or amended by men.

The laws of civil governments frequently work a hardship on their citizens. But Christ's law is founded upon the needs of human nature and obedience to it brings peace, joy and holiness. Let her citizens be on their guard! They must never submit to any law that emanates from any authority but Christ. The Church is not a self governing body which makes its own laws and regulates its own course. Paul said in Ephesians 5:24: "the Church is subject unto Christ."

In these troubled times, we can see how imperfect are the works of men and how weak the governments of this world. Would you not like to be a citizen of the Kingdom not of this world? Will you accept the evidence found in the New Testament that He is the Christ? Will you turn from your sins and confess Him as Lord? Then be baptized into His church and live for Him the balance of your days? At the end of the way, there awaits you an abundant entrance into that eternal kingdom of bliss and joy.

A KINGDOM NOT OF THIS WORLD

Sermon preached by W. D. McPherson  
October 2, 1960

## ARE YOU SATISFIED WITH YOURSELF?

Rom. 7:18,19,24

Let me begin the lesson with a personal question: are you satisfied with yourself? I am not thinking of your personal appearance, or of your economic status, or your station in life, but rather of the quality of that life. I am asking - are you the kind of person you want to be and know that you ought to be?

If you will be honest with yourself, the answer is an emphatic, "No". No normal person is satisfied with himself. There is some hidden sin, or some weakness; the realization of a wrong done another, a confidence betrayed, a wrong unrighted; or just the realization that we have fallen short of the goals we have set for ourselves. Even as great and as good a man as Paul felt his imperfections as an intolerable burden. In the letter to the Romans, he spoke of it: Rom. 7:18,19,27. "For I know that in me (that is in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I do,.... O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

The truth of the business is, God never intended you to be satisfied with yourself. You are not made that way. You were endowed with freedom of choice which puts a tremendous load of responsibility on one. So much is involved in life choices and often when it is too late, you find that you have made the wrong one. It is impossible to be complacent about yourself when you are made to realize that you have unthoughtedly taken the wrong road.

Again, you always act with reference to right and wrong. God made you a moral being. That not only means that you have freedom of choice, but your actions are self-judged, by the standards of right and wrong. There has never been a time since Adam was placed in the Garden of Eden that man has not had a revelation from God as to what is the right way. Even when he forgot God's law, he learned enough from experience to stand self condemned, and no one can be happy or satisfied in the wrong.

Then too, you have a fleshly as well as a spiritual nature. We read in Gal. 5:17: "For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would." That means a constant warfare is raging in your breast with the eternal destiny of your soul as the stakes. Who can be satisfied when his heart is a battle ground between two opposing forces? The keenest remorse ever felt is the knowledge that the flesh is winning out over the spirit and there seems to be nothing that we can do about it.

Finally, God has set perfection as the goal for His children. A perfect religion demands a perfect goal. We have the blood of Jesus, the perfect atonement; His manhood, our perfect example; we walk in a perfect law of liberty; nothing less than perfection can be the goal of Christian growth. Matt. 5:48: "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect." We have the exhortation in 2 Cor. 7:1: "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God."

All of this adds up to the conclusion that God did not intend that life should be a feather bed affair. To be sure, the Bible teaches the virtue of contentment, but it applies only to material things. We are to be content with what we have because things are of secondary importance, but never content with what we are. Each spiritual victory is a challenge to plant our feet on higher ground.

Just here, we need to be reminded that dissatisfaction with oneself can get out of hand. God intended it to be a blessing, a spur, an incentive to further growth. But like all good things, it can be perverted and work havoc with our lives.

Sometimes dissatisfaction with oneself leads to discouragement. It becomes a wet blanket instead of a spur. In that case, people often take the what's-the-use attitude and refuse to do anything for themselves. Instead of being challenged, they let themselves be defeated. Some turn to alcohol, to crime, and even to suicide.

Dissatisfaction with oneself may lead one to become hypocritical. Seeing bad in themselves, they see nothing but bad in others. They constantly criticize everything and develop such unlovely characters that people avoid them. When they find themselves shunned by others, they take it to mean that they were right in their judgement and end up in complete frustration.

There are others, who seeing their imperfections, take a negative attitude. They are determined to walk the straight and narrow. Life consists only in thou-shalt-nots, and they become so fearful of doing wrong that they do nothing constructive. This is the plight of the hobbyist. In his determination not to do the wrong thing, he completely loses sight of that which he ought to do.

Paul was a great student of human nature as well as an inspired man. He felt the downward pull of discouragement. In our text he shows how to make dissatisfaction with oneself a stepping stone instead of a stumbling block. Appalled by his failures to achieve his goal in life, he cried, in verse 24: "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Then he gives answer to his despair in verse 25: "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord."

Are you dissatisfied with yourself? That is to be expected. You are not perfect. Bring your life to Christ, with His help and encouragement, you cannot be defeated. There is His love to sustain, His Blood to cleanse, His promises to encourage, and His word to guide.

You can be better than you are. The situation is hopeless only when you try to do the job all alone. Make Christ your Savior and Lord through obedience to the Gospel. Then walk with Christ in lowly service. "But we all with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory." 2 Cor. 3:18.

ARE YOU SATISFIED WITH YOURSELF?  
Rom. 7:18,19,24.  
W. D. McPherson, Sept. 18, 1960

## IN SPIRIT AND IN TRUTH

"God is a spirit; and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth." Jno. 4:24.

Man is a worshipper. From the tropics to the poles, wherever people dwell, they have made some provision for worshipping the Supreme Being, God, Allah, or whatever they call Him. Jesus discussed the subject on more than one occasion. One, in particular, the conversation with the woman of Samaria at Jacob's well, you will find in the fourth chapter of John.

The Master's majestic presence, together with His gracious words led the woman to the conclusion: This man is a prophet. She evidently had a great deal of curiosity, for immediately upon deciding that Jesus was a prophet, she sought information on a controversial question: "Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say that Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship." What do you say about it?

Jesus graciously responded, giving her much more than she asked, for His words were not for her alone; He was thinking of His church - even of you and me. He indicated that the question was no longer a timely topic. The woman did not know it, but she was standing on the threshold of a new era in which worship would not be localized in any one spot. He said, Jno. 4:21, "The hour cometh when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. Then verse 24, "God is a spirit; and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." If God is a spirit, He is everywhere, and can be worshipped anywhere. Under the Gospel system the place is irrelevant - it is the kind of worship that counts.

"In spirit and in truth" is the Christian law of worship. There has never been a time when men were free to serve God as they pleased. According to Heb. 11:4 it was by faith that Abel offered unto God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain, and "faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God." (Rom. 10:17). Under the Mosaic covenant, Nadab and Abihu were destroyed by fire from Heaven when they presumed to depart from God's established order. In making Christian worship subject to the divine will, Jesus merely underscored the principle revealed in former dispensations. "If the word spoken by angels was steadfast (that's the Old Testament) and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward, how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" (Heb. 2:2,3). We shall not escape. We read, Rom. 14:12, "Everyone of us shall give an account of how we observed Christ's law of worship. "Not everyone that saith unto me Lord, Lord shall enter into the kingdom of Heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in Heaven." (Matt. 7:21).

It is impossible to obey a law that you do not understand. Do you know what it means to worship God in spirit and in truth? Ignorance will not excuse you. So it is the part of wisdom to find out. Jesus spoke of those whose worship was vain - empty, fruitless. You do not want that to happen to you? Let us study together what it means.

You and I are made up of body and spirit. "In spirit" shows that acceptable worship is not an act of the body, but of the spirit. The body is used just as the carpenter uses a hammer; it is merely a tool. In prayer, the knee is bent, the hands folded, and the head bowed but that is not prayer. Prayer is the sincere expression of the soul's deep need. In the Lord's Supper, we eat a small piece of bread and drink a little grape juice but that is not the Lord's Supper. The Lord's Supper is seeing Christ's body and blood in these emblems, remembering in grateful appreciation the love that sent Him to the cross, and rededicating ourselves anew to the Christ who died that we might live. Giving is not merely putting money into the collection plate. It is remembering how much we owe to God and giving back to Him a sacrificial portion of that so freely bestowed on us.

The other element in Christ's law is to worship "in truth". Some contend that this means nothing more than sincerity of motive. To be sure that is important for God hates a hypocrite. But sincerity is but part of the picture. Saul was sincere in persecuting Christians, but he was wrong. To worship "in truth" means to worship according to the teaching of the truth. John uses the same expression with greater clarity in 2 Jno. 4: "I rejoiced greatly that I found of they children walking in truth as we have received a commandment from the father." We worship God in truth when every act of worship is regulated and guided by the Word of God.

The New Testament is the history of the Church as established by the apostles. They were Spirit guided men working as personal representatives of our Lord. What they taught and practiced is the divine pattern to be followed by all subsequent ages. There is a pattern of worship consisting of the following items:

Singing - Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16  
Prayer - 1 Cor. 14:15; 1 Thes. 5:17,18  
Breaking Bread - 1 Cor. 11:23-33

Apostles' Teaching - Acts. 2:42  
Fellowship - Acts 2:42; 1 Cor. 16:1,2



When a congregation assembles on the First Day of the week and faithfully carries out a worship made up of these items, she is worshipping God "in truth".

For many years, the Churches of Christ have contended for the New Testament pattern of worship. The religious world seemed to have forgotten that it existed. So with tongue and pen, we stepped forth with our plea. Gospel preachers have not had the success they desire in converting the world, but they have certainly indoctrinated the Church. There are many who think that all there is to worship is to go through the items in some mechanical way. They have completely lost sight of the fact that Christ's law calls for worship in spirit as well as in truth.

It is difficult to call in our wandering minds from the things of a material nature. We come into the assembly with our cares and our burdens, our plans and our projects. In spite of good resolutions, our minds wander far afield. We are present in body; we go through the forms of worship but the spirit is not in it. This kind of worship is as much a violation of Christ's law as to bring in a musical instrument. It is not strange that those who do this find the service dull and boring. Eating the Lord's Supper should be the most thrilling experience of the week. If you do not find it so, the trouble is with you, not the Lord's Supper.

We need to do something about this, brethren. An inadequate worship not only robs God of the glory that belongs to Him, but it robs you of spiritual joy and growth. Let us take ourselves in hand. Let us assemble in a quiet and orderly manner. Then let us put our hearts into every item of worship. Surely for one hour in the week, we can put away the world and concentrate upon God.

**IN SPIRIT AND IN TRUTH**

Sermon preached by W. D. McPherson  
October 9, 1960

## YE MUST BE BORN AGAIN

Jno. 3:7

We owe a great debt of gratitude to Nicodemus, for his visit by night was the occasion of Jesus' discourse on the new birth. There has been more speculation, and more unwarranted statements on this subject than any other connected with the plan of salvation. This is doubtless evidence of the fascination which the new birth has for the children of men. In this discussion, we shall stick to the scriptures, and take care that we do not add to the confusion which already exists.

There is a tremendous difference between admiring Jesus and making the surrender to Him as Lord. Nicodemus had the greatest admiration for Him. He said, "We know thou art a teacher come from God; for no man can do the miracles thou doest, except God be with him." However, Nicodemus' admiration was rather condescending; he was a ruler of the Jews, a Pharisee, a son of Abraham. He considered himself prime material for the coming Kingdom. So Jesus had to set him straight; "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God." Here is our text for the evening. We shall not take them up in order, but we are going to study every word in it.

First, let us see if we can learn something about the kingdom of God. The word "kingdom", as used by Jesus and His apostles, conveys the idea of a rule or reign. So the Kingdom of God is the rule of God over the hearts and lives of men according to the laws of His divine government. Nicodemus, like all Jews, thought of the Kingdom as a political affair, a mighty empire with Jerusalem as its capital. Jesus showed him that it was to be a spiritual kingdom. "The Kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit." Furthermore, both Christ and His apostles identified the kingdom with the church. In commenting upon Peter's confession that He was the Christ, Jesus said, "Upon this rock I will build my church"... and to Peter, "I will give unto thee the keys of the Kingdom". Matt. 16:18. He was not speaking of two institutions but one. The kingdom is the church, the church the kingdom. In writing to the church at Colossae, Paul reminds them that through the Gospel they had been delivered from the power of darkness and translated into the kingdom of his dear Son. Col. 1:13. The kingdom is the church.

Next, let us look at the word "see". Except a man be born again, he cannot SEE the kingdom of God. We use "see" in two senses, (1) to behold, to look at; (2) to enjoy or experience. Jesus could not have meant to look at with the natural eye for the kingdom is spiritual. There are certain ordinances and agencies pertaining to the kingdom which are visible to the eye, but they can be observed by those who are out of the church as well as by those who are in it. Jesus is saying, "Except a man be born again, he cannot experience or enjoy the kingdom of God".

There are some people in the church who give every evidence of not enjoying their religion. They attend the minimum number of services; they stay home when the slightest hindrance arises; they do not read their Bibles; are not interested in soul winning; religion seems an intolerable burden. Is it possible that they have not been born again? The spiritual minded seek the company of the spiritual; the worldly seek worldly things. Can we expect to enjoy the holy associations of Heaven when we do not enjoy those of the church? Many seem to think that membership in the church should automatically produce happiness. They are wrong. God has provided the things in Christ which will produce happiness. If we use them we will find joy in our religion; if we neglect them we will find misery. Do not blame God; blame yourself.

Now we come to the expression, "born again". What does it mean to be born again? Nicodemus could not understand it, and I am sure that we could not had not Jesus given us light. Nicodemus expressed his perplexity in the question, "How can a man be born when he is old, can he enter the second time into his mother's womb and be born?" His trouble was, he had the wrong man in mind. There is an inner man and an outer man. The outer man is the body and the inner man is the soul. Proof text, 2 Cor. 4:16. "Though our outer man is decaying, yet our inward man is renewed day by day." Jesus answered by saying, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is Spirit." In other words, it is the soul or spirit which is born again, not the body. The fact that the spirit is born again and the body is not, brings about a constant struggle between the flesh and the spirit from the time of conversion until death. Before the new birth the flesh controls the spirit; after it, the spirit rules over the flesh. With God's help the Christian can crucify the flesh, keep it under and grow in spirit. But if he loses his first love and fails to nourish faith on the sincere milk of the word, the flesh will once more get control over the spirit and endanger the eternal salvation of the soul.

In Jno. 3:5 Jesus gives the two elements of the new birth; "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."

There are two elements in every birth. First there is the imparting of life by the sowing of seed, which process is called a begetting. Then there is the emerging of the new life which is called being born. The two elements of the new birth are the Spirit and water. Let us see how these two elements operate.

Spiritual life is begotten in the human heart by the Holy Spirit working through the word of truth. In explaining the parable of the sower, Jesus said, "The seed is the word." Lu.8:11. Our faith, repentance, hatred of sin, love of Christ, turning to God in obedience - all are produced by the Holy Spirit, but by the teaching of the Spirit. How else could he do His work? The Spirit is not some magic fluid to be poured over the soul but a person. One person influences another either by word or example. The Spirit influences the sinner by the word. Hear the scriptures: 1 Cor.4:15 - "In Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the Gospel." Jas.1:18 - "Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth." Pet.1:23 - "Being born (begotten) again, not of corruptible seed but of incorruptible, by the word of God which liveth and abideth forever."

The other element in the new birth is water. If the matter were not so serious, the efforts of men to make it appear that water here does not mean water would be amusing. Born of water means just what it says and of course, means Christian baptism. Great Bible scholars of almost every denomination have so regarded it. The Presbyterian Confession of Faith, the Episcopal prayer book, the Methodist Discipline have all gone on record to that effect. Every passage in the New Testament dealing with baptism confirms it.

The penitent believer is baptized into Christ. Gal.3:26,27. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, he has already believed that Christ is savior and Lord and has repented of his sins, but he is still in a state of alienation. Conversion is completed by being baptized into Christ. In baptism, he is added to the church, born into the family of God.

Nowhere in the Bible is it taught that one is cleansed by the Holy Spirit; it is the blood of Christ which cleanses. 1 John 1:7. Christ shed His blood in His death; the penitent believer reaches the blood when he is baptized into the likeness of His death. "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?... For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall also be in the likeness of his resurrection: Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed." (Read Romans 6:3-6)

There is one other word in the text to be noted: "EXCEPT a man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God." Except emphasizes the exclusion of everything else but that which is specified. In entering the Kingdom, Jesus excludes every other way but being born again. There is no other way. Nothing else will do. Do you wish to be a member of the Lord's church, a citizen of His Kingdom? You must be born again. When your heart is changed by faith, your life changed by repentance, and your relationship to Christ by baptism, the result is a new creature in Christ.

YE MUST BE BORN AGAIN

Jno. 3:7.

Sermon delivered by W. D. McPherson

November 1, 1960

## THE CHURCH IN SMYRNA

Rev.2:8-11

"Unto the angel of the church in Smyrna, write; These things saith the first and the last, which was dead and is alive." Thus begins the second letter to the seven churches of Asia. Smyrna was one of the two churches in which there was nothing to condemn. Philadelphia was also praised but the praise was mingled with warning. For Smyrna there was no warning, only encouragement. It was the weakest in worldly goods, perhaps the smallest numerically, certainly the most persecuted of the seven, yet it stood highest in the Lord's eyes. All of which demonstrates that God measures His church by the yardstick of spiritual values rather than by outward circumstance.

The letter continues: "I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty (but thou art rich) and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan." The fact that Christ knew them did not strike shame or fear in the hearts of these saints; rather it was one of the bright spots in their existence. Only the guilty fear those eyes which are like a flame of fire. In times of distress it is a great source of encouragement to know there are those who understand. Earthly friends often fail us, but Jesus is a Friend who can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities. Therefore, says Paul, Heb.4:16, "Let us come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in every time of need."

Smyrna is the suffering church. Their trials were threefold: tribulation, poverty, and the blasphemy of those who called themselves Jews and were not. The Greek word for tribulation is 'pressure'. In ancient times, criminals were sometimes crushed to death by having a large flat stone laid upon them. They were under pressure, suffering tribulation. We know what it is to be under pressure of time, of debt, of anxiety, of fear. These Christians were under the pressure of persecution. Never has a congregation been placed in a more hostile environment or had to fight harder for its very existence. In the first place, they were surrounded by heathenism in its most splendid form. Smyrna was noted for its Golden Street, a broad and spacious thoroughfare lined with beautiful and stately temples. Idolatry was rich, powerful, and popular. What a contrast were those pagan shrines to the humble building where the church met.

Smyrna not only worshipped the conventional gods of the times but was particularly strong in emperor worship. Once each year, every Roman citizen was required to burn incense to Caesar, in recognition of his being the emperor god. Each citizen on performing the rite was given a certificate to prove his loyalty to anyone who was inclined to question it. This requirement was not primarily religious but political. A Roman could burn his incense and then worship any god he pleased. But those Christians had some definite convictions. To them this was an act of idolatry. They refused to call any man Lord. The Romans could not understand their attitude, so they branded them as haters of mankind. The people of Smyrna were most zealous for the honor of Caesar; they would not tolerate anyone who refused to recognize his divinity. A sword hung perpetually over the heads of every Christian. They were loathed, despised, spoiled of their goods, and in danger of a terrible death every minute of the day.

But this was not all. The cup of their suffering was filled to the brim by persecution from another source. There was a large Jewish population in the city. It would seem that these would at least let the Christians alone since both worshipped the true God. But it was not so. They watched them, they spied upon them, they informed against them in complete disregard for the truth. A few years later when Polycarp was condemned by the Romans to be burned at the stake, it was the Jews who gathered the wood to burn him. Jesus said of them, in this letter we are studying, "They call themselves Jews but are not. They are a synagogue of Satan." We hear a great deal today about the Jew being God's people. Those who make such a remark have not studied the New Testament very closely. The true Jew today is not the fleshly descendent of Abraham but his spiritual descendent—the Christian. Jesus' statement here proves it, as well as Rom.2:28,29. "For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward, in the flesh: but he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit."

Let us now read further in the letter, verse 10, "Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days:" The Lord could give them no immediate relief, but rather that their sufferings would be intensified. He revealed that some of them would be cast into prison, and that all of them would have to endure a persecution of ten days duration. There is no reason to conclude that Jesus meant ten literal days of twenty-four hours. In the Bible, especially in Revelation, a definite number is often put for an indefinite period. The little church had evidently enjoyed a period in which the pressure had not been so great. He tells them that a new wave of persecution is

coming but that it will be of comparatively short duration.

Our Lord is completely honest with the children of men. He never seeks disciples through vain promises or false hopes. During His ministry a man came to him saying, "Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest." Jesus answered, "The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his head." In other words, "The birds and animals of the field have places of repose and shelter, but I am a stranger in my own world, a wanderer and an outcast. Are you willing to endure that to be my disciple?" Again "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. A man's foes shall be they of his own household." Matt.10:34-36. Among the last words Jesus said to His apostles was: "In the world ye shall have tribulation." Jno.16:33. Let us get the lesson. Being a Christian does not make our lot any easier here on earth. From the very moment we step over on the Lord's side the devil is at work applying the pressure. With every device at his command, he seeks to draw us back into the world, and if he cannot do that, to make us worthless to the church.

It is rare indeed in America that a Christian has suffered bodily harm for the sake of Christ. We have thus far enjoyed the blessings of religious freedom. However the future liberty of conscience is doubtful. There are evil forces at work even now undermining it. The time may not be far distant when the church will be made to suffer as did the saints at Smyrna. When that time comes will we be ready? Personally, I want to be stronger than I am now, for the promise to the overcomer is too precious to miss.

That promise, both to Smyrna and to us is found in Rev.2:10, "Be thou faithful unto death and I will give thee a crown of life." All who wear out this life in the service of the Master, as well as those who lay it on the altar of martyrdom shall receive another life as a reward for their faithfulness. A life for a life; that is not asking too much if we get a life infinitely better in return. And that is just what Jesus offers each of us. The terminus of this life is the grave, but that life which the Christian gets in exchange is eternal, never ending. It matters not how we shield it, this life is filled with disappointment, pain, anguish of body and mind, but the life Jesus shall give in exchange for this one is one of radiant happiness and everlasting joy. He shall wipe all tears from our eyes. This life is one of loneliness and disappointment; the crown of life is eternal bliss in the company of God and the redeemed of all ages. Heaven is too sweet to imagine, too lovely to miss, too wonderful to throw away.

We close with the words of Holy Writ, Rom.8:16-18. "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: and if children then heirs; heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together. For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us."

#### THE CHURCH IN SMYRNA

Rev.2:8-11

Sermon preached by W. D. McPherson

December 11, 1960

THE CHURCH IN THYATIRA  
Rev.2:18-29

The fourth letter to the seven churches of Asia is written to Thyatira. "And unto the angel of the church in Thyatira write: These things saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet like fine brass." Rev.2:18. Thyatira was the home of Lydia who was among Paul's first converts in Philippi. It is said of her in Acts 16:14 that "a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us; whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended to the things which were spoken of Paul."

Thyatira was not a renowned religious center like Ephesus and Pergamos, but was noted for its commerce and trade. It was the headquarters of a great wool market, but was better known as the source of one of the most exclusive products in the ancient world - purple dye. As you know, purple was, and still is, the color of royalty. In those days the waters around Thyatira abounded in a little shellfish called the murex. The throat of this little creature contained one drop of purple dye. God intended this dye to be used by the murex to color the water and thus to hide himself when attacked by his enemies. Thyatirians cultivated the little creature to furnish dye for the state robes of royalty. Think of how many murexes were required to dye the robes of the Roman Emperor. Pliny, a historian of that time tells us that the dye sold for over a thousand denarii, two hundred dollars a pound in our money. Lydia must have been a woman of great wealth, for traffic in such a costly product required a large outlay of capital.

The message to Thyatira is one of sharpest criticism but it is not the kind of criticism which discourages for it begins with a warm commendation. Jesus said: "I know thy works and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last to be more than the first. Notwithstanding I have this against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols." Who has not at times been guilty of unwise and hurtful criticism? Let us learn from the Master. There are times when it is one's duty to criticize his brother, but its purpose must be to help and encourage rather than to hurt. When you must criticize follow Jesus. Begin with praise of all that is good in your brother. It will show him that your motive is a loving desire to help; he will receive it in the right spirit, and will be encouraged to make for himself a better life.

This congregation was harboring a woman who called herself a prophetess, but was really a Jezebel. In that first age of the church, when some possessed miraculous gifts, there were women too whom God gave the gift of prophecy. The proper use of this gift is to be found in 1 Cor.11:2-16. You understand, I am sure that this woman was not the Jezebel of the Old Testament, but one like her in nature and activity. Jezebel was the wife of Ahab, one of the kings of Israel who lived about nine hundred years before Christ. She was a Gentile, the daughter of the king of Tyre and a worshipper of idols. Ahab married her in defiance of God's law. No woman in Jewish history was more despised than was Jezebel. She first led her weak husband into idolatry, then used him to establish the cult of Baal into Israel. She was a woman who possessed talents of the highest order; she was artful and persuasive, capable of influencing people, but she used all against the God of Israel. There is nothing more wicked than to use one's powers and abilities against the God who gave them.

It is inconceivable that the church would tolerate one who was leading people into the carnal sin of fornication. She was seducing them into spiritual adultery. Adultery is a vivid picture of spiritual infidelity to God. The prophets described the unfaithfulness of Israel as the breaking of her marriage vows with God, her husband. Thyatira, a great commercial center was a city of many trade guilds, which were very similar to our labor unions. Membership in these guilds carried so many privileges with them that a merchant could hardly refuse to belong.

Many of the activities of the guilds were bound up with the worship of idols. They had their banquets which began and ended with a cup of wine being poured out as an offering to the gods. Could a Christian have a part in such a procedure? During those feasts meat was served which had been offered on a heathen altar to some idol. Could a worshipper of the true and living God eat this meat? Sometimes these banquets got out of hand and degenerated into revelry attended by drunkenness and immorality. Could the saints afford to be in a situation where this might occur? It was a real problem; identical with those we face today. A refusal to join those guilds meant business failure and poverty, but on the other hand to participate in those heathen ceremonies could hardly be interpreted as anything but disloyalty to Christ. The teaching of the

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Gospel on this matter seems clear enough. There is Jas.4:4, "Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is an enemy of God." Jesus had also spoken: "For what is a man profited, if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" Matt.16:25. Then Eph.5:11, "Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them." And finally 2 Cor.6:17,18 - "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." But in spite of all that God had said, this woman called Jezebel was teaching that association with the heathen in their trade guilds was harmless. The doctrine of Jezebel is the most dangerous in all the world. It is the doctrine of compromise.

The situation that existed in Thyatira is by no means a dead issue. Every day Christians are called upon to decide which comes first, popularity, material prosperity, or loyalty to Christ. There are too many who are willing to make a compromise. However, all who wish to know the Lord's will on this matter can find it in this letter. Beginning at verse 22, we read: "Behold I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds. And I will kill her children with death: and all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts."

Just what the nature of the judgement was which the Lord had in mind would be hard to say, but it would be sharp and unmistakeable. It would be such a punishment as to leave no doubt of the Lord's attitude toward compromise with the world. There is nothing which would do more to stem the tide of worldliness in the church than to see as Christ sees it. He knows the very existence of the church depends on keeping the world out of the church. Like truth, goodness is invincible as long as unmixed with evil. Fellow Christians, we must learn to resist any compromise, even at the price of personal loss. Not only is our own soul involved but also the future of the church.

THE CHURCH IN THYATIRA  
Rev.2:18-29

Sermon preached by W. D. McPherson  
December 25, 1960

THE CHURCH IN SARDIS  
Rev. 3:1-6

The fifth letter which Jesus directed to be written to the churches of Asia is found in Rev. 3:1-6, the letter to Sardis. Before the Roman conquest, Sardis was the capital of the kingdom of Lydia, and her most famous king was Croesus, a man of fabulous wealth whose name survives even today in the proverb: As rich as Croesus. Sardis was one of the few cities in the ancient world so favorably situated that life was easy and wealth could be obtained with very little effort. However, this easy existence did not prove to be a blessing. The people of Sardis degenerated into a loose-living, luxury-loving people who had grown flabby in mind and morals, as well as in body. The church was so deeply affected by this unhealthy environment that when the Lord looked at His church He could find nothing to praise, but was forced to write: "I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead."

The technical meaning of 'death' as used in the Bible is separation. Physical death is the separation of the body from the soul; spiritual death, the separation of the soul from God. However, there has always been a popular usage of the word. We frequently refer to that which is useless, inactive, fruitless, as being dead - that is Sardis. Life had been too easy. She was not threatened by persecution; she was not blasphemed by those who called themselves Jews and were not; there was no danger from false teachers within. Untroubled and undisturbed, she had sunk into a profound slumber from which our Lord seeks to awaken her before it is everlastingly too late.

It seems to me that these words of Jesus need special emphasis. Could it be that we have a name that we are living but are dead? Just when is a congregation in danger of dying? These questions do not awaken in our minds a pleasant train of thought but they ought to be faced. Evidently others are doing so, for it has not been too long since I saw the notice of a sermon in the Saturday paper on the subject, "How to Kill a Church." To take a human life is a terrible sin. The murderer takes that which belongs to God and which he has no power to replace. But to contribute to the destruction of the church, the Lord's body, is a crime inconceivable in magnitude. Let us think for a bit on how one might go about killing the church.

A failure to provide an efficient and adequate teaching program will cause a church to die. Jesus made it clear in the Great Commission that His church is to go forth with an open Bible, breaking unto hungry souls the bread of life! "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." Matt. 28:19,20. The first part of the Commission has to do with evangelism: teaching that portion of the Gospel which will create faith in Christ and lead men and women to be baptized into Him. Then there is nurture: those truths which develop Christlike character and fruitful Christian living. A teaching program which deals only in first principles will rob the saints of the spiritual food necessary to their development. On the other hand, a church which neglects first principles will not reach the unsaved and will dry up for a lack of numerical growth. The prophet said, "Lengthen your cords and strengthen your stakes." Let your teaching reach out to a lost world and then strengthen those who have been brought into the body of Christ.

Another situation which will kill a church is irresponsibility. Too few are aware that the business of keeping the church going and growing is the work of every member. You are aware of Paul's comparison between the church and the human body in 1 Cor. 12. In making the application, he said: "Ye are the Body of Christ and members in particular." You may be a toe or a finger rather than an arm or a leg, but a toe or a finger are as essential to a complete body as an arm or a leg. It is customary to make resolutions on New Year's day. Here is one that I would like for us to make together. Let us all solemnly affirm, in the presence of God, this: "I can't do everything, but I can do something. What I can do I ought to do, and God being my helper, I will do it."

Selfishness will cause a church to die. In fact there is nothing so blighting as selfishness. When church members are stingy with their time and money there is little that can be done along other lines to redeem a desperate situation. Everything necessary to build up the body of Christ calls for somebody's time and money. Not enough of either are given here at Moreland Avenue. If each of us will highly resolve that in 1961 we will give more and do more, at the end of the year we will be happier in the Lord than we can ever realize unless we try. We are burdened with debts and have obligations which seem insurmountable, but there is not a one of us who could not increase our giving if we really wish to do so. We know not when the heavens shall be dissolved and the elements shall melt with fervent heat. Let us begin this very day, laying up treasures in Heaven where our treasure will be untouched by the mutations of time.



One other thing needs to be mentioned. Ungodly living on the part of the members can kill the church. A congregation made up of consecrated, loving serving saints is a tower of strength; but a worldly, selfish church is dying and if she doesn't repent, she ought to die.

What is the Lord's message to Sardis? You will find it in verse 2: "Be watchful, and strengthen the things that remain, that are ready to die; for I have not found thy works perfect before God." Wake up before it is too late. You still have some life. Realize your peril; begin building on the good that you have and keep on building until you are once more fully alive. What fine advice to dreamy saints who have been drifting downstream with idle oars. The loving Master is sounding a clear note of warning. He is calling their attention to the rocks and shoals which lie ahead. They are going back instead of forward. Soon they will drift upon the rocks and make shipwreck of their souls.

I know of no better message for the new year than the message to Sardis. There is a vital place for the Lord's church in this frightening world. The Kingdoms of this world are being shaken as never before. When the shaking is over Christ's church will still stand. If you have been loyal to it, have worked for its welfare you too will stand. But if you have neglected it, you will die.

**THE CHURCH IN SARDIS**

Rev. 3:1-6

Sermon preached by W. D. McPherson

January 1, 1961

THE CHURCH AT PHILADELPHIA

Rev. 3:7-13.

The sixth letter to the churches in Asia is addressed to Philadelphia, a city about twenty-eight miles southeast of Sardis. "And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth and no man shutteth; and shutteth and no man openeth." Rev. 3:7. Although this little congregation was the weakest of the seven and had suffered at the hands of those who belonged to the synagogue of Satan, she had stood so firmly for the Lord that He had no word of reproof, only encouragement. "Behold I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it."

We must not forget that Revelation is rich in figurative language. In this book, God is speaking to us in pictures. Jesus uses the word 'door' in a figurative sense to reveal that the church was being offered a great opportunity. A closed door signifies progress hindered, opportunity denied; an open door is the symbol of access and unhindered progress. Recently, I had business in our new county jail. When I was granted permission to visit one of the cell blocks, the man in the office pointed to a closed door and said, "Right through there." I tried the door and found it locked. I could go no further. Just then there was a buzzing sound and the door opened of its own accord and I went in. I found myself in a long corridor at the end of which there was another door. I soon discovered that this door was also locked, but there was a convenient button near by which I pressed and soon the jailer came with a great bunch of keys. This door was opened for me but before I reached my destination there was still another door which had to be opened before I finally arrived. Thinking back over this experience I can see that an open door is an opportunity; at any point along the way I would have been stopped had not a door been opened for me. The little church at Philadelphia, small and weak as she was must have been tempted to give up. She was making no progress, the future seemed hopeless. It is darkest just before the dawn. To this little weak and discouraged group of disciples Jesus is saying: "Hold on! Don't give up. I have set before thee an open door and no man can shut it."

The letter itself does not tell us specifically the opportunity which was opening up for the church at Philadelphia but similar references found in other parts of the New Testament make it rather clear that Jesus was referring to new opportunities of preaching the Gospel. Paul, in 2 Cor. 2:12, uses the same language: "When I came to Troas to preach Christ's gospel, and a door was opened unto me of the Lord, I had no rest in my spirit." Also in Col. 4:2,3, we read, "Continue in prayer and watch in the same with thanksgiving; withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance to speak the mystery of Christ." There in Philadelphia, God's overruling providence was working to give the church an opening to preach the Gospel with greater effectiveness than ever before.

What a lesson for the church today! On more than one occasion, I have heard Gospel preachers give expression of their fears for the future of the church. Crime is on the increase, morals are decaying, irreligion is growing, secular affairs compete for the time which should be given to the church. There are some who make the gloomy prediction that the people will soon be completely unwilling to listen to the Gospel. They are wrong! To every generation of Christians our Savior speaks as He did to the church in Philadelphia, "Behold, I have set before you an open door, and no man can shut it." It cannot be denied that we are living in terrible times. The whole world is in the midst of a great social revolution of such tremendous proportions that civilization itself hangs in the balance. But God has not forgotten His world. In spite of the wall of ungodliness which Satan is building around us, He is opening new doors for the preaching of Christ. Let me point out some of them.

1. Immorality, intemperance, debauchery, and every kind of criminal activity is increasing every day. You say, "What's the use of preaching righteousness to such a sodden world?" Why, the very rottenness of iniquity is its own condemnation. People eventually find out that sin cannot satisfy man's craving for happiness but rather destroys all prospect of a satisfying life. Here is an open door for the Gospel. Bring home to men the fact that the wages of sin is death and that only Christ can satisfy that aching void at the center of their being and they will listen.

2. Until recent months, we have been depending on government, military armament, and gold reserves for security. Now we know that not one of these have any power to save us from the intentions of an evil aggressor. Now that the gods in whom we have been trusting have fallen to the ground, I believe we will more readily turn to the God of Heaven in whom there is real security. Here is another open door for the preaching of the Word. Now is the time to tell people as we have never told them

before that "The world passeth away, and the lust thereof; but he that doeth the will of the Lord abideth forever." 1 Jno. 2:17.

3. The kingdoms of this world are passing; dynasties perish; ancient seats of government are overthrown. As the march of revolution goes on, not a government of the earth, including our own will be left untouched. What better time is there to tell people about that Kingdom which shall not be moved, the church of the Lord Jesus Christ? We read, Heb.12:28, "Receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear." That's just what the people are looking for - stability; is there any better time to tell them about it?

4. The religious world is at last fully awake to the evils of division. A proposal to unite four leading denominations made the headlines recently, and was a live topic of discussion for many days. The Churches of Christ have been pleading for unity for one hundred and fifty years. This widespread longing of a divided Christendom for unity and brotherhood is a splendid time to preach New Testament Christianity as never before. The only effective answer to an unbelieving world is unity in Christ.

Yes, there are many open doors today. The question is: Are we going to walk through them and win the world for Christ? This is no time for the church to draw back into a shell. People need Christ as never before. If we are wise in our approach we can win them. Let us live closer to the Lord, work harder to win souls and claim that promise made first to Philadelphia but which can be ours: "Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I will also keep thee from the hour of trial which shall come upon all the world." Rev.3:10.

THE CHURCH AT PHILADELPHIA  
Rev. 3:7-13.

Sermon preached by W. D. McPherson  
January 8, 1961

THE APOSTOLIC BENEDICTION  
2 Cor. 13:14.

Paul wrote two letters to the beloved church at Corinth. In the first he points out certain evils which threatened their very existence, while in the second, he commends them for their willingness to receive correction and to repent. The second letter closes with a short but beautiful prayer, sometimes called the apostolic benediction, found in 2 Cor. 13:14. "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost be with you all." This verse is one of the texts setting forth that doctrine which men call the Trinity but which the Bible speaks of as the Godhead. The word is mentioned only three times in the Scriptures, but is taught in dozens of passages. Godhead means godhood. As manhood is that which makes a man, so godhood is that which makes God God. The Supreme Being has made Himself known in three modes of existence - the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit. First, in human history, He was revealed as Jehovah, the God of Israel. He was the One God, immortal, invisible, Creator and Preserver, whom all should adore and obey.

Christ brought a new and richer manifestation of God. He appeared as a man living as a man among men, but made the claim and proved it, that He was the only begotten Son of God. He announced Himself as One who dwelt from eternity in the bosom of the Father, who came forth from the Father, and would return unto Him. In manifesting Himself as God in Christ, the Father gave the richest and fullest revelation of Himself - His love, grace, and mercy.

When our Lord was about to leave His apostles, He promised them another Comforter, the Holy Spirit, who would abide with them forever. "But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me." Jno. 15:26. In accordance with His promise, the Holy Spirit came on Pentecost, thus completing God's revelation of His godhood, one God manifest in the divine-human Christ and in the Spirit of Truth and life. That's the Trinity (Godhead), the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, three persons yet one, not an invention of men but a Scripture sealed, Heaven revealed truth.

The doctrine of the Godhead is one of the great mysteries of the Bible, but like all of God's mysteries, the fact that it is beyond human reason is no cause for rejecting it. Every day we come face to face with marvels of nature which we cannot explain, yet never think of denying. To use a homely illustration, can you tell how the green grass in the meadow makes hair on the horse, fur on the rabbit, wool on the sheep, and feathers on the chicken? Can you explain how a ray of sunlight makes light, heat, and power at one and the same time? In view of the numerous mysteries of nature which we do not understand yet accept as true, it is downright dishonest to say, "I will not take what the Bible says about there being one God in three persons, until it is explained to my satisfaction." In order for this type of objector to be consistent, he should also say, "I refuse to use electricity in my home until I understand all about it." He needs to be reminded that God cannot be brushed off so easily. The Word cannot be destroyed with an objection.

Paul, knowing the truth of the Godhead, in bidding farewell to the Corinthians, prays that all the benefits which the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit have to bestow, may descend upon them and richly bless them. Let us try to understand and appreciate this prayer, that we with all reverence may join in and pray for the very same thing, for he who has these blessings has everything. The prayer is threefold:

1. May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.

Grace, unmerited favor, is the most marvelous word in the sacred vocabulary. As one has said, "It describes the highest love, the deepest devotion, the widest compassion, and the most magnificent mercy Heaven can offer." Christ is the bringer of grace to this despairing, sin-cursed world. In doing so, He divested Himself of Heaven's glory and put on the frail garments of humanity. He not only became a man but He became a servant, yes, an obedient servant, obedient even unto the death of the cross.

The human mind cannot fully comprehend or appreciate what it cost Jesus to bring grace to this old world. He was arrested in the night like a dangerous criminal. They loaded Him with chains and dragged Him before four different judges, each of which perverted justice. They lashed Him until His back ran bloody; spit in His face; pressed the cruel thorns upon His brow. They laid the heavy cross upon Him till He fell beneath its weight, and when they finally reached Calvary they nailed Him to it. But the climax of grace is not in the fact that Jesus suffered, but that He suffered for our sins. Peter explains it all in 1 Pet. 2:21-24. "Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow in his steps: who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: who when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously: who himself bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes we are healed."

If, as is popularly taught, our eternal destiny is forever settled the moment we believe, Paul was out of order in praying that the grace of the Lord Jesus might rest upon the saints. Why pray for more grace when you already have the highest favor that grace can bestow? Paul knew whereof he was speaking. No inspired writer of the New Testament was clearer on the point that Obedience to the Gospel cancels past sins, puts one into Christ, but does not insure eternal salvation in Heaven. The Lord's word to His church is: "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life." Rev. 2:10. So let us all who are gathered here this morning, earnestly pray each for all: "May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you." Let us pray that grace may be given for such strength of conviction that we will never compromise the truth or yield to evil; grace to stand against the temptations of the world; grace to labor without fainting, to give without grudging, and to persevere to the very end of life's journey.

2. The love of God be with you all.

Paul is not implying that they were not already in possession of God's love. Every Christian is surrounded by, enveloped in His love. He loved us before we loved Him. He sought us when we spurned Him, yearned over us when we were too busy serving the devil to care. There is not a moment of the day when God does not love us with a love that is as high as Heaven and as wide as the universe. However, Paul was aware of a fact which most of us seem to have overlooked. As much as God loves us, He cannot freely bestow His rich favors upon the unworthy. If you come in, out of the sunshine of a bright summer's day and shut yourself in a closet, you have no one to blame but yourself for being in the dark. Let us throw down our idols, turn from our uncleanness, make Christ truly the Lord of our hearts that the richest treasures of His love may be ours.

3. The communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

According to Thayer's Greek lexicon, communion is that which we have in common. Paul is praying that the Holy Spirit which is the common possession of every Christian may be with them. The ministry of the Spirit is indispensable. Through the Bible He is our teacher, creating and developing faith, leading on to eternal life. As a living presence in us, He comforts, strengthens, intercedes. When we have the communion of the Holy Spirit, you hate sin, love Jesus, find courage in deepest distress, run the race that is set before you and in God's good time, win the prize.

THE APOSTOLIC BENEDICTION  
2 Cor. 13:14.

Sermon preached by W. D. McPherson  
January 22, 1961

## MUSIC IN HEAVEN AND IN THE CHURCH

If you have been a member of the Church of Christ for any length of time, you have been confronted with the rather accusing statement: "You belong to the church which doesn't believe in music." That always hits me right between the eyes, for I can never be sure whether the critic is poking fun at our singing, or if he really believes that we are queer enough to be against music. I always try to assure him that we do believe in music. I point out that there are three kinds of music: (1) playing upon an instrument, (2) singing, (3) singing to the accompaniment of an instrument. I further point out, that according to the teaching of the New Testament, Christians are limited to SINGING in worship, and that we are convinced that we can go no further without defying the authority of Jesus Christ.

If this does not satisfy the critic, he sometimes comes back with the following: "They used instrumental music in Heaven, why can't we have it in the church? Can anything be wrong in the church which is lawful in Heaven?" Evidently the advocates of instrumental music consider it a good argument or they would not use it. Therefore, we are obligated in all fairness to examine it carefully, for if it is a valid objection, we may need to change our position. There is no virtue in stubbornness or salvation in error. Jesus said (Jno. 8:32), "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

There are three references to music in Heaven, all in the book of Revelation. They are Rev. 5:8,9; Rev. 14:2; Rev. 15:2,3. The first reads: "When he had taken the book, the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having everyone of them harps, and golden vials of odours, which are the prayers of the saints. And they sung a new song." Rev. 14:2 reads: "And I heard a voice from Heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder, and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps." Rev. 15:2,3 reads: "And I saw as it were, a sea of glass mingled with fire: and them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God. And they sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb."

If all this proves that God accepts instrumental music in Christian worship, it must necessarily be proof by means of example. It cannot be denied that an apostolic example is as good as a command. Acts 20:7 is an illustration. "On the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them." This verse shows that it was the practice of the church in Troas to assemble on the first day of the week to eat the Lord's Supper. It is a sound and logical conclusion that a practice carried out under the supervision of the Spirit filled apostles is Christ's pattern for us. But is the playing of harps in Heaven a situation parallel to that in Acts 20:7? Not at all. Those who made music in Heaven were the celestial beings who stood before the Throne of God and later the redeemed of all ages. They were not a congregation assembled for worship. Since the situation is not parallel and the circumstances different, the harpers in Heaven are not an example for Christians in the church.

Then too, there is something else to think about. If music in Heaven is an example, no one is following that example. In Heaven, each one had a harp and each played and sang. In Rev. 5:8 it is specifically stated that each had his own harp, so I am not guessing about it. Yet in congregations where instrumental music is used, one plays and all others sing. If music in Heaven is an example, it is a matter of faith, and must be carried out just as the Lord's word directs. To contend that a practice is an example, and then to neglect to follow the example is to stand self condemned before God.

The truth of the matter is, those harps used in Heaven were not literal but figurative harps. As we have already pointed out, Revelation is a book made up largely of symbols and figures. In Rev. 5:8 we read, "And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having everyone of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of the saints." Note, the vials are figurative; if the vials are not literal, but represent the prayers of the saints, how can one consistently contend that the harps are literal? Rev. 14:2 settles the matter. I read from the Amr. Revised Bible: "And I heard a voice from Heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and the voice which I heard was AS the voice of harpers harping with their harps." John, then, did not hear harping but the voice of singing, as grand and as melodious as if it had been the music of many harps. It is clear that the Revised Version is correct here, because all three clauses are in the same grammatical construction.

A correct understanding of the first two passages in Revelation helps us to understand the third. Rev. 15:2 speaks of the harps of God. We can see now that they are not mechanical instruments but whatever spiritual faculties God has given us for praising Him. In this connection, let us study Eph. 5:18,19, "Be filled with the Spirit; speaking to yourselves (one another) in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your hearts unto the Lord." Please note that in our worship we are to sing and make melody. The only possible way to make melody is upon an instrument. Does that

open the way for the use of the piano or organ? No, because God specifies the instrument - make melody in your heart, ie, use the harps of God. Let us get this beautiful picture. In singing the Holy Spirit touches the strings of the heart through the words of psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs so that the thoughts and feelings of the heart vibrate to the sentiment of the song. Thus in the service of praise, we are taught, edified, our hearts are lifted up to God and overflow in gratitude.

The music they have in Heaven has nothing to do with the music which is acceptable to God in the church. The only rule of faith which bears the stamp of divine approval is the apostles' teaching. Paul, an apostle said, "The things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also." 2 Tim.2:2. Did the apostles teach it; is there an example sanctioning the use of instruments in worship? It is not there. Here is what we find, Col.3:16-17, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him."

There are those who would have you believe that the Churches of Christ are alone in their opposition to instrumental music. They are absolutely wrong. It was not until 660 that Pope Vitalian permitted the use of organs in the churches. Their use in Protestant churches was protested by some of the most able men among them. The words of Adam Clark will illustrate my point. In his famous Commentary, he makes the following comment on Amos 6:5, "If there was a woe to them who invented instruments of music, as did David under the Law, is there no woe, no curse to them who invent them and introduce them into the worship of God in the Christian church? I am an old man and an old minister, and I here declare that I never knew them productive of any good in the worship of God, and have had reason to believe that they were productive of much evil. Music as a science, I esteem and admire; but instruments of music in the house of God I abominate and abhor. This is the abuse of music, and here I register my protest against all such corruptions in the worship of the Author of Christianity."

We do not fear to stand alone as long as we stand on the truth. It is better to please God than men. Let us make our worship just what Christ would have it - a spiritual worship carried out in accordance with the truth. Let us teach others as they will allow us and the time may come when they will see the beauty of the Lord's way.

#### MUSIC IN HEAVEN AND IN THE CHURCH

Sermon preached by W. D. McPherson  
January 29, 1961

THE STEWARDSHIP OF WORDS  
Matt.12:36, 37.

Stewardship is the cornerstone of religion. It acknowledges that life with all its gifts is from God; that all must be used in accordance with His will; and that there is a day of Judgement, when each of us must render up an accounting of our stewardship. In view of these solemn facts, we are reminded in 1 Pet.4:10, "As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same, one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God."

The stewardship of money is frequently emphasized in sermons and in religious papers; we are also pretty well aware of the responsibility we owe to God for the right use of our time and talent. But there is another area of responsibility which is not so obvious to the average Christian. I was forcibly reminded of it the other day in a statement by Dr. Ilion Jones: He Said, "Speech is the most unique of all human gifts, sets man apart from the rest of God's creatures, and constitutes his most solemn stewardship." As I thought upon his words I was reminded of the statement made by Jesus in Matt.12:36,37, "Every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give an account thereof in the day of judgement. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned." The doctor is right. The origin of speech belongs to God who taught the first man to speak. When the Creator endowed man with a power above all His creatures, He gave it to him because he had the ability to use it a-right, and at the same time, made him responsible for how he used it.

If we will but take the time to understand the power of words, we will appreciate the importance of this stewardship. It is true that the pen is mightier than the sword. Empires have been built by men who were able to say the right words to the right people. Stockholders are enriched millions of dollars each year by efficient salespeople skilled in the use of words. Words fitly spoken have turned many a lost soul from destruction and brought them to the feet of the Savior; unwise words have had the opposite effect.

There are words which heal and words which build, but there are also words which wound and destroy. The Greeks have a proverb: The boneless tongue small and weak, can crush and kill. David prayed that God might hide him "from the secret counsel of the wicked..... who whet their tongue like a sword, and bend their bows to shoot their arrows, even bitter words." Ps.64:2,3. Solomon said, "A man that beareth false witness against his neighbor is a maul, and a sword, and a sharp arrow." Prov.25:18. Gossip, talebearing, back biting, whispering, have power to pull even the mighty from their seats, tear a useful man's reputation to shreds, and destroy the good he is trying to do. We have it on good authority that there are actually evil organizations in this country, which will for a price, start a whispering campaign against any individual, and no matter how uncorrupted he may be, they guarantee in the end, to destroy him.

The Christian's responsibility in the realm of speech is well defined in the Bible. The power of words, either for good or bad, as well as the impending judgement for the use of them, make it imperative that we learn what is expected of us. We cannot afford to take lightly the warning of the Master, "By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned." This morning, we shall survey the ground and see what is included in the stewardship of speech.

The word which gives an over-all picture of that speech worthy of a true Christian is SOUNDNESS. Paul directed the young man Titus, "In all things shewing thyself a pattern of good works: in doctrine shewing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity, sound speech that cannot be condemned, Tit.2:7,8. Soundness is wholesomeness, a wholesomeness which exhibits the health of spiritual manhood, rather than the morbid and corrupt speech of the morally degenerate. There are actually misguided people by the dozen who think that profanity is the trademark of virile manhood. Poor souls! They are blind and do not know it; they weak and have not found it out; they are sin-sick with an illness which is soul deep and fever hot.

Profanity, which is contempt for God and sacred things is but one instance of corrupt speech. There is also obscene speech, conversation which is indecent, lewd, offensive to modesty and chastity. Obscenity is not peculiar to any one period of history but is the curse of every age. The saints of God are surrounded by, and sometimes almost submerged by a flow of corruption which can best be described as the contents of a stinking sewer dumped upon them. Let us not forget our stewardship. The blacker the night, the brighter shines the little candle. Always register your disapproval of lewd stories and filthy jokes, if by nothing more than walking away. With God's help you can keep your mind clean. Speak in the full knowledge that God hears, and so speak that you will not be ashamed for him to hear.



If you would be a good steward of words, you must learn the art of encouragement. Remember, everybody is carrying a load; some burdens may be lighter than others but all are carrying them. We are commanded to bear one another's burdens, so let me remind you that one of the most effective ways to do that is with a few well chosen words of encouragement. The trouble with us is, we are so busy feeling sorry for ourselves that we don't see the other fellow's load. If we would say more and do more to make our brother's load lighter that very effort would lighten our own load. In the Judgement, when we shall have to give account for the words we have spoken, if we have been nothing more than fault finding critics we shall have failed in our stewardship.

Then there are words of gratitude. Nothing does more to brighten life than the spirit of thanksgiving. Ingratitude stifles the spirit of human kindness and service to one another; a sincere 'thank you' is like a glass of water poured upon a drooping plant. A preacher told of a faded letter shown to him by a very old lady. She had treasured it in her Bible for years. It showed that it had been read dozens of times. The letter was a word of thanks for the splendid work she had done as a teacher of a Bible class. Those few words of gratitude had been a source of inspiration to her all of her life. I was baptized in 1916. That has been nearly fifty years ago. But if I live to be a hundred, I shall never forget that one of the elders waited until I came out of the dressing room. He shook my hand and said, "Son, we are happy to have you as one of us. I hope you will be a blessing to the church." A little girl received a beautiful doll from her uncle. Her mother asked, "Did you thank him for this lovely present?" "Yes Mother," the Child replied, "But I didn't tell him so." This describes us only too well. If you are thankful to God, tell Him so; if you are grateful for the kindness of a friend, thank him. Remember, we shall all give an account.

All of this is important, but the most profitable use of words in all the realm of speech are those spoken for the Master. Judging by their actions, or rather by their failure to act, the majority of Christians believe that the work of carrying the Gospel to the lost belongs exclusively to the preacher. But neither Jesus nor His apostles ever said anything which could possibly lead to that conclusion. The Lord's command in the Commission is, "Go ye into all the world." Mrk.16:15. The word 'ye' includes every Christian.

Young Christians particularly are aware of their inexperience, their lack of training in teaching and hesitate to speak for the Master, fearing that they shall say the wrong thing. This is commendable up to a certain point. Diligent application to the truths of the Gospel and methods of presenting these truths will soon enable one to become an effective teacher. When there has been sufficient time and opportunity to prepare oneself, ignorance becomes an excuse instead of a reason.

May we realize as never before, that we live in a world of words; that words may destroy as well as build up; that they may kill as well as make alive. The Christian's sword is the word of God. It is unthinkable that God would place this omnipotent weapon in our hands without holding us accountable for its use. Let us be faithful in the stewardship of words, remembering the words of Paul: "Study to show thyself approved unto God: a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, handling aright the word of truth." 2 Tim.2:15.

#### THE STEWARDSHIP OF WORDS

Matt.12:36,37

Sermon preached by W. D. McPherson

February 5, 1961

A JOURNEY TO BETHLEHEM

Lu.2:15.

On the night of Jesus' birth, there were shepherds out on the mountain pastures surrounding Bethlehem, keeping watch over their flocks. Sheep are helpless animals and must be closely guarded. So, as the text literally reads, the shepherds were keeping their watches, that is, some watched while others slept. Those sheep out on upland pastures discredit the popular date of Dec. 25th as the birthday of Christ. It was customary to fold the flocks by the first of November, for after that it was too cold out of doors for both shepherds and sheep. Dr. Ellicott, a reputable commentator, suggests that it must have been in the spring, around Passover time when Jesus was born. At that time the grass is lush and green and the shepherds are all out in the fields guarding their flocks. Suffice it to say, the time of Jesus' birth is of little consequence or God would have revealed it. It is the fact of His birth which is important.

On that memorable night, while the shepherds watched, a stillness lay over hill and valley, broken only by the occasional bleating of the sheep. The sky was aglow with starry brightness, when suddenly as Luke tells it, "the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shown round about them, and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people, For unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Saviour which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger." Lu.2:9-12. There is a Jewish tradition that wherever Michael, the Archangel appeared, he was accompanied by the glory of the Shekhinah. If this was true, it could have been he who brought the news of a Savior's coming, for even as he spoke there appeared a multitude of the Heavenly host, praising God and saying,

"Glory to God in the highest,  
And on earth peace,  
Good will toward men."

Then the angels returned to Heaven and the light faded leaving the shepherds to ponder upon the most glorious news ever given to the children of men. But the world would never be as dark again, for the Sun of Righteousness had risen.

When some measure of calm had been restored to the shepherds' trembling hearts, there was but one thought in their minds: to see this wondrous babe for themselves. So they said one to another, "Let us go over to Bethlehem, and see this thing which has come to pass, which the Lord hath shown unto us." So leaving their flocks they hurried to Bethlehem and found Mary and Joseph and the babe lying in a manger. We need to remind ourselves that there was more than a babe lying there - there was Truth incarnate, made visible in human flesh. There was Truth the world had been waiting millenniums to see. We do not know how much of it the shepherds saw, but let us in meditation journey back to Bethlehem and see what Truth we can find to help us in this troubled world in which we live.

In this little family scene, we shall find the perfect home. It was not a double-garage, two bathroom, three bedroom, air cooled, radiant heated affair. It was only a stable with a feed box for a crib and the fragrant straw for a mattress. Yet it had all the essentials of a home. There was the father: stalwart, devoted, God-fearing, standing between the world and his family. There was the mother: understanding, loving, radiant with the joy of motherhood. There was the little one; God's gracious gift, waiting to be protected, loved, guided into noble manhood. These are the essentials of a home. As we look in on this home God selected for His Son, we find the pattern for our own homes. God help us to follow the pattern.

Again, in Bethlehem, we see the faithfulness of God. It was there that His purpose for sinful man became fact. That purpose was first revealed in the Garden of Eden. The serpent who had permitted himself to become Satan's tool in the temptation, heard the awful sentence of doom: "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; he shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." Gen.3:15. The seed of the woman is Christ. See Gal.3:16. For century after century, the servants of God waited for the bruising of Satan. God kept His promise alive through the voice of the prophets, but during those four hundred years after the close of the Old Testament, the hope of many grew faint. But God had not forgotten. Everything was moving according to the celestial time table, for in Gal.4:4 we read, "When the fullness of time was come God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law." As we gaze upon the babe of Bethlehem, we see there, God's guarantee that those who put their trust in Him shall not be put to shame.

Again let us look upon that tiny baby and see the power of God. However, if we catch the truth which is there for us, we will have to look through God's eyes. As the prophet said of old: "Man looketh on the outward appearance, but God looketh upon the heart." The world then and now, sees nothing big or strong in Bethlehem with its poor stable and tiny manger. But that is the fatal error of unredeemed humanity: to put confidence in bigness and to look for strength in size. God says He has deliberately chosen weak and insignificant tools to effect our salvation. It is explained in 1 Cor.1:27-29, "But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and the things which are not, to bring to naught the things that are: that no flesh should glory in his presence."

To the heedless crowd which thronged Bethlehem, Jesus was merely a baby, another mouth to compete for food in an already overcrowded world. They saw only poverty and weakness, but if we will look through God's eyes we can see His infinite power. Jesus is the Word made flesh, the second member of the Godhead, the brightness of the Father's glory, the express image of His person. Through Christ, God breaks into the stream of history and is made warm and real. Great indeed is the mystery but it is enough to say that it is a demonstration of the power of God.

No one can look upon Mary's infant without being impressed with His sweet innocence. But that is true of every baby. Go to the home which is enjoying a blessed event and see the little one cooing in his crib. His eyes are wide with the sweet look of innocence, his little face unlined by dissipation or sin. He has the countenance of an angel. Yet we know that it will not always be that way. There will come a time when knowing right from wrong, he will choose the wrong, and dying to the state of innocence he will pass into the state of condemnation.

It was not so with Jesus. There was never a time in all His life when He yielded to temptation, fell into sin, or transgressed His Father's will. As the Bible says of Him, "He was tempted in all points like as we, yet without sin." Why did God permit His Son to die the death of the lowest type criminal? It was love that did it. Man was hopelessly lost, fatally stricken with sin, helpless in his despair. Jesus, moved by love beyond our understanding, took upon Himself the guilt of us all, paid our penalty, that we through faith in the blood might be set free from the curse of death eternal.

Our journey to Bethlehem has been a profitable one, but we cannot stop there. It is not enough that Jesus came; we must go on the Calvary to see the full measure of God's love. Those tender hands must be torn by the cruel nails; that side must be pierced with the Roman spear so that the Lamb having been offered, we might draw near in full assurance, and find grace to help in time of need.

A JOURNEY TO BETHLEHEM  
Lu. 2:15.

Sermon preached by W. D. McPherson  
February 12, 1961

Many years ago astronomers observed what appeared to be a new star in the constellation, Cassiopeia. When it first burst into view, its light was a dazzling white, visible even during daylight hours. In a few weeks, it lost its first brilliance, becoming first a dull red and then a lead colored light, and finally disappeared altogether. The final verdict of the scientific world was that they had witnessed the death of a planet.

According to the Bible, the fate which overtook that unknown planet in 1574 will one day happen to our earth. There is a most vivid description in 2 Pet.3:10, "The day of the Lord will come as a thief; in the which, the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall be dissolved with fervent heat, and the earth and the works that are therein shall be burned up." (A.S.)

Every Bible student who has ever made a study of science knows that, while the Book of God is not a text book on science, there is not a single fact given in it which is in conflict with the established principles of science. Indeed, the Bible, written, some of it four thousand years ago, reveals such a remarkable anticipation of modern knowledge, that one must be blind indeed not to see the hand of God in it all. Man is continually discovering what God knew all the time and had already revealed in the Bible. An instance is to be found in the verse just quoted where we are told that "the heavens shall pass away with a great noise and the elements shall melt with fervent heat." Today, even the high school student knows that the elements are the building blocks out of which the earth is made, whether they be liquids, solids, or gases. These elements are 96 in number and exist in various compounds. For example, salt is a compound made up of sodium and chlorine combined chemically; water is a compound of hydrogen and oxygen, while air is a mixture of oxygen and nitrogen. We have also established the fact that when a compound is broken down into its component elements there is a release of heat and energy. The point is, that when Peter wrote, men did not know these things, yet he describes the dissolution of the earth and her atmosphere in exact scientific language. Is there any better proof that God was guiding him?

One day, according to the word of the Holy Spirit, God the Master Chemist, shall put this old earth into His crucible and bring about just the reaction to break it down into its component elements. The reaction shall be accompanied by a release of energy (the heavens shall pass with a great noise) and at the same time a release of heat (the elements shall melt with fervent heat).

After reminding us of the certainty of Christ's coming and of the destruction of the material world, Peter, in verse 11 gets down to the practical application of this truth: "Seeing that these things are thus all to be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy living and godliness, looking for and earnestly desiring the day of God." It is of vital importance that each of us give heart searching enquiry to the question. "How shall I live?" If there were no Judgement, no Heaven, no Hell, it would still be best to live a good life. Be not deceived, there is a Judgement from which each shall pass into a state of eternal bliss or misery. This most stupendous event in human history shall be preceded by the coming of Christ, the resurrection of the dead, and the end of the world. It could be tomorrow; it could be tonight, yes even this very day. "What manner of person ought I to be in all holy living and godliness?" It is woefully tragic that so many rushing heedlessly on are more concerned about making a living than they are about making a life. I am sure that you are not among that number and that we can, for a few minutes, study the question, "How shall I live?"

#### 1. Live in the spirit and not after the flesh.

The flesh is our physical nature, our inheritance from Mother Earth; the spirit is our eternal nature, that which marks our kinship with God. This subject is fully covered in the New Testament. We will do well to heed it. For instance, Rom.8:5, "They that are after the flesh (put the flesh first) do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the spirit the things of the spirit." Then, Rom.8:13, "For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die; but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live." The Col. 3:5, "Mortify therefore your members which are on the earth; fornication, uncleanness (dirty mindedness), inordinate affection (uncontrolled passion), evil concupiscence (evil desire), and covetousness, which is idolatry: for which things sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience." Then Gal.5:19, "Now the works of the flesh are manifest which are these: Adultery, fornication, uncleanness (impurity of mind), lasciviousness (sensuality), idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance (quarrelling), emulations (jealousy), wrath, strife, seditions (party spirit), heresies (factions) envies, murders, drunkardness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell before, as I have told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God." The only sane and sensible way to live in view of the

impending destruction of this world is to live above the world, for "the world passeth away, and the lust thereof; but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever." 1 Jno.2:17.

## 2. Live for Christ and not for self.

How shall we live? Live for Christ instead of self. Selfishness is as great a curse as sin because there is not a single sin that does not have selfishness at the bottom of it. Charles Kingsley once said, "If you wish to be miserable, think about yourself; about what you want, what you like; what respect people ought to pay you; and then to you, nothing will be pure. You will spoil everything you touch; you will make misery for yourself out of everything good, you will be as wretched as you choose." Selfishness is self defeating and self destroying.

On the other hand, living for Christ is the fulfillment of life. In Him and in Him alone is life to be found, life full, free, abundant, everlasting. All other living is mere existing. Living for Christ is the only way to destroy selfishness. Paul's experience is that of every born again Christian: "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." Gal.2:20. Living for Christ teaches one to despise the world, to live the sweet will of God, and to grow into the kind of person who is ready for Heaven. The crash of worlds has no terror for those who are living for Christ. Paul explains it all in 1 Thes.4:16,17. When Christ shall come again the dead in Christ shall be raised, then the living saints shall be changed, and together they shall all be caught up into the air (removed from this doomed earth) and so forever be with the Lord.

## 3. Live each day as if it were your last on earth.

How shall we live? Live each day as if it were your last on earth. It is not preacher talk when I say that this might well be your last day on earth. I knew a man years ago whose family attended the old Foster St. church in Nashville, Tenn. One Sunday morning he responded to the Gospel invitation and said, "I will be baptized tonight." That afternoon he was killed in an automobile accident. I am sure that if he had known it was his last day on earth, he would not have waited to be baptized. There are probably some things all of us would do or try to undo, if we knew this was our last day on earth. I am sure there are some absent from the worship who would have made a little more effort to be here if they knew this was their last day on earth. I am also sure there are some of you here this morning who have not made your plans to be back tonight, who would determine to be here if you knew this was your last day on earth.

Now here is the point, since we don't know when the end is coming, and have no way of knowing, isn't it the part of wisdom to live each day as if it were the last day on earth? That is Jesus' advice, Matt.24:42-44, "Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up. Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not, the Son of Man cometh." Do you, in the light of the truth we have learned, need to change your way of living?

It is characteristic of human nature to delay, to put off, to wait for a more convenient season. But to the majority that propitious moment never comes. That is one reason there will be more people in Hell than in Heaven. The road to Hell is paved with good intentions. Won't you take your place among the few who dare not trifle with an uncertain future, and begin to-day to live in such a way that Heaven shall be your home?

HOW WE SHOULD LIVE

2 Pet. 3:10,11

Sermon preached by W. D. McPherson  
February 19, 1961

SEND FOR SIMON WHOSE SURNAME IS PETER

Acts 11:13, 14.

It is rather remarkable that for some ten or twelve years after the church was established there was no effort made to convert a Gentile. The Commission was clear enough. If they did not understand the "teach all nations" of Matt.28:19 to include the Gentile, they certainly should have gotten it from "preach the Gospel to every creature" in Mrk.16:16. However, even the apostles thought that every creature meant every creature among the Jews or Jewish proselytes. I am sure those first Christians did not intend to completely exclude the Gentile. It seems they thought one had to first become a Jew and then a Christian.

Let us not be quick to condemn them. A system of salvation so world embracing in its scope, so gracious in its provisions, could not be grasped immediately. As Jesus explained it, there is first the blade, then the ear, and then the full grain in the ear. When the time came for the bringing in of the Gentiles, three miracles were necessary to prepare the church for this significant event. They were all performed in connection with the conversion of Cornelius as recorded in Acts 10.

It is unfortunate that so many confuse these miracles and their purpose with what Cornelius did in order to the remission of his sins. The miracles are one thing and what Cornelius did is entirely another. If the miracles were necessary to his salvation, they are necessary to ours. We shall see later in the lesson that he was saved through the obedience of faith, just as every penitent believer has been saved from the day of Pentecost until now. Cornelius was truly a seeker after God. Although a Gentile and an officer in the Roman army, he had learned to fear God and to make daily prayers to Him. Yet there was an aching void at the center of his being which nothing could fill. One day, as recorded in Acts 11:13, an angel appeared unto him saying, "Send to Joppa, and call for Simon, whose surname is Peter; who shall tell thee words whereby thou and thy house shall be saved." It may never have occurred to you, but a great deal of light can be thrown upon the whole plan of salvation, if we will take the time to get a scriptural answer to the question, why did the angel tell Cornelius to send for Peter?

For one thing, the command to send for Peter, underscores the Lord's faithfulness in keeping His promises. Back in Caesarea Philippi (Matt.16:18), at a time when the future seemed destitute of all hope, Jesus solemnly affirmed, "I will build my church." And to Peter who had just confessed Him to be the Christ, He said, "I will give to thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven." A key is the emblem of power and authority. He who has the key has the power of opening and shutting. It is specifically stated in Matt.18:18 that the same key was given to the other apostles along with Peter, but he was given the privilege of first using it. In accordance with the promise, he had the honor of opening the door of the Gospel to the world: first to the Jew on Pentecost in Jerusalem, and then to the Gentile, at the house of Cornelius. In view of the multiplied evidence of God's faithfulness, how can anyone fail to put their trust in Him? Men often fail us, but God has never betrayed a confidence or defaulted a promise. Centuries ago, when Israel was discouraged and fearful of the future, He said, "The heavens shall vanish away like smoke, and the earth shall wax old like a garment, and they that dwell therein shall die in like manner; but my salvation shall be forever, and my righteousness shall not be abolished. The moth shall eat them up like a garment, and the worm shall eat them like wool: but my righteousness shall be forever, and my salvation from generation." (Isa.51:6-8) This word is as true today as it was then.

The angel's directive made it quite clear as to why Cornelius was to send for Peter: "He shall tell thee words whereby thou and thy house shall be saved." You may wonder why the angel, already in contact with Cornelius, did not deliver the message of salvation. It would certainly have facilitated matters as far as Cornelius' hearing it was concerned. The Scripture answer is obvious. In the Great Commission, Jesus committed the saving Gospel to men - He put the treasure in earthen vessels. His solemn injunction, "Go ye into all the world, puts the responsibility on the church. From that day (until even now, neither an angel, nor the Holy Spirit in a direct way, or Christ Himself, has ever told a sinner what to do to be saved. When they did speak, it was to direct the enquirer to a faithful preacher to whom the Gospel had been committed. If ever there was a time when a direct operation of the Holy Spirit, independent of the Word, seemed justified, it was in the case of Cornelius. Here was a man who earnestly desired salvation, but being a Gentile, even the apostles with their ideas of the limitations and restrictions of the Gospel, would have refused to teach him. But the angel dared not interfere with the arrangement Christ had made for the Gospel to be preached by men. Instead of telling Cornelius himself, he said, "Send to Joppa, and call for Simon, whose surname is Peter; who shall tell thee words, whereby thou and thy house shall be saved."

Many of the creeds written by men exalt the supernatural power of God in making alive those who are dead in trespasses and sins. Those who subscribe to those creeds ridicule us because we say teaching is necessary in order to salvation. We contend for it because that is what the Bible teaches. Instead of poking fun at us they ought to get busy and show that the Bible does not teach what we say it does. But that they cannot do.

We believe as strongly as anyone that salvation is the gift of God's supernatural and divine power, but we also believe that it is made available through hearing, believing, and obeying the truth of the Gospel. Paul gloriously affirmed, "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." but he added, "How shall they call upon him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? (Rom.10:13,14). We are justified by faith (Rom.5:1), but Rom.10:17 teaches that "faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God." No one can deny that the sinner left to himself will remain in his sins. There must be some divine drawing power to bring him to God. What is that power? Will you let Jesus teach you? He says, Jno.6:45, "Every man therefore that hath heard and hath learned of the Father cometh unto me." That's why Paul said, "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" (Rom.1:16).

Every conversion recorded in the New Testament resulted from preaching the Word. The conversion of Cornelius is sufficient to prove our point. All agree that Cornelius was saved by faith in the Lord Jesus; the question is, when did he believe? Peter can settle that point. Several years later he spoke of the matter thusly: "Men and brethren, ye know how that a good while ago God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the Gospel and believe." Do you think it would have been possible for Cornelius and his house to have believed had they not heard Peter? I don't, because Peter was sent for in order that he might tell them words whereby they might be saved. If it was necessary for Cornelius to have these words to be saved it is necessary for us to have them. The same terms of pardon offered to Jews in Acts 2 were offered to Gentiles in Acts 10 and that which was required of both, are required of us today.

Peter was to come bringing words whereby men might be saved; let us see what those words were. He preached faith in the crucified and resurrected Lord. Acts 10:43. "To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name, whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins." He preached repentance. Acts 11:18, "Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life." He preached baptism in the name of Jesus. Acts 10:48, "And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord." Baptism in the name of the Lord is baptism for the remission of sins, as we learn from Acts 2:38. The baptism was water baptism for Peter said, "Who can forbid water, that these should not be baptized." The descent of the Holy Spirit upon the house of Cornelius was to convince the church that all Gentiles were proper subjects of the Gospel and was not for the remission of sins.

Do you want to be saved? Then believe on Christ upon the evidence found in the Gospel, repent of your sins, and upon the confession of your faith be baptized into Him. Then live faithfully until death and the crown of life will be yours.

SEND FOR SIMON WHOSE SURNAME IS PETER  
Acts 11:13,14  
Sermon preached by W. C. McPherson  
February 26, 1961

## I BELIEVE IN GOD

Our presence here in this service of worship is within itself a testimony of our belief in the existence of God. No one pressured us into coming; we are expecting no material reward for being here; we are here because we believe that God is, and that it is his will that we be here. However, we need to be reminded that while we take the existence of God as a matter of course, there are an increasing number who do not. Faith in God is under attack by powerful and unscrupulous enemies. The ranks of atheism are increasing every day. Many of these new recruits are young men and women who were reared in the Christian faith but who were not well grounded in it. It is not enough to affirm that we believe in God, we must have good solid grounds of conviction if we are to meet the onslaught of the enemy. In this lesson, we are discussing three sound and logical reasons for believing in God. They are by no means all that could be said on the subject but they are sufficient. I believe in God because common sense demands it, the Bible teaches it, and science testifies to His presence in the universe. Let us consider each of these points in order.

### COMMON SENSE DEMANDS IT

The human mind is so constituted that it cannot have faith in anything which is contrary to reason. The atheist knows this and tries to capitalize on it. He would have you think that faith in God is unreasonable and unscientific; that it belongs to the realm of superstition and myth. Those who listen to him are the victims of wicked deception. It is infidelity which is blind and unreasonable. Instead of everything happening by chance, the truth is, nothing happens by chance. We live in a world of cause and effect. Every effect must have an adequate cause. The only cause sufficient to explain the universe is found in Gen.1:1, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." Anything else is contrary to common sense and reason.

Some travelers in the Arabian desert pitched their tents for the night in an uninhabited area. The next morning their guide stepped outside his tent, examined the ground, and said, "Some camels passed through here during the night." When asked how he knew he replied, "I see their tracks." Was his an unreasonable conclusion? Not at all. In fact it was the only conclusion. He knew tracks, and there they were in the sand. Every effect must have an adequate cause to explain it. The only reasonable conclusion was that camels indeed had passed that way during the night.

This little story suggests that God has left His tracks in the universe. It was David in Ps.19:1,2, who said, "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth his handiwork. Day unto day uttereth speech and night unto night showeth knowledge." Dr. Rimmer points out in one of his books that the man who thinks his way through the mechanics of creation, will at the end of his search find a Being of intelligence and power whom the Bible calls God. Let us take a simple illustration. The earth and her surrounding atmosphere is made up of ninety-six different elements existing in various chemical combinations. The chemist has learned how to break down these compounds into their simple elements as well as to form new compounds. But to do so requires years of training and a deep understanding of the laws of nature. A useful product in our modern world is iodine. It exists in nature in combination with other elements. How does the chemist obtain pure iodine, by throwing together a lot of materials? That would not do it in a million years. By patient investigation and long study, he has learned the secret of this little item in God's world. He takes a kind of seaweed called kelp, adds sulphuric acid and manganese dioxide, and in the reaction which follows iodine is precipitated. Now my point is this: if only a trained mind after a long study of chemical law can get iodine out of seaweed, didn't it take a master mind to put it there in the first place? A man would have to be as crazy as a betsy-bug to believe the world is run by chance. Truly the Bible has said, "The fool has said in his heart, there is no God."

### THE BIBLE TEACHES IT

We must understand that the Bible does not set out to prove that there is a God. His existence is taken for granted. It is rather a revelation through the ages, of His nature and character, coming to a grand climax in the person of Jesus Christ. It is a picture gallery of men and women who lived in fellowship with God, and through whom He was able to work out His divine purpose for the salvation of the world. Each of these great heroes of faith are star witnesses, testifying not only to His existence but also to His power to transform human life.

Let us indulge in a bit of fancy, and in imagination speak to some of these ancient worthies concerning their faith in God. Abraham, do you believe in God? He replies, "Can anyone doubt it? At His command, I left home, kindred and friends to become a wanderer in a strange land, but He walked with me all the way, protecting and shielding me from dangers both seen and unseen. My faith was tested as no man's has ever been tested. When, after years of waiting, the son of promise was born, He told me to take that son,



then a lad of seventeen, and offer him as a sacrifice on Mt. Moriah. I staggered not at the command but set about to carry it out. However, just as I raised the sacrificial knife for the fatal blow, God stayed my hand. It was this testing of my faith and my passing the test that caused me to be called the Friend of God."

Then we see Moses, and ask for his testimony. Moses, do you believe in God? He replies, "Why I spoke to Him face to face when I was with Him for forty days in the Mount. I received from Him the Covenant written with His own finger on two tables of stone. When I returned to the people, my face was so dazzling with His reflected glory that I had to wear a veil in order to talk to them. Yes, I believe in Him."

Next, we enquire of David, "Do you believe in God? His face grows thoughtful and serene, "Do I believe in Him? I learned to know Him when I was but a lad watching my father's sheep on the hills of Bethlehem. There under the stars, close to the world which He had made, I found so many tokens of His loving care that every doubt was removed. It was faith in God which steeled me to tackle the giant Goliath, armed only with a sling and five stones. It was God's hand not mine which guided the stone unerringly to the giant's forehead, felling him like an ox."

Then, there is Daniel. "Daniel, do you believe in God?" He answers, "I have no doubts. It was He who gave me the interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream when all his astrologers had hung their heads in shameful silence. Then in later life when my enemies had me thrown to the lions, God closed their mouths and saved me from a horrible death, How could I doubt?"

If time permitted, we could hear from a host of others, but enough has been said to establish our point. Read your Bible for yourself if you want further evidence. All the saints of the Bible go on record for God. Opposed to them are such noted infidels as Voltaire, Paine, Ingorsol, Karl Marx, David Hume, Bertram Russell, Bernard Shaw. I ask you, whom shall we believe? Shall we accept the testimony of those great saints who lived for, suffered for, and in many instances, died for their faith, or shall we listen to the infidel who would destroy your faith but can give you nothing better in return? I know your answer, even before I ask you.

#### SCIENCE TESTIFIES TO IT

Every century has its own standards by which to judge things. Today, when in doubt about a matter, the world asks, "Does science teach it?" All who believe the Bible reject science as an infallible guide to truth. They know it is a product of the human mind and has all the weaknesses of human wisdom. But inasmuch as the world sets such store by it, I conclude this lesson by pointing out that the most eminent scientists believe in God. I have a booklet called "The Faith of Great Scientists" which affirms the faith of twenty-two of them. I give one quotation from Dr. Kerr from Columbia University: "What I have learned about the earth has made me no less a believer in a Supreme Power, but actually more so. You see, some of the early philosophers simply guessed there is a God. But we have so much evidence to go on; we have seen so much of His Handiwork, we can say, God must be."

You must have been thinking, while I have spoken, that on the eve of our meeting, a lesson along that line would be more appropriate. Sermons on soul winning, personal work, and responsibility for the lost are important, but at the bottom of all successful evangelism is a deep and abiding faith in God. If something has been said this morning to strengthen your faith, then this study has not been in vain. When faith is weak, effort is weak. Let us be impressed with the fact that there is a God in Heaven to whom we owe loyal service, and before whom we shall stand to give an account of that service. Let us surrender ourselves completely to His will, that He may use us in this meeting to build up the Kingdom and to bring lost souls to Christ.

I BELIEVE IN GOD

Sermon preached by W. D. McPherson  
March 12, 1961

NOW THAT I AM A CHRISTIAN  
Heb.6:1.

The lesson this morning is for the seventeen young people who were baptized during our meeting. What I shall say is valuable to all of us and deserves our careful consideration, but it is intended especially for you who by reason of your recent baptism are babes in Christ, and who, if you are to continue to please God, must grow into spiritual manhood and womanhood. Forty four years ago, I decided I was ready to be baptized. On the day that I determined to go up, I placed myself on the front bench, for I felt that I did not have the nerve to walk down the aisle. When I took that momentous step, I knew full well how to become a Christian, but was not very clear on how to be a Christian. If someone had taken the time to give me some special guidance along that line, I would have made greater progress. I shall try to say to you this morning, just the things I wish had been said to me when I was baptized.

First of all you should be impressed with the fact that faith, repentance, and baptism are for the pardon of your past sins, i.e. those you committed when you were in the world. Obedience to these commands does not take care of the sins of the future. When you were baptized into Christ, Satan lost possession of your soul. Please be warned; he hasn't given up. He will seek to win it back. He tried with everything he had to keep you out of the church. Having failed in that he will try to get you back into the world. If that fails, he will try to make you lose interest and thus become useless to the church. He will not let you alone. He will keep at you until the day you die.

You must be a good soldier of Christ Jesus. Don't let the Devil have his way with you. Take a firm stand on what you know is right. Be strong in time of temptation, fight the world and the flesh, be a faithful worker in the church. You probably have the feeling that you are not strong enough to hold out against Satan. You are not. There are many honest people who are not baptized because they fear that they will not be able to live the Christian life. They are lacking in faith. Christ does not ask you to go on alone; He promises to help you to be a good Christian. Don't you believe Him when He says He will help you, or is it that you fear He is not able to help? In either case you need more faith.

Some of you may be thinking of those you know who started out in the church and fell by the wayside. "Why", you ask, "didn't Christ help them?" He did help them when they permitted it. Christ doesn't force Himself upon anyone. Being a Christian is a voluntary matter. Christ has put everything in the church which is needed to win out over Satan, but you will have to use it. Suppose you were crossing an old field and fell into an abandoned well. There was enough water in the bottom to break your fall but not enough to drown. There you stand waist deep in water with no way to climb out. A passerby hears your cry for help and seeing your predicament throws you a rope. The way of escape is available, but you will have to use it if you get out of the well. Your rescuer cannot pull you up until you take hold of the rope. So it is with going on to Heaven. Christ has lowered the Gospel rope in the form of certain commands and duties. If you take hold of them He will draw you up to Himself in Heaven; if you neglect them you will fall back into Satan's clutches. I want to remind you of some of the things which the Saviour has placed at the young Christian's disposal, so that he can hold out faithfully and be saved in Heaven.

First, there is the assembly with the saints on the Lord's Day. We read in Heb.10:25, the command. "Not forsaking the assembling of yourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more as ye see the day approaching." Could your school exist if teachers and students never met for classes? Could a civic club or fraternal order last very long if its members never came together? No more can this or any congregation be strong and active unless her membership is faithful in assembling at God's appointed time. It is in coming together as members of the church that we get the feeling of belonging. In the assembly we get to know one another better and as a result, learn to love one another as we ought. It is in the assembly that we learn what the church is doing, what she plans to do, and are taught what she ought to be doing. Last but not least, in gathering together on the first day of the week, we are celebrating our Saviour's resurrection from the dead. Today, millions are celebrating the resurrection by assembling. We rejoice in that, but next Lord's Day the majority of those who are in the churches will be at home, out on the lakes of the land, or on the highways. That's what is wrong with this business of Easter. The Lord's arrangement is for Easter every Sunday. The world has made it an annual affair. If you will assemble regularly with the saints and take part in the service, you won't get very far away from your Lord.

The Lord's Supper is another provision to help us hold out faithfully. The Lord's Day reminds us of the resurrection, the Lord's Supper of the crucifixion. When Jesus gave the supper he said, "Do this in memory of me." The bread represents His body which was nailed to the cross; the juice of the grape, the blood which the cruel Romans drew from His body when they crucified Him. When thanks have been given and the emblems are passing from one

to another, our minds go back to the first supper when Jesus sat at the head of the table, and we hear Him say, "Remember me." As the voice of the Savior falls upon our ears in tender appeal, the heart replies, "Lord, I do remember you. I weep at my sins which sent you to the cross, and pour out my grateful thanks that you were willing to die that I might live." Don't tell me that a Christian can do that Sunday after Sunday and stray very far from his Lord during the week. Of course, if you are not reverent and thoughtful in eating the Lord's Supper it will do you no good, in fact it will do you harm. The Bible says that when we eat without seeing Christ, we eat and drink condemnation to ourselves.

Then, there is the Bible. Just as steak and potatoes, milk and good warm bread nourish the body, the word of God nourishes the soul. Jesus said, "Man shall not live by bread alone but by every word which proceedeth out of the mouth of God." Matt.4:4. Read your Bible every day. Read all of it, but never let a day pass without reading some in the New Testament. The Old Testament brings us up to Christ; Matthew, Mark, Luke and John reveal Christ; the book of Acts tells how to get into Christ; the twenty-one epistles tell how to live in Christ; and Revelation tells of the glory that shall be His and ours in the wind up of all things.

You need to read the Bible to have more faith. Faith is everything in the Christian life. 2 Cor.5:7 says, "We walk by faith." I Jno.5:4 says, "This is the victory that hath overcome the world, even our faith." And how do we get faith? "Faith cometh by hearing the word of God." Rom.10:17. Faith is believing in the reality of that which we cannot see. We can't see God with our eyes because He is spirit and spirits are invisible. But we can see Him with the eye of faith. We know that there is something out there guiding the universe. The more we study science the more we see that behind the laws which control and direct this world there is a master mind: the Bible calls Him God. Jesus shows us that He is a loving and kind Heavenly Father who is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. Daily Bible reading will give you a strong faith which will keep you going in the years to come and which will see you safely through the temptations and trials of life.

Last but not least, there is prayer. When you read the Bible, God is talking to you; when you pray, you are talking to God. Don't you know that when you and God talk together each day, you are not going to get very far away from Him? You and He will walk together through life as true friends. You will learn His will and walk in His way. Satan will tuck his tail and flee in ignominious defeat.

A father trying to encourage his son to read the Bible, told him that God was speaking to him on every page. The boy opened his Bible at random and began reading one of the genealogies: "Abraham begat Isaac; and Isaac begat Jacob; and Jacob begat Judah and his brethren." He turned to his father and said, "Dad, do you mean to tell me that God is speaking to me here?" "Yes son," the father replied, "He is saying to you that life goes on from generation, and that from father to son, God works out His purpose for a better world." The trouble is, we just read words and never take the time to see what there is in them for us. When you read a verse, stop and ask yourself, "What is there in this verse for me? What truth would God have me learn, what lesson would He have me get?" If you think hard and pray as you think, you will hear God speaking to you in every line.

The best advice to young Christians is found in Heb.6:1, "Therefore leaving principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection." Never stop, never turn back; keep on going and growing. There are times when you will stumble and fall; get up and go on again. Christ has no patience with a quitter, but He is long suffering and forgiving with those who stumble and try again. You will be laughed at and ridiculed by some people. Pity them, but do not let them move you. God tells us in Rom.3:27 that we are baptized into Christ. That means that you are now a part of Christ. Now that you are in Christ, Christ must be in you. He must be in you so fully that people can see Him in your life. Then you will indeed be the light of the world, and many by your influence will come to know Christ in the forgiveness of their sins. May God bless and keep you in this great adventure of faith.

NOW THAT I AM A CHRISTIAN  
Heb.6:1.

Sermon preached by W. D. McPherson  
April 2, 1961

## ENCOURAGEMENT TO FAITHFULNESS

Heb.2:1, 2.

Unfaithfulness was as much a problem in the church of the first century as it is today. In fact, one book of the New Testament, Hebrews, was written to Christian Jews living in Jerusalem, who were so discouraged and downhearted, some were thinking of returning to their old faith. They had left the popular side, forsaken the beautiful Temple with its appealing ritual to become a poor and despised group meeting in some out of the way place they could not even call their own. They had suffered so much that they were beginning to think that they had made a mistake in giving up Moses and the Law to cast their lot with the hated and persecuted Christians.

Let me say that if unfaithfulness is in any degree justifiable, there was more excuse for them than for us. To be sure we have our crosses to bear, but we have never been unable to get a job because of our religion. We have never had our houses plundered out of pure spite. We have never seen our family stoned on the way to church. We have never been cast into a filthy prison or been in danger of execution out of loyalty to Christ. The point I am making is this: if God was so concerned about them that He had His apostle write a long letter, warning them of the awful consequences of unbelief, He is terribly concerned about the members of the church today who are unfaithful with less justification. If they were in danger of losing their crown after all they had been through, we certainly need to be concerned about losing ours.

Never forget it, when the Holy Spirit guided an inspired man into writing the book of Hebrews, He had you and me in mind as well as those Christian Jews. In this book are to be found many warnings to the unfaithful, but in Heb.3:1,2 there is a bit of advice which will be of great benefit to us all. "Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus; who was faithful to Him that appointed Him, as also Moses was faithful in all his house." Christ is the Christian's example. We read, "For even thereunto were ye called; because Christ suffered for us, leaving us an example that ye should follow in his steps." 1 Pet.1:21. So the advice is consider Jesus - that is, look intently upon Him, carefully scrutinize Him with the fixed purpose of following His example of faithfulness.

Before we can look for faithfulness in Jesus, we must know what we are looking for. The dictionary defines it as thorough in the performance of duty; true to one's word, promise, or vow. It means just that in the Bible as well as in the affairs of men. A young man and a young woman stand before the preacher to say the vows which shall make them husband and wife. Faithfulness is the magic ingredient which will make theirs a happy marriage and a permanent union. If they are not true to those vows, there is no power in Heaven or on earth that can hold that marriage together. It is a solemn moment when a successful candidate for public office takes the sacred oath to defend and support the constitution of the United States and to faithfully discharge the duties of his office. America has become a great nation because the majority of her public servants have been men of honor, integrity, and faithfulness. Her future depends on the faithfulness of those who shall guide her destiny in the years to come. Faithfulness in serving the public is the foundation of every great business enterprise. It is the secret of harmony between management and labor. It is essential to eminence in the arts and sciences.

At the foot of Mt. Vesuvius near Naples, Italy, lie the ruins of the ancient city, Pompeii. In 79 A.D., it was covered with volcanic ash in a sudden eruption of the mountain, killing thousands of people. Over the years, much of Pompeii has been uncovered, so that today it is possible to walk through this city of the Dead and to observe the houses, shops, and temples of one of the wealthiest as well as the wickedest places of the ancient Roman world.

Many bodies were found in uncovering Pompeii, most of them remarkably preserved by the volcanic ash in which they were buried. Some were in the streets where they fell trying to escape; others were found in vaults and cellars where they had fled for refuge. The most memorable find was that of a Roman soldier who was standing in his sentry box at the city gate. He was clothed in the armour described by Paul in Eph.6. His sword was at his side, his spear in his hand. While the earth trembled beneath his feet and the red hot ash fell like rain, he stood at his post until he died a horrible death. All round him others were fleeing but he did not join them, because his captain had placed him at that post of duty and he had not been relieved. That is faithfulness.

All of this but serves to underscore the importance of faithfulness in the Christian life. It is the persistent theme of the New Testament teaching. I Cor.4:2 reminds us that "it is required of a steward that a man be found faithful." All Christians are stewards, so faithfulness is required of all. Faithfulness is one of the qualifications of both elders and deacons. It is evident from 2 Tim:2:2 that preachers and teachers are required to be faithful in handling the word of God. We read: "The things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men who shall be able to teach others also." The Lord's promise to His church is: "Be thou faithful until death and I will give thee the crown of life." Rev.2:10. He further tells us in the parable of the talents, that on that

Great Day when we shall all stand before Him to render up an accounting of our stewardship, those who have made good use of their ability and have applied it in the service of the Kingdom will hear Him say, "Well done thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." But of the unfaithful He will say, "Cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

Now with these preliminary matters before us we are ready for another look at our text: "Wherefore holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider Jesus who was faithful to him that appointed him, as also Moses was faithful in all his house." The thought is, consider Jesus in order that you may follow His example of faithfulness. The Jews set great store by Moses. They regarded him as the ideal leader. The apostle is pointing to one greater than Moses. Moses was only a servant of God, the Christian looks to one who is faithful as a Son. Let us follow his advise.

Jesus shows first of all that faithfulness grows out of a dedicated life. His devotion to His work was so complete that He often forgot to eat. On one occasion when the disciples reminded Him that He had not eaten, (Jno 4:34) He said, "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work." He explained in Jno.6:38, "I came down from Heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me." When He came to the end of His ministry, He could say what no other has ever been able to say, "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." Jno.17:4. It is impossible to be faithful until you have first given yourself to the Lord. Only when that question is forever settled, when you can say, "Lord, I am thine, completely thine," can you do the work he has for you to do. In the words of the beautiful hymn, it must be, None of self and all of Thee.

Looking at Jesus will show us something else about faithfulness. As He lived it, exemplified it in His life, faithfulness demands obedience in which there is no room for compromise. "No man," said Jesus, "can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon." Satan knows the deadly, damning destructiveness of compromise. It is his favorite device. He whispers over your shoulder, "Don't take your religion too seriously. Keep something for yourself." Jesus knows from personal experience the appeal of this spirit. At the end of those forty days of temptation in the wilderness of Judaea, Satan took Him into a high mountain apart and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world with their glory. "All this will I give thee," he said, "If thou wilt fall down and worship me." I don't think that the Kingdoms of this world actually belong to Satan, but he knows the way an ambitious man can get them, just fall down and worship him. Every evil dictator from Alexander the Great to the evil men in the Kremlin have listened to him, but not Jesus. He said, "Get thee hence Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve."

Finally, we observe that Jesus carried out His Father's will in complete disregard to any personal sacrifice or suffering to Himself. When they arrested Him in the Garden, Peter made a feeble effort at resistance. Perhaps the others would have joined in had not Jesus stopped them with the words: "Thinkest thou that I cannot pray to my father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?" Matt.26:53,54. He was not forced to die. He gave up His life voluntarily. But God had willed it; the prophets had spoken it; so with complete disregard to Himself He went forward in the faithful performance of His duty. What a rebuke to we poor disciples who claim to be following Jesus.

We call upon you in this closing moment to give consideration to your faithfulness. If you are careless and negligent in the performance of your duty as a Christian, consider Jesus. He will inspire you, encourage you, and show you how to walk, so that in that great Day it will be said of you: "Well done thou good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joys of thy Lord."

#### ENCOURAGEMENT TO FAITHFULNESS

Heb.2:1,2.

Sermon preached by W. D. McPherson

April 9, 1961

THE SEED AND THE SOIL  
Gen.1:9-13.

Again we are witnessing one of God's great miracles, the miracle of Spring. As the earth blossoms forth, interest in seed and soil is both universal and fever hot. Out in the country, the plow is running early and late. Our precious Georgia soil is being plowed, harrowed, and planted in hope of another abundant harvest. We city folk who are fortunate enough to have a bit of good earth at our disposal have already planted our gardens and are eagerly awaiting the appearance of the first seedlings. Even the apartment dweller has a window box which he cultivates with pride.

The seed and soil are two of the most amazing wonders of the universe. In them lie the secret of life, both physical and spiritual. The soil is not dead dirt; it is living and vital. Take a cupful of good earth from the garden; it is a little world in itself. Not only is it full of minerals and vitamins but it teems with life. There are multiplied billions of soil organisms, bacteria, and microscopic animals, some friendly and some unfriendly to plant life. Pick up a seed. It is hard and dry, contained in an ugly cover, and to all appearances, without life. But place that seed in fertile soil where it can be warmed by God's sun, moistened by friendly showers, and it will burst its jacket, putting up a shoot which will grow into a great plant producing her fruit in due season. What is the origin of this great wonder? How did seed and soil come to be? Only the Bible has an answer which is satisfying and conclusive. You will find it in Gen.1:9-13. "And God said, Let the waters under heaven be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear; and it was so. And God called the dry land Earth; and the gathering together of the waters called he Seas; and God saw that it was good. And God said, Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit after its kind, whose seed is in itself, upon the earth; and it was so. And the earth brought forth grass, and the herb yielding seed after his kind, and the fruit tree yielding fruit, whose seed was in itself, after his kind: and God saw that it was good. And the evening and the morning were the third day."

It is evident from the Gospel records that Jesus was a great lover of nature. His teaching is studded with illustrations taken from natural life. This may come as a surprise, but if you will take the time to investigate, you will find that the greater part of His ministry was carried on out of doors. The lonely desert was His prayer closet; the mountain top or the fishing boat drawn up on the beach His pulpit; the birds and flowers, the wind and the sea, the seed and the soil were the texts for His greatest sermons. However it was not altogether the love of nature which prompted the Savior's use of so many illustrations from the world about Him. He knew, even better than the poet, that

Earth's crammed with Heaven,  
And every bush aflame with God.

He knew that the God who created the earth also made man, and that natural law and spiritual law are one. This season of the year, when so many are thinking of the seed and the soil is an excellent time to meditate on some of the great lessons which the Bible draws from that source. This we shall do as time will allow.

Jesus used the seed and the soil to illustrate the Law of Cooperation. You will find the teaching in Mark 4:26,27. "So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground; and should sleep and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how." The farmer belongs to the oldest partnership in history. He works with God in producing the food necessary for himself and a hungry world. No one knows better than he how dependent he is upon God. To be sure he toils every day, plowing, sowing, reaping, but it was God who gave him the seed and the soil to plant it in. He also sends the sunshine and the refreshing showers. It is God who sets in motion those complicated chemical processes which makes the crop to grow and produce her fruit in due season. The farmer may not be able to give a scholarly explanation of plant growth but one thing is clear to him; he knows he must cooperate with God in producing a crop. He does not expect God to do it all, but knows that he cannot do anything without God's help.

The creation and development of the new life in Christ is in accordance with the Law of Cooperation. Its application in the spiritual realm is found in Eph.2, verse 8, "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast." God's part in salvation from sin is embraced in the word 'grace', man's part is described as "faith". We are not saved by grace only or by faith only, but by grace through faith. God's grace is the expression of His love, revealed in the gift of His Son, who shed His blood as the atonement for sin. Furthermore, God placed salvation in Christ's spiritual body, the church, into which the penitent believer is baptized as an expression of his faith. The account of this soul saving system is called the Gospel, which means good news- and such it is, the best news which has ever fallen upon the ears of men. The Gospel consists of facts, commands, promises. On hearing the Gospel the sinner finds evidence sufficient to make him a believer in Jesus as Saviour and Lord, that faith expresses itself in obedience to the commands of the Gospel, and through the obedience of faith he enjoys its promises. Truly there is a wonderful lesson to be learned in the Law of Cooperation.

Immediately after illustrating the Law of Cooperation, Jesus proceeds to talk about the Law of Growth. Returning again to Mark 4, we read at verse 28, "For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear. But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come."

Growth is silent, progressive, and requires time - first the blade, then the ear, and then the full corn in the ear. A boy or a girl cannot grow up overnight any more than a plant. If we would remember that our young people are immature, we would be more patient with them. Growth may be stimulated by proper food and exercise but it cannot be forced. That which is true of plants and children is also true of young Christians. We come into God's family as spiritual babes; it requires time to become full grown men and women in Christ. Much harm is done in the church and to the church because older Christians become impatient with their weaker brethren. They expect them to act with wisdom and initiative when in point of growth they are not capable of it. Instead of criticizing and neglecting them, we should encourage and help them. There can be no doubt about it, God has laid the burden of the weak upon the shoulders of the strong. Rom.15:1, "We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmity of the weak, and not to please ourselves." Gal.6:1,2, "If a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual restore such an one." "Bear ye one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ." Rom.14:7, "None of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself." Matt.7:12, "All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets."

Still another illustration of spiritual law in the realm of nature is found in 2 Cor.9:6. "But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall also reap sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap bountifully." This is the Law of Proportion, which in the language of the street simply means that you get out of life exactly what you put into it. The farmer who is stingy and niggardly in planting will come up short at harvest time. He who puts nothing into the ground gets nothing out of it. This principle is of the widest application to life. Take, for instance, the matter of friendship. It can be neither purchased nor demanded of another, but when you sow the seeds of kindness, understanding, and love in the hearts of those about you, many of them will germinate and the result will be a harvest of friends. The Law of Proportion is the secret of happy church membership. Those who, figuratively speaking, stand on the side lines, merely observing and criticizing never get anything out of their religion. The happy Christian is the busy Christian. He doesn't have time to be suspicious, skeptical, or cynical of his brethren. We should all realize that if others disappoint us we often disappoint them. After all, your number one responsibility is yourself. Put your best into the service of the Master and the best will come back to you.

Other illustrations await our consideration, but for the time being, we must content ourselves with this final one - the Law of Kind. In Matt.7:16, Jesus asks: "Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit." It is the law of life that everything produces after its kind. God fixed that in the beginning and no exception has ever been found. The apple tree produces apples, the peach tree yields peaches, corn makes corn, and wheat makes wheat. This principle is the basis of our plea for the restoration of New Testament Christianity and our assurance that it is possible. The Bible reveals that congregations called Churches of Christ were established in the first century by the apostles and their co-workers through the preaching of the Gospel. Inasmuch as that very Gospel exists today in the New Testament, we are convinced that if it is preached today with the same faithfulness it will produce the New Testament church - that church which Jesus called His, was purchased with His blood, and wherein God has placed salvation. For, as the Master further said, "A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit; neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit." Some in the church have grown ashamed of our plea. They have decided that it is old fashioned and completely out of touch with reality. They are wrong. It is sound, logical, and scientific; as old as creation, yet as fresh and as challenging as the latest discovery in nuclear physics. Let us learn it, teach it, contend for it, and if necessary, die for it. The world needs our plea; let's preach it.

#### THE SEED AND THE SOIL

Gen.1:9-13.

Sermon preached by W. D. McPherson

April 16, 1961

## THE PERIL OF IGNORANCE

Eph.4:17,18.

It would not do to begin this lesson by saying I am full of my subject, for I am speaking to you on the Peril of Ignorance. The majority of people consider ignorance an unfortunate circumstance, a condition to be deplored but which is often looked upon with complacency. I intend to show you that it is deadly dangerous, and in this enlightened land of ours, entirely without excuse. God, on more than one occasion, has recorded in His Holy Book, "Brethren, I would not have you ignorant." Those who persist in their neglect of knowledge when God has willed it otherwise are criminally negligent, and are playing fast and loose with their souls.

In this world of turmoil and strife, we have become so accustomed to warnings of various kinds that we have become peril hardened. Even in the simple matter of getting from one place to another, the shortest trip is beset with such dangers that had our forefathers been confronted with the same situation, they would have stayed at home. People who must live with the drunken speedster on one hand, and with the atomic bomb and the inter-continental missile on the other, are not easily frightened. Yet it must somehow be brought home to each of us, that ignorance of God and His holy will is fraught with perils more horrible to contemplate than any physical disaster known to man. We need to grasp the full significance of Jesus' word: "Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But rather fear him, which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell."

Let us begin our study by pointing out that men and women are ignorant for three reasons. There are those who are so because they have not had an opportunity to learn; others are carelessly negligent, while a third group wilfully rejects knowledge. It is generally agreed that those who are negligent or wilful in their ignorance are without excuse, but what of those who have not had an opportunity to know the truth? Can one be called a lost sinner who is ignorant of the fact that he is displeasing God? The case of Saul of Tarsus, or as he is better known, Paul, the apostle, is the Bible answer to that question. Before his conversion, Paul was one of those of whom Jesus spoke in Jno.16:2, in killing Christians he thought he was doing God a service. Luke says he made havoc of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committing them to prison. Acts 8:3. He referred to himself as a blasphemer, a persecuter, and injurious, yet he declares that he did it ignorantly in unbelief. Here is a clearcut case of one who was guilty of great evil, yet at the time, he was completely ignorant of any wrong doing. He even had an approving conscience. What was his standing before God? Did his ignorance excuse him? Let Paul answer for himself: I Tim.1:15, "This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief." For all his good intentions and approving conscience, the apostle knew that without the knowledge of the saving Christ, he was a sinner - yes, the chief of sinners, and being a sinner he was lost.

Ignorance is dangerous because one may, like Paul, be living in rebellion to God's will and be entirely unaware of it. The penalty for sin is not arbitrarily imposed by an angry God, but comes as a result of having chosen the evil rather than the good. Sin is a deadly, ravaging disease which works like any other malady. A man may have cancer working silently for years in the tissues of his body. The fact that he doesn't know it is there does not prevent it from being cancer, any more than ignorance of one's sin would prevent it from being sin. This man, feeling that something is wrong, goes to the doctor for an examination and is told that he has cancer. He already had the disease before he knew what it was, but he is infinitely better off, for now that he knows his condition he is able to do something about it. If he had continued in ignorance, treatment would have come too late and he would have died.

Let me plead with you not to permit yourself to be victimized by ignorance. There is no excuse, as long as the Bible stays in print, for any intelligent person to be in the dark about sin. The Scriptures define it, describe it, analyze it, and illustrate it. To be sure, you think you are all right, but do you KNOW it? The only way to know that you know is to study the Bible. There is many a person out in the world who is perfectly satisfied with his prospects of eternal life simply because he has too narrow a view of sin. Some are depending on a good moral life to see them through, others think that giving your fellow man a square deal is all that is necessary. I talked with a man who contended that if one died in battle for his country, he was saved in spite of the life that he may have lived prior to that time. There are many in the church who think that because they have been baptized and attend the services occasionally that they are meeting God's requirements. If these people would go to the Bible, they would find that they have but a partial view of religion and would change before it is too late. But let it be clearly understood that whatever you do, when you stand before Christ at the Judgement, it will be futile to plead ignorance. If you are a sinner you are spiritually dead whether you know it or not.

What we have said thus far is only a part of the picture. Our study would not be complete if we did not include a word about the part ignorance plays in the spreading of error. Near the end of Jesus' ministry, some Sadducees came to Him with what they considered a very



difficult question. It seems that a woman had married, her husband died and she married again. The second husband died and she re-married. This marrying and burying kept on until she had buried seven husbands. The question was: In the resurrection, whose wife shall she be of the seven? Jesus answered by saying, "Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures or the power of God. For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels in heaven." Matt.22:28-34. Here is a good example of the harm error can do. These Sadducees had deviated from the truth in their thinking about the resurrection, and in doing so had embraced error. One can depart from the truth by going beyond it or by falling short. In their case they had fallen short. It is characteristic of error that one error leads to another. These Sadducees became so mixed up in their thinking that they finally denied the resurrection altogether. That, in turn, led them to accept materialism which teaches that nothing is real except those things you can see. They said, "Man has no soul, there is no hereafter, no Heaven, no Hell." So, having denied everything that would encourage a man to live a good life, they became selfish and despicable in character.

Let us get the Savior's warning: "Ye do err not knowing the Scriptures." Error has multiplied through the centuries until today, the various errors taught by men are as numerous as the stars in the sky. The only way to avoid them is to know the Scriptures. Jesus said on another occasion, "Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free." The Bible is truth; it is all truth. To the extent that you know the truth and respect the truth, you are armed against error. He who is ignorant of the Bible will sooner or later be bound by the chains of false teaching and will remain so till the truth shall set him free.

I cannot say how much error God will overlook in those who are ignorant because they have no way of knowing. We must leave them to Him who tempers justice with mercy. But I do know that if God overlooks some error in those who are honest and ignorant, we cannot justify our ignorance on the same grounds. We have Bibles, we have teachers and preachers; we can know if we want to. Concerning Israel, God once said: "My people are destroyed for a lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee." Hos.4:6. God's people today, can be rejected for the same reason. Knowledge is power, but ignorance spells defeat. The Bible says (Jno.17:3), "And this is life eternal, that they may know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." And we read further: "Hereby we know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby we know what we are in him. He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also to walk, even as he walked." I Jno.2:3-6.

Let me say in conclusion that God has a program which is an invincible safeguard against the peril of ignorance. Item 1, Love the truth. II Thes.2:10-12. "And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth that they might be saved. For this cause God shall send them a strong delusion, that they should believe a lie; that they might all be damned who believed not the truth." Item 2, Learn the Truth. II Tim.2:15. "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." Item 3, Obey the truth. I Pet.1:22. "Seeing you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently; being begotten again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God which liveth and abideth forever." May God help us to follow His way that we perish not in our ignorance.

THE PERIL OF IGNORANCE  
Eph.4:17,18.

Sermon preached by W. D. McPherson  
April 23, 1961

THE TOUCH THAT HEALS  
Matt.9:20-22

When Peter addressed the assembled thousands on Pentecost, he preached "Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles wonders and signs which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know." Acts 2:22. One of those wonders by which the Heavenly Father put the stamp of His approval upon Jesus as His Son and our Saviour is quite simply told in Matt.9:20-22. "And behold a woman, which was diseased with an issue of blood for twelve years, came behind him, and touched the hem of his garment; for she said within herself, If I may but touch his garment, I shall be whole. But Jesus turned him about, and when he saw her, he said, Daughter, be of good comfort; thy faith hath made thee whole. And the woman was made whole from that hour."

If you will note the circumstances surrounding this miracle, you will find that the woman's healing was the result of an interruption. Jesus had received word from Jairus, the chief ruler of the synagogue in Capernaum, that his little daughter lay at the point of death. He was implored to come immediately that He might heal her. It was while Jesus was hurrying through the crowded streets of the city in answer to a father's distress, that this poor woman touched him, she who had suffered for twelve years. Most people do not like interruptions. We much prefer to make our plans and to see them mature without interference from any source. We often become vexed, even to the point of frustration when things do not work out as we intend them. We can learn here in Jesus' handling of an interruption that they may be turned into unexpected but fruitful opportunities for service.

I once knew a preacher, back in the old days, who boarded a train to go some three score miles from Nashville to conduct a week's meeting. He was to be met at the station by one of the brethren who was to carry him some seven or eight miles out into the country to the little church where he was to preach. When he arrived, there was no one to meet him. Many a person would have been greatly upset, but not him. When he saw that no one was coming for him, he left his suitcase with the station agent and began walking to his appointment. After going a mile or more, a man overtook him in a horse and buggy and stopped to see if he could help him. The preacher explained his situation, and on hearing his story, the stranger, though not a Christian, offered to take him to his appointment. As they rode along the subject of religion naturally came up and the stranger was so impressed with the preacher's knowledge of the Bible that he decided to stay for the sermon, and when the invitation was extended he came forward, made the good confession and was baptized. If the preacher's plan had worked out exactly as he had intended, he would never have met the stranger and have been instrumental in leading him to Christ. Let us learn to take life as it comes, to be undismayed by the unexpected, and to find either a blessing or a way in which we can be a blessing in every circumstance.

Jesus' word to the woman with an issue of blood leaves no doubt that it was a miracle in which healing was a direct result of personal faith upon her part. He said: "Daughter, be of good comfort, thy faith hath made thee whole." It is also profitable to observe that hers was a perfect faith, that is possessing all the essential elements of faith, and that makes it a pattern of our own believing. The Bible teaches that there are various degrees of faith. It speaks of a weak faith and a strong faith, of great faith and little faith, of a faith which works by love and a faith that is dead. The only degree of faith which obtains a blessing from God is that which expresses itself in action. This is the faith which is described in Jas.2:21,22: "Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect."

It is evident that the woman in our lesson believed that Jesus could heal her prior to the act of touching Him, but she was not actually healed until her faith expressed itself in action. Weakened as she was by hemorrhages which had sapped her strength over a period of twelve years, she braved the surging throngs crowding about the Master, and pushed her way through until she could touch the hem of His garment. Like Abraham faith wrought with her works and by works was faith made perfect. Mark adds to Matthew's account the fact that when she touched Jesus, the "fountain of her blood was dried up; and she felt in her body that she was healed of that plague." Mrk.5:29.

One of the most popular errors of our day is the doctrine that the alien sinner is saved by faith only. The creed reads: Faith only is a wholesome doctrine and full of comfort. Yet everything in the Bible, including the healing we are studying, is against it. As a matter of fact, the only time the Bible mentions faith only, Jas.2:24, is to say that we are not justified by it. There is a vast difference between faith and faith only. Faith is a full persuasion that Jesus is Saviour and Lord, a persuasion strong enough to produce obedience to His will. Faith only is merely an acknowledgement that He is the Christ, like the devils who believe and tremble but do not obey. Jas.2:19. If faith only saved, every devil in Hell would be saved. Faith only has never saved anyone. "Even so, faith without works is dead, being alone." If one is saved by faith, he is saved by a dead faith and that is unthinkable.

There is a peculiarity in the Bible's use of the word "faith" which if understood will clarify its place in the plan of salvation. Faith is sometimes spoken of as one step in

securing the forgiveness of sins, and is used in connection with other steps. For example, faith: step number one; repentance: step number two; confession: step number three; and baptism: step number four. Then at other places in the New Testament, it embraces within itself all four steps. For example, Rom.5:1, "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." And also Jno.3:16, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life." The explanation of this peculiarity of usage has already been covered in the lesson. The Gospel is a system of salvation by faith, but we have just learned that no one receives a blessing as a result of His faith until that faith has expressed itself in action. In identically the same way, the sinner does not obtain the forgiveness of sins until his faith has found expression in obedience to the commands of the Gospel. Rom.6:17 reminds the Roman Christians that "ye were the servants of sin; but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which has delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness." These are the very same people by whom it was said earlier in the Roman letter that they were justified by faith. Faith and obedience as used in the Gospel are not two separate things but obedience is the expression of faith. When the sinner's faith is strong enough to render obedience to the Gospel, pardon follows. Faith without obedience is faith only, a dead faith and is powerless to save.

Anyone who meditates upon Jesus' miracles of healing will invariably think of friends and loved ones who are ill. Some of them, like the woman with an issue of blood, have been sufferers for years. What a wonderful blessing if Jesus were here to heal them! It is regrettable that there are men in our midst, ready to exploit human misery, who claim to be carrying on Christ's healing ministry. I recall that the apostles had such powers, and that they laid their hands on others who to a limited degree were given the gifts of the Spirit, but I have searched diligently and have found nothing which teaches that these gifts are a permanent part of the Gospel age. On the other hand, 1-Cor.13:8-10 they were limited to that period in which the New Testament was being written. We read: "But whether there be prophecies they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away... But when that which is perfect is come, that which is in part shall be done away." That which is perfect is the Holy Scripture which James calls the perfect law of liberty (Jas.1:25). The teaching of these verses is that when a perfect revelation of God's will was come, all miraculous powers would cease. Prior to the completion of the Bible, miracles were the teacher's credentials, today a 'thus saith the Lord' is the proof one needs that he is speaking for God.

Does the fact that there are no miraculous cures today mean that it is futile to pray for the recovery of the sick? Certainly not. In illness as in everything else in life, the Christian works hard, uses the best help at his disposal, and prays unto God knowing that if it is best, the desires of his heart will be granted. A serene and hopeful faith and conviction of the efficacy of prayer is a mighty force in healing the diseases of the body and the mind. Prayer in no way cancels out the laws of nature or the necessity of a physician but rather supplements and reinforces them. Trust in God and the right spiritual attitude are just as essential to recovery as medicine or surgery. When Paul wrote to the church at Philippi, he told them of the illness of Epaphroditus. He said, "For indeed he was sick nigh unto death: but God had mercy on him; and not on him only, but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow." It is evident that Paul had been praying for his friend and that God had heard his prayer. Jesus reminds us that God knows what we need, even before we ask Him. We may be sure that a loving Heavenly Father hears His children, and if it is consistent with His will delights to grant their requests.

The great lesson for us in this miracle is that He who healed men's bodies has equal power to deliver us from sin. He is not here in the flesh but is present in the Gospel. Paul calls it "the power of God unto salvation," (Rom 1:16) but it is that only to those who believe. Do you believe that Christ is Savior and Lord? Then turn from your sins, confess Him as such, submit to baptism, and enjoy the new life in Christ.

THE TOUCH THAT HEALS  
Matt.9:20-22

Sermon preached by W. D. McPherson  
May 7, 1961

## FOLLOWING GOD

Eph.5:1.

As we assemble here this morning in the capacity of a church family, a part of God's larger family, the church universal, an appropriate text comes to mind: "Be ye therefore followers of God as dear children." Eph.5:1. Indeed, we are sons and daughters - not subjects, not servants, not slaves - but children of the Heavenly Father. We were the children of wrath, but by our obedience to the Gospel, we were adopted into God's family, sanctified through the precious blood of our dear Savior, and are now heirs of eternal life.

The apostle could have said, "Follow God as a soldier follows his captain." He does indeed, use the figure of a soldier quite effectively in another part of the Ephesian letter. He could have said, "Follow God as a student, who in ancient times followed his teacher about from place to place, learning from him all the while. This too is a Scriptural figure. But these did not precisely express what Paul had in mind. The word 'follow' is from the Greek word 'mimetai' from which we get our word mimic. The idea is that they were to mimic God as the child responds to a loving father in adoring imitation. So he chose the sweetest, the tenderest, and the most expressive figure of all: follow God as dear children.

It is not necessary to urge children to follow their parents, for they are naturally imitative. With children, playing is living, and much of their play is imitation. So Johnnie drives his toy automobile like Daddy, and little Mary puts on grown-up clothes and pretends she is Mother. Johnnie considers his father the greatest man on earth. And if the Queen of England should come into her home, Mary would not consider her more important than her mother. With what interest the children watch Daddy do a fix-it-yourself job. To them the whole operation is an amazing demonstration of skill, and that wonder prompts their little hands to attempt the same thing.

All of this is a perfect illustration of our text. Those who are truly God's children love Him even as they are loved by Him. Love finds expression in adoration which is admiration carried to the point of worship, and adoring Him, we seek to be like Him. A little boy once returned from Bible Study in a most thoughtful mood. His teacher had talked of God's wonderful kindness and His goodness, expressed in so many ways. He sat quietly at the dinner table, much longer than might be expected of a small boy, and finally he said, "Mother, isn't God good?" "Yes, son," the wondering Mother replied. Then he added, "And He is smart too." Somehow, you and I must capture that mood if we are to do the bidding of our text. We can find it this morning if we put our hearts into the worship. As we praise God in song, send our deepest thoughts to Him on the wings of prayer, meditate upon His word, commemorate His love by eating the Lord's Supper, and give back to Him a portion of that with which we have been blessed, our souls will cry out, "O how good He is, how loving, how kind," and beholding His goodness we will desire to be like Him.

At this point it is well to raise the question, In what shall we imitate God? He is so infinite in greatness and perfect in all moral excellence that we certainly cannot follow Him in everything. No, not in everything, but we can and ought to follow Him in love. His love is the most amazing thing about Him, and we are constantly admonished to imitate it. It is not hard to love those who are lovely, those with whom we see eye to eye, or who shower favors upon us. But God's love goes further than that. He loves those who are warped and twisted by sin, who are enemies of all that is righteous and good. We must imitate that. Jesus said in Matt.5:44,45, "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in Heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth the rain on the just and on the unjust." This kind of love is the only force mighty enough to dispel from human hearts the selfishness and greed, the suspicion and hatred which has set nation against nation, race against race, and class against class. Hate and lust for power threaten to destroy our civilization. The only chance for the world is to give love a chance. If Christians cannot, in their dealings with one another, demonstrate to the world the power of love, where will they learn it? The hour is late. Let us heed the warning of the Holy Spirit: "Keep yourselves in the love of God."

In what shall we follow God? Surely, we should imitate Him in the spirit of forgiveness. Some of the most beautiful verses in the Bible tell of it. For instance, there is Mi.7:18,19, "Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? He retaineth not his anger forever, because he delighteth in mercy. He will turn again, he will have compassion on us; he will subdue our iniquities; and will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea." Then there is Ps.103:11-13, "For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him. As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us. Like a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him." But the most revealing of all, is Jesus' word from the cross: Father forgive them for they know not what they do. The officers of the law had struck and insulted Him, the high priest had perverted justice to destroy Him, Pilate had betrayed Him as a matter of political expediency, the mob had cried out for His blood like hungry animals, but He

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said, "Father forgive them." They made Him drag His cross to Calvary. There they nailed Him to it and raised it to an upright position, where Jesus hung, a spectacle to men and angels. Yet He said, "Father forgive them." In this word Jesus revealed His own heart, but at the same time, He revealed the heart of God. For "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself. He said to His apostles, "He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father." "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by me." Jno.14:6.

Few of us know what it is to forgive, for we have never been deeply wronged. But we have had enough experience with it to know that it is extremely difficult. To the man of the world, untouched by the grace of God, revenge is sweet. Yet God makes His forgiveness of us the basis of our forgiveness to others. Recall Eph.4:31,32, "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice: and be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." If we see defects and failings in others, we should remember that God sees more of such in us than we could ever see in another. If He can put up with our shortcomings we should certainly be able to put up with the shortcomings of others. If He can forgive us so much, we ought to be able to forgive one another. It is well to remind ourselves just here, that God makes His forgiveness of us to depend on our willingness to forgive others. Jesus made that clear in Matt.6:14,15, "For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses."

Finally, let me remind you that we ought to follow God in holiness. Indeed we are so commanded in 1 Pet.1:14,15, "As children of obedience, not fashioning yourselves according to your former lusts in the time of your ignorance; but like he who called you is holy, be ye yourselves also in all manner of living; because it is written, Ye shall be holy; for I am holy." Holiness is goodness or moral excellence. It first exists inside a person and then flows out in the form of wholesome words and good deeds. I do not need to tell you that God is perfect in holiness and should not need to tell you that you and I can never be perfect as long as we live in this body of flesh. Those who claim to be perfect are either ignorant or dishonest. It is not until after the resurrection, when the faithful shall be given another body, that they will be "set before the presence of his glory without blemish." Jude 24. So, while we cannot be perfect here, God intends that we set His holiness before us as the chief aim of life, and day by day grow more and more like Him. And in order that we might better know Him, He sent Christ who is His perfect likeness; that looking at Him as He walked among men, we might know how we should walk.

If time permitted, we could give other instances of ways in which we ought to imitate God, however, those already mentioned pretty well cover the ground. Let us each in this final moment, take a look at ourselves with the searching question: Am I making God, as He is revealed in Christ, the pattern for my life? One of the grave perils facing the church today is that too many in it are more inclined to follow the world than to follow Christ. Are you and I among that number? Let us never forget that Christ intended for us to change the world but by neglecting to follow closely in the footsteps of Jesus, the world changes us. There are members of the church who are cold and indifferent to the will of Christ. They spend more on clothes than they do on lost souls, care more for earthly possessions than for treasures in Heaven, are seeking the fleeting pleasures of the flesh rather than abiding happiness. Are you among that number? If you are and know that you are, why don't you do something about it this very morning?

FOLLOWING GOD  
Eph.5:1.

Sermon preached by W. D. McPherson  
May 14, 1961

## WHERE ART THOU?

Gen. 3:9

In order to properly introduce the question which shall concern us at this time, it is necessary to read several verses. I shall read the tragic story of the first sin as found in Gen. 3:1-9. "Now the serpent was more subtile than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods knowing good and evil. And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat. And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons. And they heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day; and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God amongst the trees of the garden. And the Lord God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou?"

Here is our question. He who asked it was none other than God. He was speaking to Adam, the first man, the head of the human family. As we have just read, the occasion which prompted it was Adam's disobedience, which bore immediate fruit in guilt and a deep sense of shame. In consternation, both he and his wife fled from the presence of one whom they had been accustomed to greet with greatest joy, and tried to hide among the trees of the garden.

Just here let us pause long enough to underscore the fact that it is impossible to hide from the Almighty. One of His attributes described in the Bible is that of omnipresence, which means that whatever God can do, He can do it anywhere, and everywhere at once. He is as close to a man in the frozen wastes of Siberia as He is to one in the jungles of Brazil. He can hear the prayer of faith from one in darkest Africa, as well as one coming from enlightened America. The Psalmist once asked, "Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up unto Heaven, thou art there: If I make my bed in hell, behold thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost part of the sea; even there thy hand shall lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me." If the time shall ever come when our scientists shall overcome the insurmountable barriers necessary to put a man on the moon, if the astronaut, upon his arrival, will take the time to observe, he will find God there in all of His splendor and power.

It is evident then that when God asked, Where art thou, He was not seeking information. Adam had not been out of His sight for a fraction of a second. His purpose was to help man locate himself spiritually. Like a grieving parent talking to a wayward child, He said, "Adam, look where you are, skulking among the trees, when you should be coming forth to meet me with joy. Don't you know that the consequences of sin cannot be avoided by running away?"

We all need a lesson in spiritual geography. When the navigator sails his great ship across the Atlantic, he takes bearings at frequent intervals. He has learned from long experience that in order to know where he is going, he must first determine where he is. Even if I were disposed to do so, it would not be necessary to ask for a show of hands as to who wants to go to Heaven. I know that such is your desire without asking you. Let us get the lesson: it matters not how strong may be my desire, I can never be sure I am on the right road to Heaven unless from time to time, I stop long enough to take my bearings. Where am I? Just what is my standing before God; that is the question of questions. Guess-work won't do, feelings are deceitful, sincerity is not enough, tradition is dangerous. Only the Word of God is the chart and compass of the soul. "Thou wilt guide me with thy counsel and afterwards receive me into glory." Psa. 73:24. The Bible, rightly divided, is the only safe guide from time to eternity. As Coleridge once said, it finds us at more points than any other book.

This morning I intend to take the Bible, and definitely locate, in a spiritual sense, every individual upon the face of the earth. The broadest classification is based on man's responsibility. Of the more than two billion inhabitants of this globe, each individual is in one of two classes - a state of innocence or of accountability. The innocent are those who were born mentally deficient, as well as babies who are not old enough to know right from wrong. Until the innocent obtain the knowledge and experience necessary to know the difference, they are not saved but safe. There is no greater perversion of the Scriptures than that doctrine that teaches there will be babies in Hell, through no fault of their own, but simply because they were not one of the elect. There is not a verse in the Bible which gives any semblance of truth to this theory.

It is the rightful heritage of every child, as he grows up, to receive the knowledge of God's will, and to have the proper examples set before him, so that he will learn the difference between right and wrong, and when the time comes will choose the right. But

whether he is taught or not, the day will come when he will pass from the state of innocence to that of accountability. From that day onward, he must bear the responsibility for his own life. God's call to all in this category is, "I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life that ye may live." Deut.30:19.

Having seen that the innocent are safe in the Lord's tender care, we can omit them from further discussion. But as we examine the accountable in the light of Bible truth, we find that they fall into two groups - they are either in Christ or out of Christ. We have just read that God calls upon these to choose life. Let me point out that the only possible way to choose life is to choose Christ. Our Lord declares in clear and unmistakable language, "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by me." Jno.14:6. Eph.1:22,23 makes it clear that to be in Christ is to be in His church: "And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be head over all things to the church, which is his body." Gal.3:26,27 teaches that one is baptized into Christ: "For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ." Baptism, as is clearly shown here, is not the bare act of immersing one in water, but is immersion as an expression of faith upon the part of the one baptized. The examples of conversion found in the New Testament show that the only proper subject of baptism is a penitent believer. Those who are thus baptized are saved, added to the church. They are in Christ.

One other classification is necessary to cover all the ground included in the question, Where art thou. All who have reached the age of accountability are either in Christ or out of Christ, and of those in Christ, some are faithful and some are unfaithful. Faithfulness as taught in the New Testament is a devoted Christian who recognizes that he is a member of the Body of Christ and has put himself under the control of Christ, the Head. To the extent of his ability, he works for the advancement of the church, helps to promote its growth, and contributes to its spiritual strength. He walks before his brethren in love, supporting the weak, visiting the sick, helping the poor, the widow and the orphan. He gives liberally of his money for the spread of the Gospel, but also gives of his time and talent to personal evangelism. He labors at all times to live a holy and godly life which will adorn the doctrine of Christ. The promise of Heaven is to the faithful. "Be thou faithful unto death and I will give thee the crown of life." Rev.2:10. Heb.4:1 says, "Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it." The unfaithful is pictured in the parable in which the man who had been given one talent made his report. He said, "I was afraid, and went and hid my talent in the earth; lo, there thou hast that is thine." Matt.25:25. Hear Jesus' fearful judgement upon the unfaithful: "Cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

This completes the analysis, nothing more can be added. Here is the information necessary to locate every individual upon the face of the earth. Babies and the mentally deficient are safe. All who are old enough to know right from wrong are either in Christ or out of Christ. Of those who are in Christ, some are faithful, others unfaithful. Where are you? If you are in Christ and faithful, you are just where you ought to be. Continue on as you are today and one day Heaven shall be your home. If you are out of Christ, you need to obey the Gospel. If you are in Christ but unfaithful, your soul is in peril. You are the unfruitful branch which at the Judgement will be cast into the fire. If you are not where you ought to be, you do not have to stay where you are. Won't you make the matter right today?

WHERE ART THOU?

Gen.3:9

Sermon preached by W. D. McPherson

May 21, 1961

## GIVE THE MORE EARNEST HEED

Heb.2: 1

The points to be covered in our lesson are found in Heb.2:1-4. "Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip. For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of reward; how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wondrous, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will."

The International Paper Company has been running a series of advertisements, showing studious young men busily engaged in reading. Underneath is the caption: Give me a man who reads. Reading is supremely important; we all need to do more of the right kind of reading. But it is significant that while the world says, "Give me a man who reads," God says, "Give me a man who heeds." This is the message of our text, Heb.2:1. "Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard."

First, let us learn that there is a difference between hearing and heeding. Hearing is listening; heeding is doing. Jas.1:22,23 puts it this way: "Be ye doers of the word and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if any be a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: for he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was." The devil is a great hearer. He seems to know everything God has ever said on the subject of salvation. When he tempted Mother Eve, he revealed perfect knowledge of what God had said about eating of the trees of the Garden, and quoted the Scriptures perfectly in a vain effort to cause the Savior to yield to temptation. The fact that he left out a part of the verse quoted was not due to ignorance, but was an egotistical effort to deceive One who was Himself, the living Word. If mere knowledge of the Bible made one a saint, he would rank among the greatest, but because he hears and does none of it, he is the devil.

The verses which we read a few minutes ago give four reasons for giving heed to the Word. Let's get them.

1. We should render immediate obedience because of the danger of forgetting what God has said. "Give heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip." It seems that the translators can't quite agree on the word 'parapneuma'. The version we have just read translates it slip. "Lest at any time we let them slip", like dropping a fragile vessel containing a precious liquid. Another translates it, 'let it flow by', like water flowing down stream. Still another translation is 'drift away from them'. The most picturesque and perhaps the most accurate bids us give heed lest at any time what we have heard 'leaks out'. It must be admitted that the human mind is pretty leaky. Any text book on the psychology of learning, gives all sorts of graphs and charts showing how quickly we forget, even that which has been most carefully learned. Whatever the translation, the lesson is the same: Seize the opportune moment. Lay hold on the word of salvation while it is available, for as Jesus put it, The time will come when you will seek and not be able to find. See Lu.13:24.

2. We should give heed because of the transcendent value of the message. The message to be heard is here called the great salvation. Salvation, in this sense, embraces all truth relative to the eternal salvation of a soul. It is the Gospel with its facts, commands, and promises. This Gospel is God's power to save. Rom.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." See also 1 Pet.1:23-25. We certainly should be ready to heed that upon which so much depends. The mind of man does not have the capacity of grasping what it means to be lost. It is so terrible that it brought Christ from Heaven and nailed Him to the cross. Shouldn't we appreciate it enough to be crucified with Him?

3. We should give heed to the things which we have heard because of the supreme dignity of He who has spoken. Even in human affairs, the bearer of a message indicates its importance. When our president wished to give a word of hopeful assurance to those tiny nations of Southeast Asia, threatened by Communism, he sent none other than Vice-president Johnson. Those Asian people knew that a message sent by one so highly placed in governmental circles, was not political propaganda, but the policy of the United States. In other matters, God had often spoken through the great prophets and sometimes through the holy angels. But in this upon which so much depends in the way of our eternal destiny, He speaks through His Son.

It is because He is the Son of God, that He is most eminently fitted to reveal the mind of God, and declare His will. He existed with God from eternity. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God." Jno.1:1,2. He said in Matt.11:27, "All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him." Again, Jno.14:10, "Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I



speaking not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works."

I find it hard to understand the thinking of anyone who would knowingly ignore or set aside the word of Christ in order to substitute a theory of their own. Do they think they know more about religion than the Son of God? Do they think the will of God to be a matter of such trivial importance that it can be set aside with impunity? They need to learn that, "to obey is better than sacrifice and to hearken than the fat of rams." 1 Sam.15:22.

4. We should give heed to the things which we have heard because of the penalty of neglect. "For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?" vs.2,3. Paul argues from the lesser to the greater. If all infractions of the Old Covenant received its merited punishment, how confidently may it be inferred that neglect of the Gospel will meet its just recompense of reward? If men could not defy the word of angels without suffering, how shall we escape if we neglect the words of the Son of God? An increase of light increases responsibility.

This lesson lays great emphasis on the sin of neglect. Many people have the idea that if they are not murderers, or adulterers, or liars, or thieves they are all right with God. Nothing is further from the truth. Gross sins of the flesh will ruin a man, but he can also be ruined by neglect. We at Moreland can sit right here on our comfortable benches and go to Hell through neglect. Neglect will destroy anything. The business man does not have to indulge in corrupt practices to ruin his business; he has only to neglect it and ruin is certain. It is not necessary to cut your throat in order to take your life; just neglect the simple rules of health. Much is said today about juvenile delinquency. The chief cause of juvenile crime is parental neglect. The quickest way to destroy a congregation is through neglect upon the part of its membership. When enough lose interest, are careless in attending, and refuse to put their time and money into the work, the congregation is doomed.

Neglect is not a minor sin but one of the greatest. There will be no mercy at the Judgement for those guilty of this crime. Paul asks, "How shall they escape? The answer is, they cannot. They understood the word of the Lord, they had time and opportunity in abundance, they had the best of intentions and made many resolutions, but they never got around to heeding. There is no escape.

GIVE THE MORE EARNEST HEED  
Heb.2:1

Sermon preached by W. D. McPherson

~~June 4, 1961~~

May 28, 1961

## SIN IN THE BELIEVER

I Jno 1:8-10

It is an established rule of Bible study that in getting the meaning of any particular verse or verses, one must observe who is speaking and who is being spoken to. This rule is indispensable in getting the lesson of our text, for unless it is clearly understood that John, the writer of the epistle is talking to Christians we are sure to be led astray. There can be no doubt as to who is addressed for in Chapter 2:1 he calls them "little children", and in Chapter 2:7, "brethren", and in Chapter 3:1 he says, "Behold what manner of love the father hath bestowed upon us that we should be called the sons of God."

Our text is one of warning: "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us." In obedience to the Gospel the newborn babe in Christ breaks with sin but is not done with sin. John is showing that Christians sin. To think otherwise is to become a victim of self deception and to give evidence of ignorance of the truth. The warning is even stronger in verse ten: "If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us." God has said in His Holy Word that Christians sin. To deny it is to question His veracity and in the denial to commit a grievous sin. It is impossible to see how the truth could be made plainer, yet there are many who deny the reality of sin in the believer. Some even claim to have received the second blessing and to have arrived at a state of sinless perfection.

Not only do Christians sin, but its effects are identical with that of sin in the alien. We are aware that sin deceives and hardens the men of the world but Heb.3:13 shows it hardens Christians, "Exhort one another daily while it is called Today; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin." Then there is the solemn question of I Cor 3:16,17, "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy". Rom.6:23 reminds us that the wages of sin is death. We readily admit that this is true of the ungodly, but it is also true of sinning Christians. Jas.5:19,20, puts it this way, "Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; let him know that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins."

It is rank folly to ignore the truth and lull oneself to sleep in a false security. Rather let us face the facts. Sin in the believer, if not overcome, will lead to apostasy. The fate of those who die in that state is horrible to contemplate. Hear the Lord's word, Heb.10:26-29, "For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgement and fiery indignation which shall devour the adversaries. He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God and hath counted the blood of the covenant wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of Grace?"

Yes, Christians sin, but it is not necessary to be overcome and destroyed by it for John says further, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." On the surface, this may appear to be a very simple way to get rid of sin, but if you will reflect on your own experience you will realize that one of the hardest things to do is to admit that you are wrong. It is amazing to what lengths a Christian will go to avoid it. He will blame his family, his associates, the Church - anyone but himself. But the Lord has spoken. Confession lies between the sinner and forgiveness.

We also need to be reminded that there is more than one kind of confession. Sometimes a confession is wrung from a wrong-doer against his will. When the children of Israel were engaged in the conquest of Caanan they went against the little village of Ai and were soundly defeated. Joshua carried it to the Lord and God said, "There is sin in the camp. Someone has committed a trespass. Find your man, deal with him, and once more I can bless you." At God's direction, Joshua had all Israel pass before him by tribes, and the tribe of Judah was taken. Then Judah passed before him and the family of the Zarahites was taken. Then this family passed before him and the house of Zabdi was taken. The men of this household passed before him and the finger rested on Achan. After this long process of elimination, Achan confessed, "I have sinned against the Lord God of Israel." (Josh 7:20) Here is a full confession but it was worthless because the offender hid his crime as long as he could and made confession because further denial was impossible. Achan's confession is not the type which brings repentance.

The ideal confession is found in the story of the prodigal son. (Lu.15:18) When he came to himself he said, "How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants." The prodigal was perfectly honest in facing himself - "I have sinned against my father and against Heaven." He was humble in his penitence - "I am no longer worthy to be my father's son; I am content to

be merely his servant." He was wise in his decision - "I will go back home and cast myself upon the mercy of one who loves me".

Our text is the truth on forgiveness of sin in the Christian but not the whole truth. If this were all that God had said on the subject, this is all that would be required. But God has a further word. When Peter rebuked Simon for seeking to buy the miraculous powers of the Holy Spirit with money, he said, "Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee." (Acts 8:22) These two verses, I Jno 1:9 and Acts 8:22, constitute God's law of pardon for the erring Christian: repentance, confession of sin, prayer.

There is one other point about confession which needs to be made clear: must one always make a public confession? It depends on the nature of the wrong done. If one's sin is known only to God it need not be known to the public. If one sins against his fellow man he should acknowledge his wrong unto him as well as unto God. When a Christian sins before the world and the church is hurt thereby there should be a public confession. All sin must be confessed unto God: "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and he is the propitiation for our sins". I Jno 2:1. "Return thou backsliding Israel, saith the Lord; and I will not cause mine anger to fall upon you: for I am merciful, saith the Lord, and I will not keep anger forever. Only acknowledge thine iniquity, that thou hast transgressed against the Lord thy God, and hast scattered thy ways to the strangers under every green tree." Jer. 3:12,13.

#### SIN IN THE BELIEVER

I Jno. 1:8-10

Sermon preached by W. D. McPherson

June 18, 1961

## UNCERTAIN TRUMPETS

I Cor. 14:8

We are reading at this time, I Cor. 14:8, "For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?" It is obvious that our text visualizes a military situation. There are soldiers deployed along the battle line, waiting for the word to advance. The officer under whom they are serving has the battle plan, the men are ready to move. How does he transmit his orders to the troops along an extended line? In ancient times it was through pre-arranged signals on the trumpet. The soldiers were taught the meaning of various notes so that at the proper signal they would move at the will of the commander. It is not hard to see that the signals must be clear and distinct or only confusion would result.

Paul uses the illustration to show the limitations of speaking in tongues. One of the powers highly prized by the early church was that of tongues, which enabled one to speak in a language he had not learned. The gift was so coveted that jealousy had arisen in the church over the possession of these gifts. The apostle is showing that the ability to teach is superior to tongues for unless an interpreter is present, the speaker could not get through to his audience. He was like a trumpet which gave distorted signals.

It goes without saying that the application of the illustration to tongues is not pertinent today. Spiritual gifts of a miraculous nature no longer exist in the church. However, there is a great lesson here for every Christian. Christ wants to get through to a lost world with the message of salvation. We are His trumpets. It is ours to convey the Gospel to those who are eternally lost. It is possible for us to be uncertain trumpets. We go before the world as followers of Jesus, committed to obedience to His will. When we say one thing with our lips and another by the life we live, we are uncertain trumpets. When we practice what we teach the world gets the message, but when we demonstrate by our conduct that we are not trying to live up to what we say we are, the result is confusion and disgust in the minds of those we might otherwise win. What kind of trumpet are you?

At this time, let us examine some areas of living where we are likely to be uncertain trumpets. First, there is the home. You profess to be a Christian. Are you getting through to your family the beauty and power of the Christian faith? Love, loyalty, and a spirit of cooperation are Christian virtues. Are you practicing them in your home or do you merely say that you believe in them? You may be sure that unless you are translating these principles into daily living, your family has no confidence in your religion.

Parents may be uncertain trumpets to their children. Every good parent realizes his responsibility to the little ones whom he loves more than life itself. He wants them to grow up to be fine men and women. However, if they are to learn the elements of Christian character, father and mother must not only teach them but live it before them. When parents teach their children to be truthful and honest, and the children observe them acting differently, the effect is disastrous. The child's conception of morality, of reverence for God, of love for the church, of the sanctity of marriage, are largely formed in the home. If you set the right examples before them the teaching is easy, but on the other hand, to teach one thing and practice another is to create confusion in their minds which will grow into scepticism toward religion itself.

Another area of living in which we are likely to be uncertain trumpets is out in the world of business. Here the pressure of the world is greater and one must be indeed strong to stand up against it. Let us never forget, the unbeliever is watching. When he sees us compromise the principles we have espoused, he not only condemns us but the church as well. Do you give your employer a fair and honest days work? Are you trustworthy, honest to the last penny? Will you accept responsibility and carry it through in a creditable manner? Have you learned to get along with the people with whom you work? Are you cheerful and cooperative?

In this crazy world in which we live there are certain immoralities which are thought necessary to get along in business - drinking, gambling, and even adultery. Although the pressure to yield to the accepted pattern may be great it is not irresistible. If the Christian will say, "I don't drink", or "I have a wife at home and I love her", he may be laughed at, but he will be respected. Even if he is given the cold shoulder, there is joy in knowing that he has won a victory for Christ and has proven himself a man. The contempt which many people have for the church is largely due to the uncertain trumpets who have not the courage to live what they say they believe. Christ calls His followers the salt of the earth. Salt is a great preserver. The life of a good Christian restrains and counteracts the wickedness of the world. But you cannot be salt unless you take a firm stand against evil. Jesus warned that if the salt loses its saving power it is worthless.

Young people, how is it with you? Christ wants you to act like a Christian should at all times - in the classroom, in the library, in the assembly, on the playing field. Are you an uncertain trumpet, claiming to be a christian but going along with the wrong crowd? Just remember, those who would lead you into trouble and call you a 'square' if you don't follow, are in the minority. If everybody in school were like them it would be impossible to have a school. There are many who are too timid to stand up for what they know is right. If you show your true colors they will not only approve of you but will follow you. Then you can be a leader instead of a follower. There is no merit in being popular with the wrong crowd.

A high school senior, and editor of his school paper was instantly killed on a highway some distance from his home. The police went through his pockets seeking for identification. Among other things, they found a New Testament, well marked and giving evidence of daily use. Then they found a card bearing the sentence, "I must be careful of the life I lead, for I am the only Bible some folks read." It was no accident that this boy was a leader in school as well as in church. He was by no means perfect, but everyone knew where he stood, and his life was a testimony of the beauty and the satisfaction to be found in the Christian life. May we, as the Savior bids us, "Let our light so shine before men, that they may see our good works, and glorify our Father which is in heaven." Matt.5:16.

**UNCERTAIN TRUMPETS**

1 Cor. 14:8

Sermon preached by W. D. McPherson  
July 9, 1961

WHAT GOD CAN DO WITH US  
Acts 14:27

"And thence sailed to Antioch, from whence they had been recommended to the grace of God for the work which they fulfilled. And when they were come, and had gathered the church together, they rehearsed all that God had done with them, and how he had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles." Acts 14:26-27.

This refers to the report of Paul and Barnabas upon their return to Antioch at the end of the first missionary journey. They had been sent out by the church at Antioch to carry the gospel of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles. Now they are returning from a successful trip, bringing the joyful news of how God had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles. It is significant that these men returned relating "all that God had done with them", and not "look what glorious things we have done".

Every one of us has some ability. Some have more talent than others, but each of us can do something on our own. But the only way to really make the most of our abilities is to devote them to serving God. When we try to go forward alone our accomplishments will be very limited, but the sky is the limit when it comes to what we can do in partnership with God.

When I see a man with outstanding talents and abilities, I covet him for Christ. Take a look at Henry Ford; he was an amazing success in the jobs he chose. He did what only a few others have done. He created something that America needed, the Model T Ford which changed the life of our whole nation. And in the process he built a great industrial empire the like of which this country had not known. If he had been a New Testament Christian, devoting his time, talents, efforts and fortunes to service of the Lord, think what God could have done with him.

William Jennings Bryan was one of the greatest orators America has ever produced. Suppose he had been a faithful Gospel preacher, willing to use the power of the words at his command in christian service? What could God have done with him?

Look what Jesus did with those men who became His apostles. On that memorable morning when He called the four to become fishers of men they were most unpromising material. First He found Simon and Andrew casting their nets into the sea; "Come follow me and I will make you fishers of men" He invited them. Simon became Peter, the Rock. Andrew was a one-talent man; every time we read of him he is introducing someone to Jesus. James and John were called the Sons of Thunder; James was the first apostle to die for his Lord, and John became the apostle of love. The apostle John wrote more of the New Testament than any other man except Paul.

But our chief concern is not what God can do with others, but rather what He can do with you and me. You can never know until you give Him complete control of your life. How thrilling! How wonderful! To submit to His will, obey His commandments, rely on His judgment with complete faith; it is my earnest plea that you do just that - now.

We are all equipped for God's service. Let us examine the tools He has given us to use.

1. You have a body which has:  
Eyes to see the needs that exist and how to perform the needed services.  
Ears to hear the call of human needs.  
Feet to carry you to those who need you.  
Hands with which to serve.  
Lips to speak, to tell the Gospel of Christ to others, to spread His word.

We are charged to use the bodies God has given us in His service in Romans 12:1, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service".

2. You have other faculties, mental, moral, spiritual, which set men apart from beasts. You can dream and plan great things for God and can learn His word. You can learn how to deal with people and to teach His word. You have emotions and can learn to love God and your neighbor and to hate sin. You have wills to be surrendered to the will of God.
3. You have an influence which will be for either good or bad. Jesus teaches us something of the importance of using our influence for good in Matt. 18:6, "But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea".

4. You have a certain amount of time at your disposal. The most precious minutes are those you devote to God's service.
5. You have material resources either large or small to use as you see fit. It is not important how much we give to God, but the manner in which we give; the self-sacrifice and generosity there is involved in our giving is very important. It may be no bigger than the widow's mite, but it may mean more than the largest gift. When the poor widow cast her two mites into the treasury Jesus taught that she had given more than all the rest because her small gift was all that she had, and all that the others did was to cast in a part of their abundance. Mk.12:43-44.

Are you willing to put all these things at the Master's disposal to see what He can do with you? Won't you say with the prophet: "Here am I, send me"?

How can God do great things with you? We must surrender our wills to His. "Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God." Rom.6:13. Surrendering to God's will does not mean that we should relax and do nothing, becoming as putty and holding no individual form or shape. The usual interpretation of the potter and the clay is wrong; the potter's clay is not like putty but is just pliable enough to be molded into whatever type of vessel the potter wishes to make of it. In like manner we surrender to God's will when we learn His will and do it. "Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, but now how much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." Phil.2:12,13.

Turning your life over to God does not mean that you will have it easy; you will have to suffer. Look at what Paul and Barnabus suffered. They were severely persecuted and forbidden to preach the gospel. Paul was even stoned and beaten so that his tormenters left him for dead, but it was worth everything that it cost them.

For God to use you it is necessary that you clean up your life, put away your idols, worldly things that you are now putting first in your life. You must get rid of the sin stains, forget your own selfish wishes and exert honest effort toward serving Him. Surrender to His will can be sweet and God can do wonderful things with you.

#### WHAT GOD CAN DO WITH US

Acts 14:27

Sermon, preached by W. D. McPherson

Aug. 27, 1961

THE ANSWER OF A GOOD CONSCIENCE

I Pet.3:21

"For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the spirit: By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison; which sometimes were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water. The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ."

There are several good lessons that may be drawn from these verses, but at the moment we are interested in the statement: "In the days of Noah ... eight souls were saved by water. The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us". This is an answer to the most momentous question that can concern a responsible human being- "What must I do to be saved?" This, then, is a most vital text because it bears directly upon that question.

The eight souls that were saved by water in the days of Noah refers, of course, to Noah and his family. The general impression is that these eight were saved from the water rather than by the water. What does the Spirit mean by saying they were saved "by" the water? In the sixth chapter of Genesis we find an account of the extreme wickedness of the world at that time and how this evil had provoked God's wrath and caused the flood. It seems that in the whole world every soul had turned toward sin and away from God except the eight. So God condemned the sinful world to complete destruction and by the water saved the eight righteous souls from that destruction. Had Noah remained in the world he too would have been under God's sentence of death and would have been destroyed. "And the Lord said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them". Gen.6:7. But God was gracious and merciful toward Noah and prepared for him a salvation. He instructed Noah to build an ark, giving him exact dimensions, the kind of wood to use, and every direction he needed. Noah responded in obedient faith and built the ark exactly as God directed him. Then God shut him in the ark and caused the floods to come. When the waters abated, he stepped out into a clean new world. He was saved by water for water was the transitional element which carried Noah from the old world of sin to the new world cleansed of all wickedness.

Peter teaches that Noah's salvation through water is a type of our salvation through baptism. How is that true? The type explains the anti-type. The baptismal water is the element through which the penitent believer passes from a state of sin and alienation from God to a state of reconciliation with God and a newness of life. "Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear son: In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins". Col.1:12-14. And in Rom.6:3,4: "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life".

It is confidently affirmed by a large body of theologians that baptism does not save; God says it does. It is up to each of us to decide which teaching we will heed, that of men or that of God. We should note carefully that while God teaches that baptism saves, He does not teach that baptism only saves. Had He done so, that would have excluded everything else upon which the Bible teaches that our salvation depends.

According to the Bible:

God saves. "For therefore we both labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe".  
I Tim.4:10.

Christ saves. "And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus: For he shall save his people from their sins". Matt.1:21.

Faith saves. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten son that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life". Jno.3:16.

Works saves. "Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only". Jas.2:24.

The Word saves. "Who shall tell thee words, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved". Acts 11:14.



Grace saves. "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God". Eph.2:8.

The Blood saves. "In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins." Col.1:14.

We cannot add the word only after any one of these. Each, including baptism, is a vital element in the whole plan of salvation. In brief, God is the author of salvation, while Christ as mediator, the Living Word, the Atonement, makes it a reality. Cleansing from sin is through the blood which is appropriated by faith. But faith to be effective must be expressed in obedience (works). When faith in Christ leads one to turn from sin (repent) and submit to God's will by being baptized into Christ, remission of sins follows. It is treason to tamper with God's plan or call anything He has appointed a non-essential.

Our text reveals another significant fact about baptism. It is "not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God". The lesson is this: Our conscience does not give the knowledge of right and wrong. If it did so, then we would not need the Bible to teach us. Our conscience only approves what we have been taught is right and disapproves what we have been taught is wrong. It is a creature of education and can be mistaught; therefore, it is a safe guide only when it has been correctly taught. You have a good conscience only when you have learned the truth and obeyed it. Your supreme desire should be to have a good conscience, and you do have it when you learn the Lord's will and do it.

Baptism is the answer of a good conscience because it is the will of Christ. That will according to Matt.28:19 is, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost". And expressed in Mark 16:16, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved..." When we examine the account of Paul's conversion we find him blinded by the intense shining light from heaven, "And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me do? And the Lord said unto him, arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do". Acts 9:6. After he has reached the city we find Ananias telling him what he must do, "And now why tarriest thou? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord". Acts 22:16. Thus we see that since it is His will, we cannot have a good conscience until we have done it.

Those who have been taught that baptism is not necessary for salvation have an approving conscience, but it is the approval of a deceived conscience and is not acceptable before God. Taking Saul of Tarsus for example again we find that before his conversion he went about persecuting and even murdering christians with a perfectly clear conscience. His conscience had been mistaught, was deceived into approving of his actions no matter how evil or sinful. So we see that it is possible for our conscience to guide us directly against the will of God.

Baptism is an act of faith; there is no cleansing power in the water, but the power is in our obedience to the will of Christ. It is a declaration of the believer's love for Christ and submission to His will. It is the consummation of the process of getting into Christ and results in a good conscience. It puts one in a position to walk and talk with God, to live the Christian life.

THE ANSWER OF A GOOD CONSCIENCE

I Pet. 3:21

Sermon preached by W. D. McPherson  
Aug. 27 (Evening), 1961

## THE LORD'S INTEREST IN MY MONEY

There are many people who are interested in our money; our creditors, the tax collector, the pan-handler, the merchant, but most significant of all - the Lord is interested in my money and yours. That is why we are speaking this morning on the Lord's interest in my money.

He is interested in our money because He is interested in us. He knows all about money and all about us, and He knows that money can do things to you as well as for you. Whether we have much or little, He wants our money to be a blessing rather than a curse.

His interest in our money is threefold: First, He is interested in how we get it.

Second, our attitude toward it.

Third, He is interested in how we spend it.

Let us put all of this into three questions, the answer to which will be Christ's will concerning our money.

How does the Lord want me to obtain my money? It may be summarized in one word: HONESTLY. Honest money is that earned by our own labor without defrauding or exploiting another. To gain money by fraudulent means or by taking undue advantage of another's weakness or ignorance may be considered smart, but it is dishonest. The Bible teaches us that it is good to use the abilities God has given us to do honest work so that we might have not only enough for our own families but also to give to those less fortunate than ourselves. "Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth". Eph. 4:28. Christ's will regarding our working for our living is revealed in many passages, "For yourselves know how ye ought to follow us: for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you; neither did we eat any man's bread for naught; but wrought with labour and travail night and day that we might not be chargeable to any of you: Not because we have not power, but to make ourselves an ensample unto you to follow us. For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat. For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies. Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work and eat their own bread". II Thes. 7-12. There is no misunderstanding language as strong as this - "If any would not work, neither should he eat".

Here we should say a few words about gambling. Gambling is not mentioned by name in the Bible, but its practice is recognized and condemned. The fascination of gambling to man lies in the idea of getting something for nothing, therefore it is based on a lie. The professional gambler knows that you cannot get something for nothing, that the one who runs the gambling establishment always comes out ahead. It is a dirty rotten system to defraud others. It destroys character, demoralizes the one who practices it. It causes a man to enthrone money as a God and to ignore the will of Christ.

What attitude does the Lord want me to have toward money? The wrong attitude can open the door to many great evils. In the sermon on the mount the Lord admonishes us to lay not up treasures upon earth but to lay up treasures in heaven, for where your treasure is there will your heart be. The word STEWARDSHIP summarizes the attitude the Lord wants you to have toward money. This means that everything, including yourself, came from God, and everything belongs to God. We must hold His gifts in trust to use to His honor and glory, for we are accountable to God for that which is His. There is coming a day when we will stand before Him and must give an accounting of how we have used His gifts. Money itself is neither evil nor good, that depends on how we use it. In I Tim. 6:10 we find a statement that is often misquoted, "For the love of money is the root of all evil". Money is not evil nor is it the root of evil, but the love of money is. When I bow down before money and make it my evil master rather than use it as a tool for good, therein is the evil. Making money and using it properly can be as much talent for good as preaching or teaching.

Now, our third question, how does God want me to use my money? There are three ways of using money. It can be squandered, spent recklessly, for that which benefits neither oneself nor anyone else. Only a fool with no true sense of values will squander money. Such wastefulness reveals a grave defect in character, a childish disregard for responsibility, a love of the flesh, and ignores any preparation for the future.

Secondly, there is hoarding which is also sinful. Everything Jesus said is against it, and no individual nor group has a right to put money away where it does no one any good simply for the sake of accumulating it. Especially in the parable of the rich fool we are shown the danger of hoarding. The rich fool had amassed so much goods that his barns would not hold it all, but it never occurred to him to share his riches. His decision was to build bigger barns and store it all up so that he could take things easy for many years. But God said to him, "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required

of thee: then, whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?" So, God is against hoarding; it reveals a weak faith and indicates a greater confidence in money than in Him. Now, this does not mean that all saving is bad. It is good to put aside something for old age when we may be unable to work, but to neglect our christian duty in order to accumulate money is wrong. I have no right to say where your thrift ends and hoarding begins, but there is a line between the two where every man must decide for himself.

The christian use of money is sharing. God wants us to share it. The principle of sharing is this, the good we have received from God places us under obligation to share it. The same principle applies to the blessing of salvation which is a gift from God. Paul felt the importance of sharing as shown in his desire to impart some spiritual gift to the Romans, "That is, that I may be comforted together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me". Rom.1:12. It is the same with money; God gave you the ability to make it - you cannot do it alone - and this places you under obligation to share it. We are also under obligation to meet other responsibilities regarding our money. We must pay our share of taxes as the civil government is an institution approved by God and it is our duty to pay toward its support since we share in the benefits and privileges it affords. It is also your responsibility to provide for your family and support the work of the church. Think what the world would be like without the church. Even the infidel realizes its importance. Nowhere does money pay greater dividends than when invested in the eternal salvation of men's souls. Even future generations will benefit from the support we give the church now just as we are enjoying the building and other facilities that were erected many years ago by the sacrifices of others. We should continue their spirit of sacrifice not merely to keep up the preacher and the church building, but because some souls will be saved by it and yours may be one of them.

Jesus' observation on the widow's mite is most revealing on giving. The Lord is not interested in the amount you give, but He is interested in how you give it. And how does the Lord want us to give? He wants us to give cheerfully, "Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver". II Cor.9:7. So, let us also give purposefully. We are obligated to give as we have prospered, "Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come". I Cor:16:1,2. We see by this also that we should give liberally and regularly.

In conclusion let us remember that the Lord wants me to obtain my money HONESTLY, by working; that the attitude I should have toward it should be one of STEWARDSHIP, a trustee over that which really belongs to the Lord. And how should I dispose of it? I should SHARE it so that it also becomes a blessing to others as well as a greater blessing to me.

#### THE LORD'S INTEREST IN MY MONEY

Sermon preached by W. D. McPherson

Sept. 10, 1961

TOO FAR TO JERUSALEM  
I Kings 12:28

This year we are celebrating the one hundredth anniversary of the Civil War. For the South it is a lost cause, even though the people of the South were fighting for principles they believed and were willing to sacrifice their lives and everything they possessed for that cause. They suffered a humiliating defeat, but we are all glad that it resulted in our still being one united nation.

The strife and division that existed during our Civil War period reminds us of that period in Bible history when Israel became a divided nation. During Solomon's reign, no nation was as important as Israel which became the world's greatest power at that time. The people enjoyed the greatest prosperity they had known, but were ground down by excessive taxation. So, when Solomon died the strife began - you will find the account in I Kings 12. When Rehoboam came to the throne, the people of Israel came to him to ask relief from the unfair burden of taxes, saying that if he would make their yoke lighter they would serve him. Rehoboam then consulted the old men who advised him to be a servant to his people and speak good words to them that day, then they would serve him forever. But he did not heed the old men's counsel but instead asked the advice of the young men with whom he had grown up. He then spoke to the people after the counsel of the young men, telling them that if his father's yoke had seemed heavy upon them, his would be heavier; he would add even more taxes. If his father had chastised with whips, he would chastise with scorpions. When the ten tribes to the north heard this, they withdrew and the kingdom was rent in two by the wrong decision of one man. The nation of Israel to the north and the nation of Judah under Rehoboam.

God selected Jeroboam to rule the new nation of Israel and promised to be with him if he would be faithful and obedient. But Jeroboam was weak in faith and not equal to the duties and responsibilities that were now his. There existed a situation that he did not like. While the Jews were divided in government, they were still united in religion, and Jerusalem was still the center of worship for both nations. He was afraid that his people going back to Jerusalem to worship would drift back to loyalty to Judah's king and this might constitute a threat to his reign. This is the evidence of his lack of faith; he was doubting God and relying on himself. So, he set about to divide the two nations religiously. He made two golden calves and placed one at Dan in the north and the other at Bethel in the south. Now he did not tell the people that it was wrong to go back to Jerusalem to worship, but his point was that he was making them an easier way since they would not have so far to travel. "Whereupon the king took counsel, and made two calves of gold, and said unto them, It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem: behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt". I Ki.12:28. Those nearer to Dan could worship there, and those nearer to Bethel would find it easier to go there.

Jeroboam was not a bad man, he had several fine traits of character. He was a champion of the oppressed, a leader of great ability, and was not afraid to identify himself with an unpopular cause. He was also a very religious man, but we must not mistake religion for faith in God. Jeroboam's greatest defect in character was that he lacked love and respect for the word of God. He was self-willed and put his own wisdom before that of the Lord; he did not hesitate to depart from God's way even though God had promised to be with him if he would only remain faithful and obedient. He failed miserably in his responsibility toward his people when he taught them religious forms contrary to the will of God.

Today we have a similar situation in the religious world. People still try to sell us on the idea that it is "too much to go back to Jerusalem" which means going back to God's way of worshiping or to the Gospel as taught in the New Testament. These modern Jeroboams teach with the same evil and disastrous effects. They ask, "Do you really believe it is necessary to take all the Bible says - all the way? We are living in an age of industrial progress with new and startling inventions all around us." They forget that the only way to make progress in religion is by going back to God's way and serving Him in just the way His word teaches, doing all the things He says for us to do and leaving off those things that He has not mentioned. The Bible reveals a perfect system, it needs no revising.

In order to make this lesson practical, let us take some specific examples:

First, the plan of salvation. Modern Protestants go back as far as Martin Luther rather than all the way back to the New Testament. They find it too far to go back to Jerusalem. So they accept Luther's teaching that we are saved by grace and faith only, that it is too much to be baptized. Many substitute sprinkling in spite of the fact that the New Testament teaches us that immersion is God's appointed way.

Then, consider the Lord's Supper. The early Christians assembled for the Lord's Supper every Lord's day. "And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight". Acts 20:7. This is our authority for observing this memorial service every first day of the week just as the commandment to "remember the Sabbath Day" meant every Sabbath Day to the Jews in the Old Testament. There is no authority for serving the Lord's Supper once a month or once each quarter. The reason must be that these people consider it "too much to go back to Jerusalem", or it is just so much easier to do their own will rather than the Lord's.

Next, loyalty to the church. Too many modern people are losing sight of their responsibilities toward the church. There are so many other activities that attract and hold our interest that church loyalty is soon forgotten. Many of these activities are good and are of great civic benefit in our communities, but participation in anything that prevents us from assuming our responsibilities in the church is bad, no matter how much good is accomplished by it in other ways.

Daily Bible study seems to be too much trouble for most people these days. There are too many other things to be read; Bible study is for preachers. If we do not study His word, we do not and cannot know what God's will is nor how He would have us to live and worship.

Righteous living too, seems to be rather unpopular today. One who lives, dresses and talks in a manner becoming to a faithful Christian is likely to be branded an old fogy and is not likely to be "accepted" by society. It is hard to tell who is a Christian and who is not because so many conform to modern mannerisms in everyday habits. Paul taught the Christians at Rome to "Be not conformed to this world", in Rom.12:2. In other words, don't follow the crowd, don't be like the world that is departing from faith, but do have the faith and the courage to stand upright, to be different, to rely on God's will.

The fruit of Jeroboam's policy was apostasy which eventually led to the extinction of a great nation. The same practice today operates with the same disastrous effects. Let us be willing to go all the way with Christ at whatever cost to ourselves.

TOO FAR TO JERUSALEM  
I Kings 12:28

Sermon preached by W. D. McPherson  
Sept. 24, 1961

## THE SOCIAL PROBLEM

We are speaking this morning on a subject which we call the social problem. Lest you misunderstand, let me say that "society" is a word that has gotten in with the wrong crowd. It has lost its soberness and has become associated with teas, cocktail parties, balls, and other doings of the upper crust. The majority of people have forgotten its serious side which is people thinking, feeling, living together, and working as part of a group. That is deadly serious. In this atomic age our very survival depends on it.

It is only in the past hundred years or so that the social problem has become acute. In the early days people lived together in small groups secluded and more-or-less isolated from other groups. Most families were either on farms or in small towns and had to work out their own problems. If they failed to do so, no one was affected but themselves. Even nations were separated; mountains, rivers and seas kept them apart so that they were unaware of the differences of other countries. The problems of Africa were as remote to us as the moon is today. But tremendous changes have taken place in our world. Rapid communication, the telephone, telegraph and radio spread news of the happenings in the remotest corner of the earth before the whole world in a matter of seconds. Great strides in transportation have reduced our world to only a fraction of its original size. Jet airplanes transport us from one side of the globe to the other at a speed that used to be impossible even to imagine. Today a housewife can put a roast in the oven here and reach England in time to telephone her husband that it is ready to take out.

The social problem is how to live together in this shrunken world. We have not learned it thus far. Tension continues to mount, and only the fear of the atomic bomb keeps it from erupting into violence. The danger of accidental war hangs constantly over our heads. Our future depends on our ability to live together with other people and nations in peace and harmony. We recall when the thirteen colonies were in the process of becoming a united independent nation, Benjamin Franklin told the leaders at the conference that, "We must all hang together or we shall all hang separately". These words may well be applied today. We must learn to live together. Who is qualified to teach this urgent lesson? This is the question of the hour, and the answer is Christ. Those who know Him through careful study of the Bible, who respect His authority as Savior and Lord, and who are seeking to walk even as He walked, can teach the world in this crisis and can contribute to the good will of the human races.

This brings into focus the plea of the Churches of Christ for a return to Christianity as taught by Christ and His apostles. This plea has always been timely but is more pertinent now than ever and infinitely more urgent. We are confronted with a challenge second only to that of the first century. Let us awake from our complacency before it is too late to save both ourselves and others. This is what the world needs and is our only hope. The solution of the social problem is the same as it has been since the day of Pentecost.

God has the answer for us in a three-fold program:

First, we must win men to Christ by teaching the Gospel, the new birth. Paul said we preach Christ as Lord and ourselves as servants. All this may sound old-fashioned, but it is as up-to-date as the latest news report. The Gospel of Christ is a message of sacrificial love. It makes men over into the image of God, removes the cancer of sin and replaces it with holiness, soundness of mind and heart. We need to recognize Jesus as Savior and Lord and to intensify our evangelistic efforts locally, nationally and internationally, beginning in our own community. As new fields are opening up all over the world some wonderful things are being done, but not enough. However, enough is being done to show us that with greater effort we could do more. There are about 135 different countries in the world, and there exist Churches of Christ in only 70, which means that about half the countries in the world do not have a Church of Christ. There are difficulties involved in starting new congregations in foreign lands; the situation in Jerusalem is an example. But there are faithful Christians who are willing to go and do this work - are we willing to back them?

Second, Christians must learn to live as Christians should, to walk more closely in the footsteps of Christ. The world is quick to detect double talk or hypocrisy, to capitalize on our unchristian acts. Let us think too much of our influence to destroy it by worldliness; let the world see something good in your life that they are missing. Let us love the church too much to neglect it. Let us be too big for petty meanness, carrying grudges, harboring of ill will. There is always a need for better teaching on Christian living, but the basic need is for real Christian living. You have probably heard these lines:

I'd rather see a sermon  
Than hear one any day;  
I'd rather one would walk with me  
Than merely show the way.  
The eye's a better pupil,  
And more willing than the ear;  
Fine counsel is confusing,  
But example's always clear.

.....  
For I might misunderstand you,  
And the high advice you give;  
But there's no misunderstanding  
How you act and how you live.

Third, dare to be a Christian wherever you are. We are all associated with others at home, in the church, at school, in community activities & at work. Let us have the faith and courage to treat others as Christ would and show by practice that people can get along together. The Gospel teaches us how to live with others; it is up to us to show the world that it works. Jesus said to us "Ye are the salt of the earth". A small amount of salt can change the flavor of or preserve a large piece of meat. Christians are salt; one Christian among a group in an office, in a home, in a schoolroom, can exert a great influence on his associates. Christians must never condone evil or be silent in the presence of iniquity, but in the long run it is the living and not the argument that wins the day. If you are a coward and are afraid to stand up for what is right, the salt has lost its savor.

Franklin Rall once asked, "How can we build up men and women in lives of faith, unselfish love, and service, when the society in which they live moves deep and strong in the direction of materialism, selfishness and ruthless struggle?"

Jesus knew the problem and gave us the answer as outlined this morning:

Win men to Christ.  
Live like Christ.  
Dare to be a Christian wherever you are.

Too many are playing with religion, have gone to sleep on the job. The greatest contribution we can make to the world is a sincere Christian life. It will work if we commit ourselves with all our strength and draw from the inexhaustible stores of God's power.

#### THE SOCIAL PROBLEM

Sermon preached by W. D. McPherson  
Oct. 8, 1961

STAND FAST IN YOUR FREEDOM  
Gal.5:1.

There is much to be heard today from platform and press on the subject of freedom. Let us listen earnestly, for not only do we owe it to ourselves to be well informed on every vital subject but our liberties affect our destiny both for time and eternity. However, in thinking of freedom we should keep ever before us that, like a beautiful diamond, has many facets. Political freedom is but one of them. Infinitely more precious is spiritual freedom, which Paul in his letter to the Galatians calls our liberty in Christ.

Spiritual freedom is release from the old law of works, which convicted of sin but had no power to remove its guilt. It is freedom from the authority and traditions of men, from error and the power of sin. It is freedom to stand before our Maker with dignity and responsibility, to work out our salvation between ourselves and God without the interference of priestcraft. The Galatian letter, often called the Magna Charta of Christian liberty, contains a brief but cogent statement which we wish to discuss at this time: "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage."

Paul is reminding us of that which is so easily forgotten - freedom may be lost by taking it too much for granted. Let us never forget that eternal vigilance is the price of liberty. The Galatian churches had come into their liberty through the faithful preaching of the Gospel. Paul had left them settled in it, but after his departure, grievous wolves entered the flock in the form of false teachers. These were Jews, converted to Christianity, but unwilling to entirely abandon the old religion. They wanted to tack some of their favorite rites on to Christianity. A favorite contention was that Gentile Christians should be circumcised before being received into the full fellowship of the church.

The apostle saw where this was leading and argued in Gal.5:2-4, "If ye be circumcised Christ shall profit you nothing. For I testify again to every man that is circumcised that he is a debtor to do the whole law. Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace". The basic principle back of this argument is that spiritual freedom lies within the bounds of Christ's revealed will. He who values it, dares not go beyond that which is written. For them to step over the line in one instance was to open the door to the whole system of legalism. The testimony of the Spirit through Paul was identical with His testimony through Christ in Jno.8:31,32 - "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free". He who walks in the truth is a free man.

The Great Apostasy, which began ere the last apostle was dead was but a tragic commentary on what happens when this principle is not applied. The Reformation of the 16th Century was a heroic effort to throw off the shackles of spiritual slavery. But the reformers became satisfied before they had gone all the way back to Jerusalem, so the chains were fashioned anew.

The Churches of Christ are unique in their plea for a return to New Testament Christianity. Their plea is generally misunderstood and often misrepresented, but I can say with pride that it is the greatest contribution to religious freedom in modern times. Our plea, wherever it is heeded, will insure that liberty in Christ which is the rightful heritage of every believer. Let me explain.

1. We plead that in matters of religion, men submit to no authority but that of Christ. Does Christ command it? Do the apostles teach it? Our Lord made no provision for sharing His authority with men. He said that it all belonged to Him, Matt.28:18. Therefore, to obey men is to encourage those who are in rebellion to the will of Christ, and at the same time to be led away from that truth wherein our freedom lies.
2. Our plea calls for the abandonment of the various creeds which exist in a great number. A creed is a written statement of that which a sect or denomination believes. You ask, "Where is the harm in that?" Well, if a creed says more than the New Testament teaches, it says too much; if it says less, it says too little; if it says just what the New Testament teaches it is unnecessary. The New Testament is the Christian's only rule of faith and practice. It is the faith once for all delivered unto the saints. Those who sign a creed are bound by it. They are not permitted to teach anything contrary to their creed. Thus they lead men into error and liberty flies out of the window.



3. We plead for the simple organization of the church as found in the New Testament. In the apostolic age each congregation was autonomous, i.e. independent of human ties, self governing. Each was a little world in itself, shepherded by her elders, served by her deacons, taught by evangelists and teachers, all of whom worked together with the other members under Christ, the Head. When churches allow themselves to be grouped together under the authority of one man they lose their freedom. Let us not be a part of such a system. Spiritual freedom can be restored only when human authority is repudiated and the Headship of Christ becomes a reality.

4. Finally, we call the disciple to a recognition of the priesthood of every believer as taught in the New Testament. 1 Pet.2:5 says, "Ye also as lively stones are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ". In the Lord's church there is work for all and each must bear his share of the responsibility. It is wrong to confer on a class of men in the church a degree of importance and of power to which they have no claim, and which they are likely to abuse. The term priest can be used in the church only in a sense in which it is applicable to all Christians alike.

The Churches of Christ are not a small group of disgruntled religionists who think they are right and everybody else is wrong. They have caught the vision of the liberty which is ours in Christ and plead with men to throw off the yoke of bondage. Popular opinion to the contrary, freedom is not the ability to do as you please. To do that would create chaos. Our Lord's invitation is a call to freedom. "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light." Matt.11:28-30.

Man is so constituted that he must serve something. Some things, like money, pleasure, or power, warp and destroy life. Then there are other commitments which enlarge life and give it eternal value. The essence of your freedom lies in your ability to choose your life master. The best choice of all is a decision for Christ. Will you not make that choice today?

STAND FAST IN YOUR FREEDOM

Gal.5:1.

Sermon preached by W. D. McPherson  
Oct. 29, 1961

THE DUTY OF HOSPITALITY  
Heb.13:2.

Scholarship is not agreed as to who wrote the book of Hebrews. One good argument in favor of Paul as the inspired pensman is the way it ends. In all of his epistles he first discusses doctrine, setting forth the principles of the Christian system as revealed unto him, and then closes with practical instructions for Christian living. This plan is followed in Hebrews. One exhortation, of great value to us today, deals with the duty of hospitality, Heb.13:2: "Be not forgetful to entertain strangers; for thereby some have entertained angels unawares".

Hospitality is one of the oldest religious duties. Numerous examples show that it was held in highest esteem by the patriarchs. It was set forth in great detail in the Law. It is commanded in the New Testament. In the judgement scene described by Jesus in Matt.25, one of the factors which determined whether one should be on the right hand or the left, was whether men had shown hospitality to strangers. See Matt.25:35,43. In view of the Bible teaching, he who dismisses it as trivial matter is as blind as a bat.

The duty of hospitality does not require that we make our home a s<sup>h</sup>up kitchen, or a flop house for every passing bum. But it does require that the Christian home be the house of the open door. It must radiate an atmosphere of warm friendliness; it must possess a graciousness toward the stranger as well as toward those we love and admire. If the spirit of Christ can't transform the home it won't work anywhere. Gospel first changes the individual, and then through him, his environment. The home should be the first to feel healing rays of the Sun of Righteousness. A cold selfishness which excludes others from the family circle is the essence of worldliness and reveals a deep soul sickness.

Sometimes pride gets in the way. We say, "I would like to have people in my home, but my house is small, the furniture is worn, the carpet threadbare, and I haven't the time to entertain". It is good to have self respect, but don't let self respect degenerate into pride, for pride is a cardinal sin. Hospitality does not consist in or depend on these, but is discharged by friendliness, understanding, appreciation. Those who are impressed by what you have or do not have, rather than by what you are, will not make true friends. What they think of you should not disturb you in the least. After all your reward is not with men but with One who reads the heart's deepest secrets.

It is evident from a study of this verse in the light of its context, that the apostle is not thinking primarily of showing love to strangers in the home. Those Hebrew Christians were already well grounded in that. He is concerned about hospitality in the assembly. Of the two realms, the second is clearly more important, for in the church we are keeping house for the Lord; a spiritual feast is spread, and we want the right impressions to be made on those who are our guests. For this reason hospitality toward those who come to our services is not a mere whim or promotion scheme, it is a clear Christian duty, devolving upon every member of the congregation.

There are three guiding principles which will enable us to discharge the demands of this obligation: (1) Friendliness, (2) Impartiality, (3) Thoughtfulness.

Friendliness begins with attractive grounds and a neat building, kept clean and inviting. It consists in a warm handshake, a friendly smile, or a little attention. If you think this is a trivial matter, recall the last time you went to church in a strange place and no one spoke to you. By impartiality we mean that we should be as friendly to the man in patched pants as the the one dressed in the latest cut and fashion. Jas.2:2-4 speaks very pointedly on this matter: "For if there come into your assembly a man with a gold ring, in good apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment; and ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place; and say to the poor, Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool: Are ye not then partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts?" Thoughtfulness consists in little things which contribute to the comfort of our guests and is done to show our appreciation of their having come our way. It also includes another matter which is superior in every way to material comfort. Our guests come to our assembly to worship God. If we fail to maintain an atmosphere of orderliness and reverence in our services we not only bring condemnation to ourselves but become stumbling blocks to others. Remember, Jesus said that if we cause our brother to stumble it is better to have a mill stone tied around our necks and to be cast into the sea. I saw these lines recently which we ought to memorize and follow up with all strictness:

1. When you come to worship, speak with God. (Come in, sit down, pray while waiting for worship to begin.)
2. In the worship God is speaking to us.
3. After the worship speak with one another.

Looking again at our text, we see that the apostle offers an incentive to hospitality: "For thereby some have entertained angels unawares". The reference is probably to Abraham and is found in Gen.18, 1-8. The patriarch was resting in the shadow of his tent when behold three men approached him. The fact that they were strangers made him more careful to extend every kindness. He begged them to stop for a while in his humble abode and while they rested, Sarah prepared a bountiful meal. The account of the incident is one of the most charming stories of the Old Testament. In a short while Abraham learned that his guests were not men but Angels. One was doubtless the Angel of Jehovah, our Lord in His pre-earthly state.

The stranger in our midst is not an intruder; he is the bringer of blessings if we will do as did Abraham. Among those who come to us as strangers may be brethren of sterling character whom it is a privilege to meet. There come to us, Christians from other communities seeking a church home. There are also the burdened and sorrowful, and last but not least, those who need to know the Lord in the forgiveness of their sins. In ministering to their needs we too shall receive showers of blessings.

A wealthy Christian was once travelling across country and stopped for services in a little church along the way. Those brethren didn't know him, he bore no evidence of wealth, but they treated him with true Christian hospitality. It happened that this particular Sunday was building fund day, and one of the elders spoke of the needs of the church. The stranger said to himself, "These brethren know how to carry on the Lord's work. I believe I will help them". So that day when the collection was counted they found a check for \$500.00 bearing the stranger's name.

I am not teaching that we should show kindness to strangers in order to receive material reward, but the story does illustrate the fact that the one who shows kindness will receive a blessing, both material and spiritual. Let us live in a house by the side of the road, where in the words of the poem, we can be a friend to man.

#### THE DUTY OF HOSPITALITY

Heb.13:2

Sermon preached by W. D. Mc Pherson

Nov. 5, 1961

THE MINISTRY OF THE SPIRIT  
Jno. 16:7-11

Jesus was speaking to His eleven disciples in the upper room explaining to them that He would soon be leaving them, preparing them for what was soon to come to pass. Judas had already gone on his ignominious mission. We find Jesus' words in Jno.16:7-11: "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".

"It is expedient for you that I go away". It must have fallen on their ears like a sentence of doom. His presence had been so necessary to their confidence and faith; they must now have felt betrayed. They had forsaken all to follow Him, and now He is leaving them. What were they to do? There was no light, no strength, no hope for them except in Christ. How could He say, "It is expedient that I go away"?

Jesus explained to them: "If I go not away the Comforter will not come unto you". The Comforter is another name for the Holy Spirit, one of the Trinity, or Godhead. In the Old Testament God was prominent; during Jesus' ministry it was He. And after Jesus ascended into heaven He sent the Holy Spirit, or the Comforter, just as he promises in these verses.

There is no evidence that the apostles understood then just why it was necessary that He go away, but they did later. And we can understand it all now with the Bible before us. Jesus was bringing in the Spiritual Kingdom which would be universal in scope. While here in the flesh His power to help and to teach were limited to His immediate presence. He was restricted by time and space, and in the flesh could not personally contact all who needed Him. While His ministry reached only the house of Israel, He was well aware of the great Gentile world that was eagerly waiting, but He could not minister to them in the flesh. There was need for a spiritual presence, so it was well that He should go away so that the Holy Spirit could come and be everywhere at once. The power of the spirit to help would be present wherever the truth would go.

After promising them the Spirit, Jesus spoke of His work in the world. In verse 8 Jesus tells them that the Holy Spirit will prove the world to be wrong about three things: sin, righteousness and judgment: "And when he is come he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness and of judgment". Then in verses 9-11 He gives a brief statement of how this would be done.

First, "Of sin, because they believed not on me". No one wants to go to Hell, but there are many moral people who are not concerned about a savior because they have too narrow a conception of sin. They view it in terms of lawlessness and crime. They ask: "What crime have I done? Where is the stain on my character? Why do I need Christ?" They are rejecting Christ! How tragically they err! The Holy Spirit teaches that the sin of all sins is to reject Christ. "And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil". Jno.3:19. Man was ruined by sin, condemned by it. He is unable to help himself, is helpless and without hope when he does not accept Christ. You may be morally lily-white, your life may be otherwise without stain, but in judgment you will be as the worst of sinners if you have rejected Him. Christ came, suffered in the flesh, died, and conquered death. Through Him we are offered pardon full and free. This is what the Spirit testified when He came. To know this and to turn him down is presumptuous pride, rank ingratitude. It is to mock God's love, to make Christ a fool.

"Of righteousness, because I go to my father..." It is His own righteousness. Jesus came into the world as the Son of God. He was holy, righteous and good, and His own rejected Him. He came to save His own, but they denied that He was the Christ, claimed He had a devil and branded Him as a blasphemer. They brought Him before Pilate and charged Him with treason. Jesus said, "They will kill me, but I go to my Father".

When the Spirit came He did just what Jesus said He would. He testified that Jesus not only went back to the Father but further that He is now seated at God's right hand. All of this is the fulfillment of prophecy: "I have set the Lord always before me: because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved. Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth: my flesh also shall rest in hope. For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption". Psa.16:8-10. "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". Lu.1:31-33. "Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever: the sceptre of thy kingdom is a right sceptre. Thou lovest righteousness and hatest wickedness; therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows". Psa.45:6,7.

"Of judgment because the prince of this world is judged". The prince of this world is Satan. "Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience". Eph.2:2. Satan tempted Eve causing her to sin; he is responsible for sin. God declared war on Satan - in Gen.3:15: "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel". It is true Satan bruised His heel, opposed Jesus; for centuries he had his way. But by Jesus' death and resurrection he is judged - his doom is sealed. Now, if the World's Prince is judged, you may be sure his subjects are judged also.

In Acts 2 we have a splendid example of the method employed by the Spirit in doing His work. On the day of Pentecost the Holy Spirit baptized the waiting apostles and Peter preached the first Gospel sermon. He first showed that God proved Jesus to be the Christ by miracles, wonders, and signs, but they refused to believe and crucified Him. Thus they were convicted of sin. Next he showed that according to prophecy His soul was not left in Hades, but He came forth from the tomb and returned unto the Father, where He was exalted at God's right hand. He was vindicated as to righteousness, proven to be God's Son, our Savior and Lord. Then having shown that He conquered death and won the victory over Satan, he exhorted men to save themselves from "this untoward generation". Acts 2:40. Those who were cut to the heart and cried, "What shall we do?" Were told to repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus for the remission of sins. See Acts 2:38.

Peter was doing the talking but the words were not his, they were the words of the Spirit. Paul spoke for all the apostles in I Cor.2:13: "Which things we speak, not in words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teaches". The message of salvation which was first spoken by word of mouth was gradually written out in the books which make up the New Testament. Today wherever the written word is carried and faithfully taught, the Holy Spirit is convicting the world of sin, and righteousness, and the judgment.

If you wait for some direct revelation from the Holy Spirit you will wait in vain. That promise was to the apostles but if you will study the teaching of the Spirit as taught in the New Testament, you will learn of Christ, will come to Him, and will be baptized into Him. Then, if you continue faithful Heaven will be your eternal home. Will you not start today?

THE MINISTRY OF THE SPIRIT  
Jno.16:7-11  
Sermon preached by W. D. McPherson  
Nov.12, 1961

## A PLACE CALLED HEAVEN

Jno. 14:22.

During those four silent centuries between the Old and the New Testaments only a small segment of Jews lived in Jerusalem. The majority of them were scattered all over the world, but all of them still loved Jerusalem. When they became lonely and discouraged those exiles had a saying which comforted them, "Let Jerusalem come into your mind". No matter where he went or what his battles and burdens, the thoughts of Jerusalem always gave him comfort and cheer; it always challenged him to live worthy of so glorious a heritage.

There is a lot of wisdom in this ancient Jewish saying; wisdom that can be used in these days of constant crisis. When the pressures of the world and worldly things become unbearable, the Christian has an invaluable resource. As we go our way with our problems and tasks, our burdens and fears, we need to pause and earnestly ponder what the Bible teaches of the Heavenly Jerusalem, the eternal home of the soul, which Christ has prepared for those who love Him. We can borrow a lesson from those ancient Jews and let Heaven come into our minds to comfort and sustain us when we are discouraged.

We don't know very much about Heaven, but we do know enough to create a desire to go there. We know that it is better farther on, all gladness and light at the end of the way, a land of eternal bliss. We know that no matter what pain or anguish we may suffer here, Heaven is a place of peace, joy and eternal security, where sin cannot touch us and where nothing can harm us. It is not a myth, not wishful thinking as some would have you believe.

A Christian's faith in Heaven is not built on cunningly devised fables, but rests on the assurance of One who came from Heaven, stayed a little while and went back, "If it were not so I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you". Although there is some allusion to it in the Old Testament, it is not too clear; the clearest teaching we have about Heaven are the words of Christ and His apostles who heard what He said and wrote as the Spirit guided them. There is much loose talk today about Heaven's being just an idea, an abstraction, a mere state of being. But Jesus says it is a place: "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". Jno. 14:2,3. All the arguments of the sceptics cannot shake my faith in Christ's words. Heaven is there! The question that should be most important to all of us is, will we get there? In Rev. 21:2-4: "And I, John, saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away". John, who was close to his Lord and guided by the revelation of the Holy Spirit makes it clear that there is a place called Heaven. What kind of place is Heaven? That's a question that cries in all our hearts for an answer. Let us search the Scriptures for the answer, for all we really know about it is what is in the Bible.

We learn that Heaven is a Holy Place. This thought should delight the hearts of Christians. How much of lawlessness, sin and wickedness we are forced to look on here! Every news report carries accounts of unspeakable crimes that will make you blush with shame. Current literature, movies, radio and T.V. glorify sin in a manner that appalls us and seduces and corrupts the hearts of young and old alike. We see evil in our own families, friends, communities, in world affairs. We see sin in the church and in our own lives, we are surrounded by it. Isn't it wonderful to know there is a place where there is no sin? Of all the glimpses we have of Heaven the most thrilling is that it is a place where nothing that defileth shall ever come. Someone says, "If people are so good in Heaven, how can there be any fun?" Do you believe that you cannot enjoy living without doing evil, cannot do right and have fun? This is the Devil's own philosophy, and if you have that attitude you are not ready for Heaven. You may deceive yourself for a while, but you will soon have nothing left but a lost soul, a broken life, sorrow and regret.

Then, we are told that Heaven is a busy place. "And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of The Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him." Rev. 22:3. What this service is, we are not told and it is foolish to speculate. However, we do know it will be that which brings joy and satisfaction; we will serve the Lord in praise and worship. Now some members are bored during our short worship service here. How do they look upon Heaven and its eternal praise and worship? These want to

have their cake and eat it too; to hold on the the Devil and to get t<sup>h</sup>e Heaven by sliding in under the fence. It can't be done.

Now, how do you reconcile this with Heaven as a place of eternal rest? How can it be a busy place and also a place of rest? Our tiredness here comes from the infirmities of the flesh; our brains tire, limbs ache and exhaustion overtakes our bodies. There will be none of that in God's house. We will be busy with things we love, and there will be no pains and no disappointments. A preacher once visited in the cottage of a poor widow who was the sole support of her children during very hard times. She had to work endlessly to keep her family up. They talked about Heaven, and the preacher asked her what feature of Heaven appealed to her most. Without hesitation she replied, "O, Sir, rest. Being a place of rest is what appeals most to me". Yes, Heaven is a place of rest, but not a place of idleness. It is work without weariness. Inactivity would be boring; the happiest people are the busiest people.

Heaven is also a populous place. In Rev.7:9, we learn that it will be well populated: "After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands". Just last week I had a man tell me that there will be only exactly 144,000 in Heaven, but he is wrong. There will be a great number. Some of the words that Jesus spoke might leave the impression that only a few will be there, as in Matt.7:13,14: "Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it". But he means few in comparison to the total number who have lived. The children will all be there, those who die before reaching the age of accountability. The prophets, saints and sages will be there, those who lived and died during the Patriarchal Age and under the Law of Moses, the apostles, martyrs and the faithful from every generation. Christ's saving blood flows both ways, back to cleanse and save those who died in the Lord before the Cross as well as Christians under His Gospel.

Heaven is a happy place. John expresses it in another word, "No night there". Night symbolizes sorrow, and we have the terrors of darkness; but God is light. So, all will be light, no pain, no sorrow, suffering nor death there. Death is no stranger to any of us. We see loved ones suffer agonies and feel the loneliness and heartache of their passing. There will be none of this in Heaven, no burdens, no crosses to bear. When the explorer Ponce de Leon came to this country searching for the fountain of youth - the waters which he had been told would keep one eternally young - he should have known it could not be found on earth but only in Heaven where we will never grow old. There we will be with the redeemed of all ages, not as husbands, wives, and small families, but all as children and servants of God. When you are down-hearted, discouraged or you don't have time for a Christian life, think of Heaven.

Some say there are lots of roads leading to Heaven and that you can get there by taking any one that you wish just as you are able to get to Atlanta by either of the many roads leading to this city. This is not true. There is one thing wrong; there is only ONE road to Heaven. "Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me". Jno 14:6. Christ is the only way. Do you believe this? Add are you on the wrong road? If so, won't you accept Him, start on the right road and be comforted by letting Heaven come into your mind?

A PLACE CALLED HEAVEN  
Jno. 14:2.

Sermon preached by W. D. McPherson  
Nov. 26, 1961

## I AM READY

Rom. 1:15

In the first chapter of the Book of Romans, verse 15, there is a terse but most significant statement by one of the greatest Christians that ever lived. "I Am ready". These three little words are worthy of careful consideration because not only were they the guiding star of a great preacher and apostle but are the essence of true discipleship. Total war is not unknown to any generation; since the very beginning when God said to Satan, "I will put enmity between thee and the woman", the struggle has been going on. We are in the midst of a mighty conflict. The Christian soldiers, loyal subjects of King Jesus wait upon His commands and must be ready when He speaks. It is appropriate for a Christian to be able to say at all times, "I am ready".

The entire verse of our text shows that Paul was ready to preach the Gospel. "I am debtor both to the Greeks and to the Barbarians, both to the wise and to the unwise. So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also". Rom. 1:14,15. Paul was writing to the church at Rome, and although he had never visited there personally, he had a great desire to preach in the city of the Caesars. His commission was especially to preach to the Gentiles. In the 26th chapter of Acts when Paul is relating his commission to King Agrippa, he tells how that Jesus sends him especially to the Gentiles. He went on to tell Agrippa how that the Lord directed him to "open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God". The Gentile world was waiting for the Gospel, and Paul was commissioned by the Lord Himself to bring it to them. He desired to fulfill his commission, so he writes, "I am ready". His very life was to do the Lord's will.

Within the bounds of ones ability and opportunity, every Christian ought to show this same readiness to do the Lord's will. The great commission was given to the whole church, not to any select or exclusive group but to every man, woman, boy or girl. Are you ready to do what you can to the extent of your abilities? Not everyone can preach, not everyone can teach, and there are limitations on women's work in the church, but the commission is not narrow nor exclusive; it is as wide as the church itself. There is an example in the Samaritan woman with whom Jesus talked at the well. She had a mighty influence in her home town, spreading the news of the Christ so that her neighbors might also know Jesus. Any Christian can show others how to become followers. Being present at the worship services, letting the world know where you stand is very important. Also, the preacher finds inspiration in your support when you are present. Yes, there is much you can do; invite and bring others, your prayers and your enthusiasm are needed. "Are you ready" is a question we need to bring to heart. There is all the urgency today that existed in the first century.

In close connection with this is the admonition found in I Pet. 3:15: "But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear". You should know why you believe as you do and to be able to explain to others the reason for the hope you have in your heart. The curiosity of a non-believer is a great opportunity if you as a Christian are ready to explain why you are a member of the Church of Christ. It gives you an opportunity to explain what the church stands for, and the basis of our faith. Could you explain why you are a member of the Church of Christ? Or would you stumble and stutter and evade the question? Many times our poor response to such questions causes harm instead of good. Why do you believe in immersion rather than sprinkling? Why do you have the Lord's Supper every Lord's Day? Why do you not have instrumental music in your worship service? You may be asked these very questions. Be ready to give an answer. In these days of scepticism Christianity is under fire as never before - many even deny the existence of a living God. Never forget that we are given a positive command to have an answer ready.

There is a command in Titus 3:1 to be ready to every good work and of obedience to kings. "Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work". Good works is that which glorifies God and serves humanity, and as commanded, we must be ready. It is said of Jesus that "He went about doing good". A preacher, distracted by the constant "gadding about" of the members of his congregation once told them, "When Jesus was on this earth He went about doing good. His disciples in this congregation just go about". We are supposed to be His followers; Jesus is our example, so we too must be ready to serve at every opportunity.

Being ready unto every good work does not mean that we are expected to respond to every opportunity of doing good. No one can answer every call that presents itself, and you should not exhaust yourself or be overly disturbed when you find it impossible to help everyone that needs. Our resources are limited; the important thing is to be



ready and willing to do what is within our power. This is as much a command as is the command to observe the Lord's Supper on the Lord's Day.

Christians must also be ready to die for the faith. Paul speaks of his readiness to die for the Lord in Acts 21:13: "Then Paul answered, What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus". Paul had been traveling and preaching and had finally reached Caesarea. He stopped at the house of Philip the evangelist and stayed for several days. While he was there the prophet Agabus came down from Judea, took Paul's girdle and bound his own hands and feet, and told Paul that in such manner would the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owned the girdle and would turn him over to the Gentiles. It was to this that Paul answered, "I am ready not to be bound only, but to die..." While in the Roman prison Paul wrote to Timothy in II Tim. 4:6: "For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand". He considered himself a sacrifice and gladly so, in appreciation for all that the Lord had done for him. Millions of Christians have died for the faith, but we have never been faced with that decision. What would our decision be? Would you face the firing squad rather than renounce the Savior. If forced to choose death for Christ, would you be ready? I do not know how I would stand that test, but I hope I would be ready to die. We ought to be ready.

But something even harder is to be ready to live for Him. There are comparatively few big moments in life; our days are made up of small items, not big events. It's the little things we do for Christ, tiny choices, decisions between us and God - these are the things that count. We must be ready to put Christ first in these; it is harder but will count for more. "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God. For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith". Rom. 12:1-3.

It is all-important that we be ready; the test of our faith is our readiness to do the Lord's will. "For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also". Jas. 2:26. The test of our loyalty is also in our readiness to do His will, "Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on Him, If ye continue in my word, then ye are my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free". Jno 8:31,32. And the test of our love: "If ye love me, keep my commandments". Jno. 14:15.

In Matthew 25, Jesus gives the parable of the wedding feast, the wise and foolish virgins, teaching a valuable lesson on the importance of being ready. Of the ten virgins who went out to meet the bridegroom, five foolish ones took their lamps but no oil, but those five who were wise also took oil for their lamps. Then, when the bridegroom came, the foolish ones asked the wise to give of their oil. The wise did not have enough to divide and told them to go out and buy their own. While they were gone the bridegroom came and, the statement is made in Matt. 25:10, "And they that were ready went in with him".

Jesus is making Heaven ready for us, and He tells us that those who are ready will come in. This is the reward for being ready. When Christ comes we will be with Him, and that will be worth all the sacrifices we could ever be called upon to make. The Master calls, can you say, "I am ready"?

I AM READY  
Rom. 1:15

Sermon preached by W. D. McPherson  
• Dec. 3, 1961

## ABIDING IN LOVE

Jno.15:9

History abounds in instances of great love between individuals, and it is significant that they exist in the Bible more than in any other book.

There is the love of Jacob for Rachel; for him it was love at first sight. He agreed to serve her father, Laban, seven years so that he might have her. Laban deceived him and at the end of the seven years gave him instead an older daughter, Leah, forcing him to work seven more years for Rachel. These years of service passed for Jacob as a dream because of his great love for her. Another instance of love that is a monument of greatness is the devotion that David, a shepherd's boy, and Jonathon, the son of King Saul, had for one another. Jonathon risked the anger of his father to save his friend; even though he knew that David would occupy his father's throne he bore no resentment. The love of Ruth, the widowed Moabitess for her mother-in-law, Naomi, and for Naomi's God was so great that she was willing to leave home, friends, and everything that she had ever known to go with her. It was her deep affection for her mother-in-law that drew from Ruth the words, "Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God". These great loves are mentioned to emphasize the fact that the greatest of all is the love of God for His Son.

There are some people who are incapable of love. They are so selfish and egotistical, insincere and unstable that they do not have the capacity to love another. Their affections may be so warped by sin that they are rendered incapable of the qualities of loyalty and devotion which make for real love. A good suggestion to our young people is that they remember these things in selecting their life's companion, a husband or wife. Some have no capacity for love; not everyone is capable of bestowing love on another.

God is the greatest lover, because He is God. To the degree that man is dominated by evil, he is incapacitated for love, but God is perfect. He is all light, purity in its par excellence. Because he is the acme of perfection, His love is the greatest of all.

These thoughts should prepare us for the wondrous words of our Lord found in John 15:9: "As the Father hath loved me, so I have loved you; continue in my love". Do you get it? Jesus is telling us, His disciples, that the very love that the Father has for Him is the love he has bestowed on us. Here are the most gracious words that can be spoken to a Christian, that the Savior loves His followers with the same love that the Father has for Him, His only begotten Son. It is a thrilling and inspiring thought if we grasp its full significance. But not only that, it is also fraught with mystery. It is easy for us to understand how God could love Jesus, His Son; he is worthy. But we disciples are evil, weak, frail, often unlovable. Yet, He loves us with the same love the Father bestows on One who is all light, in whom there is no darkness.

We all feel the need to be loved; without it life would be unbearable. We like to be loved, to know and understand that someone loves us. I have sung songs with children in Bible schools for many years, and the one that is most popular - is always popular with children is: "Jesus loves me! This I know, For the Bible tells me so; Little ones to Him belong; they are weak but he is strong. Yes, Jesus loves me ..." Children love to sing this song and take great pride and joy in knowing that Jesus loves them. Christians need never doubt that someone loves you. Though all men may forsake you, there is one that changeth not. The Bible tells us Jesus loves us and we should not doubt that. There is assurance in these beautiful words of a poet:

"I know not where His islands lift,  
Their fronded palms in air;  
I only know I cannot drift,  
Beyond His love and care."

In the Great Good News, the Gospel, we learn of His love for us but find few references to God's love for His Son. In Jno.17:24, we are told that it is eternal, that God loved Him before the foundation of the world. In Jno.1:18, it is said of Jesus that "He dwelt in the bosom of the Father". In Jesus' great prayer in the 17th Chapter of John, "He shared God's glory in perfect identity". "And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was". Jno.17:5. When He sent Jesus to the world, God wonderfully acknowledged Him again and again. When Jesus was born God sent Angels to the shepherds, "And the angels said unto them, Fear not: for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord". It was spoken to those who would understand. Then the choruses in

heaven sang, "Glory to God in the highest..." Then, when Jesus was about 30 and came down to be baptized by John, we are told that the Holy Spirit descended on Him like a dove and God said, "This is my beloved Son; in whom I am well pleased". Again, on the mount of the transfiguration God spoke and said, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him". Even on the cross He was acknowledged as God's Son - at that time when the earth was in darkness and many of those who had been dead and buried rose and walked the streets.

A most significant fact is that God's love did not keep Him from the agony of the cross. Indulgence is not true love. A parent that truly loves a child will not coddle and pet, give him every attention, yield to his every whim and refuse to discipline him. God's love is perfect, but He did not keep Jesus from suffering - why? It was His job, He had chosen to bear this burden. But God did identify Himself with Him in His suffering; He felt every blow that was inflicted. They lived in intimate companionship and God gave Him the resource and strength to do His work. We cannot expect Christ to do more than that for us, nor has He promised it. In the 17th chapter of John, Vs.15-17, Jesus prays: "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from evil. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth". It is in our trials, sufferings and ordeals that we develop character.

The text has another message for us. After revealing the quality of His love, the Master says, "Abide", or continue in it. Then for fear they did not understand, He explained in verse 10: "If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love..." This is not hard to understand. If the love of another is to be a blessing we must be able to see things alike and work together in harmony and unity. For example, here is a father who loves his son devotedly, and has great plans for his future. He scrimps and saves, plans ahead, sacrifices and lays aside funds for a college education. Because he loves his son, he wants the very best for him. But the boy is lazy, wastes his time, is without ambition, is a smart-alec, and regards his father as an "old square". He falls in with the wrong crowd, gets into trouble and is kicked out of school. This does not destroy the father's love for his son, but it does rob the son of the benefits, blessings he could receive from his father's love.

To an infinitely greater degree Christ loves us and has the power to bless, but we must abide in His love. Paul says that He is able to bless us exceedingly above that which we ask or think. To abide in His love there must be an entire surrender of the whole being to Christ's will. It means that we must consciously say to ourselves, "I surrender myself to Him", and place spirit, soul and body under His absolute control for Him to do with as He pleases. When day-by-day choices or decisions are to be made, do what Christ would have you do. That's what surrender means. Live the kind of life Jesus would have you live; keep His commandments. When you keep His commandments you are abiding in His love.

Some are actually afraid of surrendering, afraid Christ will ask you to do something you don't want to do. This is a lack of trust. Suppose your little boy, of seven or eight years said, "Father, I love you so much that I am always going to obey you, and I want you to do with me what you think best". Would a father take advantage of this son whom he loves, and ask him to do something bad? No! So it is with God. He will command you to do only that which is for your welfare. You are not expressing love when you let your child do something that is not good for him, and that's how God deals with us. You need not fear to surrender to God, and you will never be happy until you make the surrender.

America is the most prosperous country in the world; we have more comforts and luxuries than any other nation, and yet we have more mental cases. Our mental illnesses are not from a lack of physical necessities, but a lack in our spiritual needs. It is becoming alarming. We must learn that the secret of life and a healthy mental attitude is not in material things but in being right with God.

Won't you make the surrender today? You cannot afford to let such love be bestowed in vain.

ABIDING IN LOVE

Jno.15:9

Sermon preached by W. D. McPherson  
Dec.10, 1961

## WHY SHOULD I PRAY?

We wonder what the Supreme Court will do about praying in public schools. There has been considerable furor in New York because the Board of Regents instituted prayer in the schools, and the children were directed to pray for country and parents. It was a simple prayer: "Almighty God, we acknowledge our dependence upon thee and beg thy blessing upon us, our parents, our teachers, our country". But five families objected, and now we await the decision of the judges.

But one thing I know, no matter what their decision is it will not stop people from praying. It would be as easy as to stop the waters from flowing to the sea. William James, a noted psychologist said, "We pray because we cannot help praying. It seems probable that in spite of all science may do to the contrary, men will continue to pray to the end of time. Let us look into the matter of prayer and seek a scriptural answer. Consider the question and see why we pray.

1. We pray because it is reasonable to pray. Man is a creature of desires, always longing or craving for something. As long as we live we want something, and in time of need we turn to the Lord. Since God is our loving Heavenly Father, why shouldn't we ask Him for the things we need? "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him. For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust". Psa.103:13,14. He knows us, and his ear is attuned to the cries of His children. The Bible encourages us to pray. Jesus, in His sermon on the mount tells us to: "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?" It is normal for a child to look to his father for his needs, to ask him for his wants. And when he is taught to pray, to fold his hands at night and ask of the Heavenly Father in prayer, "Now I lay me down to sleep, I pray the Lord my soul to keep...", it becomes a most natural part of his daily life.

Scientists tell us that God runs the world by natural law and consequently some have lost confidence in prayer. They teach that since the laws of nature are unchanging prayer is futile. We cannot deny that the laws of nature do remain unchanging. We know that if a man walks out in the street and is hit by a speeding automobile he will be killed, or if he picks up a high tension electric wire he will be electrocuted. But God has infinite resources, is not limited, has power without measure and can answer prayer by employing a higher law or by rearranging the laws of nature to work for Him. There is no doubt that God can and does answer prayer. He is not limited by one method and once rebuked His people for trying to limit Him. We should not be ashamed to get on our knees and ask Him for our needs. Remember Elisha, when enemy armies had completely surrounded and cut off the city of Gehazi. There seemed to be no escape through human means, and Elisha prayed God to open his servant's eyes. The young man then looked beyond the enemy forces and could see God's much greater army surrounding them, and Elisha said, "They that be with us are more than they that be with them". Yes, God has the power and will answer prayer if it is according to His will. The Bible tells us He's able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we can ask or think.

There are some who will admit that God has the power to answer prayer, but they argue that if He did so it would upset the laws of nature, would turn the universe topsy-turvy, would be like throwing a monkey wrench into running machinery. They say that He can't afford to answer prayers because one might pray for rain and another sunshine; to this we must remember that His answer is not always "yes" to every prayer. To answer prayer God does not have to interfere with natural law; He can re-direct it or use a higher law. There is the natural law of gravity, a body falling from a high eminence will be drawn to earth with a certain force. We all know that according to this natural law, a man falling off a high building will surely hit the ground, and his life will be crushed. But even lowly man has overcome the law of gravity, with the airplane. The law of gravity is still as firmly fixed as ever, but it is overcome every time a man leaves the ground in an airplane. One rainy day, when it was too wet to work in the fields, a group of farmers were talking in the village post office. The conversation turned to religion and prayer. One man said, "I do not believe in prayer. According to the law of gravity, if you jump from a tree you will fall to the ground no matter how much you prayed". An old man was listening to the talk and not saying much, but he finally took out his pocketknife, opened it and flung it up to the ceiling where it stuck. Then he said to them all, "I, a little old man, have just overcome that law of gravity. Do you think God cannot even do as much as I, when he wants to answer our prayers?" The faith of that group was helped by his illustration.

2. We pray because we must. The saying, "There are no Atheists in the foxhole", was popular during World War II. When you are at the end of your rope you will turn to someone else for help. Men are finite creatures, subject to calamities, and in a desperate situation even the worst will turn to God. There was once a man who had always made fun of the church and had no respect for God. His little girl became ill and the doctor said it was serious. They rushed her to the hospital, but in spite of the best medical care it seemed she would die. So in desperation the father sent for the preacher, begged him to pray for

her. He said, "Preacher, I am not fit to pray, but God will hear you. Ask Him to spare my little girl's life". There comes such a time in every life, when there is no one to turn to but God. Someone has said that when you are flat on your back there's no way to look but up. But there is no need to wait for an emergency. While Paul was a prisoner he wrote to the church at Philippi: "Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God". Phil.4:6. He is saying in nothing be anxious, but by prayer to take all your anxieties to the Lord. Paul uses the word supplication which is stronger, denotes a greater degree of earnestness. Then, in the 7th verse, he voices this wonderful benediction, "And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus". That's why a Christian needs to pray.

3. Prayer is the spontaneous expression of nobility of character. A noted poet gives us this thought:

"More things are wrought by prayer  
Than this world dreams of, wherefore let thy voice  
rise like a fountain for me night and day.  
For what are men better than sheep or goats  
That nourish a blind life within the brain,  
If knowing God, they lift not up hands of prayer  
Both for themselves and those who call them friends."

Prayer that is from the heart is spontaneous, not cold and formal. Pray earnestly, then it is up to God, leave the matter in His hands. It is noble to pray. Gratitude is one of the noblest traits of character, and the grateful heart will find many occasions to thank God for his blessings. Pray for self and for friends; a man who does not pray is hardly more than an animal. When Jesus healed the ten lepers only one, a Samaritan, returned to give him thanks. And Jesus said, "Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine?" When you wake up on the mornings in this land of opportunity and plenty, with gratitude in your heart, thank God for all blessings. That's why we pray - it is noble.

4. Prayer is a duty. In the 18th Chapter of Luke beginning with the 1st verse, Jesus gives a parable that men ought always to pray and not to faint. "Ought" puts it in the realm of duty; it is a command of God; it is His will. In Mtt.6:6, The Lord says we should pray in private: "But when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly". Now, this does not ban public prayer but means that we should not pray simply to be seen and heard by men. Prayer is a part of our worship. "And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in the breaking of bread, and in prayers". Acts 2:42. Paul said to the Thessalonians, "Pray without ceasing". How can you do that? By living earnestly, righteously, realizing always that you are dependent on God.

Since prayer is all this, it is imperative that we know how to pray. There is no specified time, place, nor position. Moses prayed mornings and evenings and had a specified place, but we under the Christian dispensation have none. There are, however, very specific spiritual conditions of acceptable prayer.

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

(2) You must pray earnestly. "Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. Jas5:16.

(3) You must pray with the right attitude toward others. "For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses". Matt.6:14,15.

(4) You must pray with complete submission to God's will. "For what ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that" Jas 4:15. In the model prayer is the petition: "Thy will be done...."

(66:18.

(5) Pray in righteousness. "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me. Psa.

(6) Pray in the name of Christ. "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you". Jn15:16. A check that bears no endorsement will bounce, the banker will not accept or cash it. So it is with prayer; in order to be accepted before the Throne of Grace it must be in Jesus' name. We should be very careful of this; it is a shame for an earnest prayer to be unheard because it does not bear the name of Jesus. This is important or Jesus would not have included it. Christians should think on these things. Do you know how to pray? Don't you consider it a privilege to be able to talk to God in prayer? God is ready to bless us, but in order to receive the things we need we must keep the prayer line open.

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## CORINTH THE SINNING CHURCH

The church at Corinth was established by Paul on his second missionary journey. After a disappointing experience in Athens, he arrived in the city alone and penniless. His first task was to find a way to make a little money. Here was a great city, wholly given over to wickedness, yet he must of necessity delay his work of preaching in order to provide for his very existence.

God was with him. He soon found both work and friends. There was a Jew, Aquila, and his wife Priscilla who had recently come from Rome. They were tent makers by trade, as was Paul, so a most congenial arrangement was worked out whereby the apostle provided for his needs. It is not clear whether these two were Christians when they met Paul, but if not they soon became followers of the Master. So Paul lived and worked with his new friends and from week to week spoke about Jesus in the synagogue.

The apostle's labors among the Jews were not entirely without fruit. He mentions in the first letter that Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, as well as Gaius were baptized by his own hands. There was also the household of Stephanus. There were probably others, for Silas and Timothy soon arrived and they did the baptizing. But in a short time the Jews turned on him and he was forced to teach elsewhere. In all these trials God gave him encouragement. He spake unto him in a vision saying, "Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace: for I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city". Acts 18:10. Paul remained in Corinth a year and six months.

But Paul was a planter rather than a waterer. When the congregation at Corinth was well established he left it in other hands and moved on to Ephesus where he remained for three years. This was his longest stay in one locality. The church at Corinth grew in numbers and in other ways, but evils crept in. Paul soon began to get bad reports through letters from members and through travelers, that conditions were not right. This occasioned the writing of his first letter to the Corinthians. I dare say there is not a congregation today which has more wrong with it than Corinth at that time.

In his first letter to them, Paul rebuked the members for the strife and divisions that had arisen among them, and denounced their taking quarrels to judges and courts for settlement. He warned them against toleration of immorality, incest and fornication that were being practiced. He dealt with their problems of contention over whether Christians should eat meat sacrificed to idols, the women's place in the church, and the abuse of the Lord's Supper. They had begun to make of the Lord's Supper a feast to satisfy their physical bodies rather than a spiritual memorial. There was jealousy over spiritual gifts and questions regarding the resurrection of the dead. The list of ills was long, and Paul was forced to write them to correct the situation.

It is not for us to question God's work, but you may wonder why the Spirit permitted the use of so much space in the New Testament to such a congregation. Here is a whole book of 16 chapters devoted to the rebuking and criticising of the evils of this one congregation. I am glad that He did allow it, for through it we may learn the constructive use of a dangerous tool. There has never been a time when the church has had so many critics as today. Criticism, like the surgeon's scalpel, is an excellent tool when used properly, but it can be a deadly weapon. It can destroy morale, discourage the faithful and poison faith. Today our harshest criticism comes from within our ranks, from those unfaithful ones who ought to be friends and helpers. It cannot be denied that criticism has its place in spiritual growth, but because it is so potent it must be used wisely. This must be why God gave us this book - so that we can learn to use criticism. A study of I Corinthians will give us a true perspective.

Let us point out a few facts:

1. Paul faced the situation candidly. He made no effort to conceal an ugly fact, did not deny the truth or excuse sin. He gave them such a searching analysis of their situation that no one in the wrong could escape his rebuke, but he did it wisely. His motive was one of deep concern and tender love. He was like a dedicated physician setting a child's broken limb. Even though he knows it will hurt, he skillfully does what is necessary, and his motive is to heal the ill. The force of criticism depends on motive.

What lesson for all of us! Our criticism is often motivated by spite or ill will. We sometimes use it as a club to beat someone else over the head, to build up ourselves at the expense of another or to justify our own wrongs, and it helps no one. In many years of preaching I have found this to be true of negligent church members. When rebuked for their unfaithfulness they will start to criticize something or someone in the church. It is an unconscious effort to justify self for our own unfaithfulness. But we do not fool God, only ourselves. To lambast the church for our own wrong doings is the coward's way; it takes some manhood to accept our just criticism and be built up by it.

2. Paul recognized that for all their faults they were the church. They were still the body of Christ, in spite of their shortcomings, purchased by His blood and the object of His love. They were criticized in a way that would help them, not tear them down. A preacher once made this statement while talking about things that can destroy the church: "I would rather be that Roman soldier who thrust the spear into the side of Jesus than to knowingly do or say something that would destroy His body". When our loved ones are sick we don't cast them out, but rather try to give them the special care and treatment they need to become strong again. So it is with a weak congregation. It is no less loved by the Lord, but it must be criticized wisely to be re-strengthened. In the second Corinthian letter Paul explains why he wrote the first. "For if I make you sorry, who is he then that maketh me glad, but the same which is made sorry by me? And I wrote this same unto you, lest, when I came, I should have sorrow from them of whom I ought to rejoice; having confidence in you all, that my joy is the joy of you all. For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote unto you with many tears; not that ye should be grieved, but that ye might know the love which I have more abundantly unto you". II Cor.2:2-4. Criticism without wisdom is sin. Paul used tact and wisdom.

3. The most wonderful thing about Corinth is the way she took it. There was no anger, no buck-passing. They just set about to wipe out those evils for which they had been reprimanded. Paul then wrote another letter to thank them for their attitude. "For though I made you sorry with a letter, I do not repent, though I did repent: for I perceive that the same epistle hath made you sorry, though it were but for a season. Now I rejoice not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance: for ye were made sorry after a godly manner, that ye might receive damage by us in nothing. For godly sorrow worketh to repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death. For behold this selfsame thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea what fear, yea what vehement desire, yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge! In all things ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter". II Cor.7:8 11.

It was said of David that he was a man after God's own heart. Not that he was perfect; he was guilty of some horrible sins. Not many men have committed a wrong that we would consider as evil as coveting another man's wife to the point of sending the husband into battle to be killed so that he could have her. But David took rebuke when he was wrong, repented, asked God to forgive him and then tried again.

Let us begin the new year right. How? "For if I have boasted any thing to him of you, I am not ashamed; but as we spake all things to you in truth, even so our boasting, which I made before Titus, is found a truth". II Cor.7:14. In humility and repentance, asking God in faith to forgive our sins, let us try to be better Christians.

#### CORINTH, THE SINNING CHURCH

Sermon preached by W. D. Mc Pherson  
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