

The Way of Truth

Vol. 75

“Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.”

No. 4



***Christ's
Coming
Forth from
the Grave
Changed
Everything!***

*See Editorial,
Inside Front Cover
&*

*"Dealing with Change,"
Page 8*

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2017

(The Editor has requested that we use his radio message for the editorial in this issue.)

The Risen Christ

WE READ as a text, I Corinthians, chapter 15, verses 13-20: *“But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen: And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not. For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept.”*

First of all, some facts about the resurrection: Christ—His was a bodily resurrection. Jesus came to earth in human form. He lived in a human body, and He was physically crucified. Joseph and Nicodemus took that body off the cross and laid it in Joseph’s new tomb, where no one else had been buried. The same body that was laid in Joseph’s tomb was resurrected. The disciples did not come and steal away His body as the soldiers were paid to lie and to say. The disciples did not believe the message of the resurrection when they first heard it. Jesus had to show Thomas His hands and His side for him to believe, and then he said, “My Lord and my God.” He then believed, and Jesus said, “Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.”

Jesus was resurrected on the first day of the week. “Now when Jesus was risen early the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had cast seven devils” (Mark 16:9). He was resurrected on the first day of the week as He said He would be.

On the first day of the week, as the two disciples were on their way to Emmaus, a stranger joined them and joined in with their conversation; and Jesus, although he did not identify Himself to them at that time, asked them questions, and they said, “Art thou a stranger around here? Haven’t you heard this is the third day since these things happened?”—Luke 24:21.

Those living upon the earth when Christ comes, and those resurrected will be changed and caught up together. “In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed” (I Corinthians 15:52). “And so shall we ever be with the Lord” (I Thessalonians 4:17).

The resurrection is an historical fact. Angels testified to it. All four of the Gospels declare it—

Mary and others came to the tomb. The angel said to them, “He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay.”—Matthew 28:6.

In Mark 16:1-9, the angel told the ladies, “Go your way, tell his disciples and Peter that he goeth before you

into Galilee: there shall ye see him.” That’s verse 7 of that passage of scripture from Mark.

In Luke 24:1-10, the angel said to the women, “Why seek ye the living among the dead?” That’s verse 5 of the passage of scripture from Luke.

Then in John 20:1-8, Peter and John went into the tomb and saw the linen clothes lying there. That’s verse 6 of chapter 20.

Jesus was seen with over 500 after His resurrection, for He spent 40 days on earth before He returned to the Father.

Peter boldly told the people, who marveled at the healing of the lame man at the gate Beautiful, that it was through faith in the One they had crucified and God had raised from the dead, who stood there whole before them. Of course, Peter was talking about Jesus Christ whom they had crucified and whom God had raised from the dead.

Paul was a strong defender of the resurrection of the Savior. In our text, he predicated Christianity. On it, if it is not true, then the whole structure falls. The apostle Paul declared, “But now is Christ risen from the dead” (I Corinthians 15:20). Paul also said, “If Christ was not raised from the dead, we have no Savior. If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; you are still in your sins” (I Corinthians 15:17).

Believing in the resurrection is required to be saved. In Romans, chapter 10, verse 9, we read: “If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.”

When we look at the three special holy seasons—Passover, First-fruits, and Pentecost—Passover symbolizes the death of the Lamb of God, and the First-fruits symbolize the resurrection of the Son of God. “But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept” (I Corinthians 15:20).

Christ’s resurrection is a sample of ours. His resurrection was real, and so will ours be. When God, by the Holy Spirit, raised Him from the dead, He thus demonstrated “the exceeding greatness of his power.” “What is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places” (Ephesians 1:19, 20). Just so with ours, it isn’t sown in weakness. It is raised in power. His resurrection is a pledge of our resurrection.

The importance of the resurrection: Can you see any Christians gathered around a tomb where the body of Jesus is supposed to be today? Absurd. It is true that millions gather at Mohammed’s tomb, but they don’t believe in a Savior.

A story is told about a Christian and a Muslim having a conversation. The Muslim said to the Christian, “You have an

ABOUT THE COVER

The Christian faith is empowered by the fact that Jesus Christ rose from the dead. When He came forth from the tomb hewn out of stone, He forever changed the way men consider religion and eternity. Because Jesus conquered death and was “the firstfruits of them that slept,” the promise of our resurrection from the dead is forever confirmed!

THE WAY OF TRUTH

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Devoted to the gospel of our loving Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave freely His life-blood, to save us from our many sins, to sanctify our fallen nature and to bring into one body all true believers, by whose stripes we are healed.

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—Alvin A. Craig, Editor

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pel. Paul said, "The gospel is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth." Believeth what? Believeth that Jesus Christ came into this world, suffered, bled and died on the cross, and rose again the third day. He ever liveth to make intercession for us. Because of this fact, He is able to save to the uttermost all who come unto God by Him.

A living Christ keeps and preserves us from all evil. Let me repeat that again: *A living Christ keeps and preserves us from all evil.* The apostles laid down their lives defending this truth. Paul, in Athens, Greece, told them of the God who was unknown to them, and he told them of the true and the living God. He also told them about the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Do you know what some of them said when they heard of the resurrection of the dead? They mocked Paul and said that he was talking about something strange and new. Others said, "We will hear thee again of this matter" (Acts 17:32).

Today, we worship not before some tomb, but a risen, triumphant, victorious, and glorified Christ. Do you know this living Lord? Is He your Savior? If not, let me encourage you to seek Him, for Jesus Christ tasted death for every man, and whosoever will may come and drink of the water of life freely. †

empty tomb. We have a tomb where Mohammed is." The Christian said to the Muslim, "That's what makes the difference." Yes, the fact that we have an empty tomb and a risen Savior is what makes the difference. He is not here; He is risen! "He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life" (I John 5:12). Jesus said, "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly" (John 10:10).

The distinguishing characteristics of Christianity: Its Founder is alive forevermore. Its Founder and Foundation is a living Stone. The Church of God rests securely upon this fact. Yes, the Church of God is built on that solid Rock, and we have a Savior who is alive forevermore.

Its springs and fountainhead from which all the blessings of God flow: "He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water" (John 7:38). Jesus said unto the woman at the well, "Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life" (John 4:13, 14). And the woman laid her waterpot down, because the water that Jesus told her about couldn't be carried around in a pot on her head. She went into the village and told those there, "Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did." So, they came out, and they listened to Jesus and His teachings. Later, they told this woman, "Now, we believe He is the Messiah, not because of what you said, but because of what we have heard."

The gospel message receives its inspiration from the truth of the resurrection. If it was not for the resurrection, we would have a dead letter and not the gos-

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LOVE'S SACRIFICE

P. Turner

Upon Golgotha's hilltop gray,
Where all the world might see,
Love set its sign one bitter day
When He hung on the tree:
It was the symbol of the price
Love paid—ah, cruel loss!—
And raised a sign of sacrifice,
A rugged, blood-stained cross.

He bore the cross up Calvary's hill,
The world from sin, to free;
He died between two craven thieves,
And did it all for me:
I hang my head and blush to think
I voiced the mob's demands;
'Twas I who clamored for His blood
When Pilate washed his hands.

'Twas I who crowned His brow with thorns
While He hung on the tree;
I scoffed to hear Him pray, "Forgive,"
Although He prayed for me;
I mocked Him while He suffered death
That I might fully live;
And now 'tis I who cry to Him,
"Forgive, dear Lord, forgive!"

HE IS RISEN

Pauline A. Lindley

Christ is risen! lo, the grave
Is empty where He lay!
Let us praise His name forever
Who bore our sins away!

He is risen! see the gloom
And darkness disappear!
Broken is the power of death
Yea, gone is every fear!

He is risen! goes before us
Our victorious Lord,
Joyfully we'll sing His praises,
Follow at His Word.

Hallelujah! He is risen!
Sing where'er you go
Till the joy of full salvation
Everyone shall know!

FOR ME
Anonymous

Under an eastern sky,
Amid a rabble's cry
A man went forth to die
For me.
Thorn-crowned His blessed head,
Blood-stained His every tread;
Cross-laden, on He sped
For me.
Pierced glow His hands and feet,
Three hours o'er Him beat
Fierce rays of noontide heat
For me.
Thus wert Thou made all mine;
Lord, make me wholly Thine;
Grant grace and strength divine
To me.
In thought, and word, and deed
Thy will to do; O lead
My soul, e'en though it bleed,
To Thee.

THE LORD IS RISEN

Thomas Hastings

Ye mourning saints, dry every tear
For your departed Lord;
"Behold the place; He is not here!"
The tomb is all unbarred;
The gates of death were closed in vain—
The Lord is risen, He lives again!

Now cheerful to the house of prayer
Your early footsteps bend;
The Savior will Himself be there,
Your Advocate and Friend.
Oh, weep no more your comforts slain!
The Lord is risen, He lives again!

SPREAD THE TIDINGS ALL ABROAD

Mrs. Harriet E. Jones

Spread the tidings all abroad,
Jesus lives, Jesus lives;
Glory, glory be to God,
Jesus lives, Jesus lives.
In the cold grave, where He lay,
Come and see, come and see,
Angels sit in bright array,
Come and see, come and see. †

**BECAUSE HE LIVES,
WE SHALL LIVE ALSO.**



Answered by the Editor

QUESTION: What effect does sanctification have on personality defects, inherited traits, childhood scars, habits, addictions, etc. (I have seen and heard people whom I believe to be saved and sanctified speak sharply, be impatient, be controlling, want to be in the spotlight, hold grudges or be unforgiving, consider themselves more intelligent or talented or better than others, have an anger problem or get angry when someone disagrees with them or overlooks them or crosses them, etc.)—Anonymous

ANSWER: If the person does, acts, and says things as you say, then that person needs a true experience of salvation! You cannot be a Christian and do some of the things you listed. For instance, *hold a grudge* and *be unforgiving*: As far as I can understand, you cannot hold a grudge without an unforgiving spirit. Jesus said, “If ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses” (Matthew 6:15). I have preached through the years, “You must forgive to be forgiven.” Another example: “*Better than some others.*” Paul said, “Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves” (Philippians 2:3). “Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another” (Romans 12:10).

In Proverbs 6:17-19, we find seven things the Lord hates, and the first one is: “A proud look.” There are many people who are more intelligent than others, but they are very unwise to go around bragging about it. To use their intelligence to “control” another is a wrong way to use it.

QUESTION: Are these the same things as carnality, or the carnal nature? Are they ever fully overcome or eradicated in sanctification?—Anonymous

ANSWER: Most of what you have listed is an expression of the carnal nature. Even the sinful things you listed are the result, or the fruit of, the carnal nature. All the sinful things you listed will be forgiven if the person will truly repent with godly sorrow. “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (I John 1:9). Of course, when a person is forgiven he must stop doing the sinful things.

R. R. Byrum, in his book *Holy Spirit Baptism and the Second Cleansing* said, “Depravity is not a physical something in man causing him to do evil, neither is it an entire subtraction of his moral nature. ... From a careful study of the subject it is evident that depravity

is a derangement or enfeeblement of man’s moral nature. It is a perversion or weakness of his moral faculties. It is in this sense that the image of God is lost, and not in the sense of an entire loss of the moral nature.

“God created man with a natural pride which we know as self-respect, which causes one to seek to be agreeable and pleasing to his fellows. But depravity causes him to want to be not only well thought of, which is proper, but to want to be thought of as better than anyone else. This is selfish, therefore sinful pride, and is condemned as sin in God’s Word.

“God placed in man a sense of justice, or that which causes a natural anger, indignation, or displeasure at an injustice. This is that which God felt toward sinful Israel and which Jesus felt as mentioned on one occasion. It is that which every good man feels at the sight of oppression of the helpless by the strong. It is good that man has this feeling. It is fundamentally necessary to his moral nature. But depravity causes him not only to feel displeasure at what he does not approve, but also causes him to have a vindictive selfish anger or hatred that would lead him to do wrong himself by retaliating.

“Sanctification does not take away those qualities which properly belong to human nature, but it does restore them from that perverted condition. A wholly sanctified man will possess natural pride or self-respect, feel displeasure at an injustice, have appetites, will desire pleasure, and have a sense of humor; but he will be saved from the perversions of these.”

QUESTION: What if these things are so deeply ingrained that a person struggles with one or more of these, but is seemingly unable to even improve or get victory over them?—Anonymous

ANSWER: As long as a person is only religious, he/she can keep struggling all his/her life and never overcome, but Paul said, “If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new” (II Corinthians 5:17). And Jesus said, “If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed” (John 8:36). The gospel of Christ has power to set people free from sin and all their bad habits.

I would suggest you read and study Romans 7:14-24 and see how Paul struggled as a “church member” (a Pharisee) and then read Romans 7:25 and 8:1, 2, and see what he says after he became a Christian.

QUESTION: Why or what is wrong if people can’t make any improvement or get victory over these things? Jesus has promised to give us power over the power of the enemy. What can people do?—Anonymous

ANSWER: Jesus connected conditions to be met with His promises. So often you hear people say that Jesus said, “Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” You need to look at what He said before saying that! “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” (John 8:31, 32).

The portion of verse you quoted was said to the 70 whom Jesus sent out to heal the sick, to cast out devils,

and to preach the gospel. He will not call all disciples to do that, but I believe He will give all power over the devil. Paul said, "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it" (I Corinthians 10:13). "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you" (James 4:7).

I do not mean to render carnal judgment, but I believe if the person you speak of gets a true experience of salvation, and then is sanctified, he/she will be saved from all his/her sins and the Holy Spirit will help him/her to work to overcome the wickedness that he/she has. Every true Christian can grow in his/her experience. "But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen" (II Peter 3:18). †

FIGHTING AND FEAR WITHIN AND WITHOUT

Radio Message by Bro. David Shaw

(aired in Jamaica)

IT IS another grand privilege to be with you on this outstanding broadcast. Our intention is to reach you and to inform you of your value and the will of God in your life.

I would like to speak to you from Deuteronomy, chapter 4, verses 9 and 10: "Only take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen, and lest they depart from thy heart all the days of thy life: but teach them thy sons, and thy sons' sons; Specially the day that thou stoodest before the Lord thy God in Horeb, when the Lord said unto me, Gather me the people together, and I will make them hear my words, that they may learn to fear me all the days that they shall live upon the earth, and that they may teach their children." My topic this morning is: "Fighting and Fear Within and Without."

As an individual, I am certain you have always been bothered with thoughts of different kinds. There's a fear within you, and you are trying to make decisions to which, in many instances, you have not done. It is important that you recognize that God is to be served, and there should be no fighting in serving God. Why? Because He is worthy of your entire being. Our lives, our talents, and all should be given to God.

In our text (Deuteronomy 4), God sought out a people for Himself, and He gave Moses as a leader and a commander to them. Moses exhorted them to obey almighty God. He exhorted them to forget not the things that God had done and to use such to glorify His great name. In many instances, we forget what God has done for us, and we are perplexed in the fact that we have

met with new situations. Don't forget the God who has brought you out of the destructions and problems that you once encountered. I want to remind you that the hearts of men are always indecisive in not knowing what to do, but God's Word is always the counselor and guide towards making the right decisions. When we make decisions on our own, we are prone to go astray, but obeying the Word of God brings us to victory.

Notice what the writer said here in our text: "Do not forget the things that God has done." The important point is: we must keep our souls with all diligence. When our hearts are set toward God, we are on the right avenue. When we are struggling in not knowing what to do, then the devil is more determined to bring us into a situation where we can lose sight of God. "Specially the day that thou stoodest before the Lord thy God in Horeb, when the Lord said unto me, Gather me the people together, and I will make them hear my words, that they may learn to fear me." I am calling on the nation today to learn to fear God. There is always fear and fighting within and without. You don't want to go to hell, and you are not ready to serve God. What is your choice? Is this the right decision to make?

The writer of Proverbs demands that we should ask God to direct our paths. Proverbs 3:6, "In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths." Proverbs 3:7, "Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the Lord, and depart from evil." Evil today is prevailing over the lives of millions in our nations, for they have allowed themselves to be overtaken by the adversary and are finding themselves in awful conditions. Their lives become miserable and a concern beyond what they themselves can find a solution to. They are refusing to accept the solution found in God's Word. We are reminded to "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts," but so many people today are wise in their own eyes, and they forget the laws and commands of almighty God.

We must seek God if we want to find out that life can become a pleasure and a joy. Life can be something worthwhile living when God is given the upper hand. If your life is not given into God's hands, then life becomes miserable. There is no place, as it were, for joy. There will always be confusion, fear, and fighting within and without. But God desires that the nations serve Him with all their heart, soul, and strength.

The writer continues in Proverbs 24:21, "My son, fear thou the Lord and the king: and meddle not with them that are given to change." People are trying to change God's Word into human thoughts and ideas, but God says unto us, "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways." As a matter of fact, the Bible says, "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." So we cannot think as God thinks, unless we obey Him through the leadings of the Holy Spirit. For one to be filled with the Holy Spirit, his heart must be submissive to almighty God. Many people want to serve God in their own hearts, in their own thoughts, and in their own decision making. How can you please God by making decisions within

yourself? You must please God by obeying His Word in every line.

God loves us as a people, He cares for us as a nation, and He wants us to have the best in life. He wants to get us out of the fear, out of the fighting and the resistance that we have within us in regard to doing good. If you resist evil and cleave to good, you have a good possession, but if you are not trying to resist evil, you are destroying your life for now and throughout eternity.

The Bible says in Matthew 10:28, "Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." Today, in our world, people are fearful of the wicked men who dwell in their midst, and they are not fearful of the God who gave His Word as a command for them to live by. Men will break God's commands and feel justified, but when they break man's commands, they live in fear. They have sleepless hours because they are watching as to who will come to destroy them. Beloved, I think we are not wise in such decision-making. We should be willing to fear God. If we do, He will deliver us from evil.

David said in Psalm 23, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil [Why?]: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me." So when we fear God, it is the best policy. When we fear men, we are putting ourselves in despair, in agony, and in great sorrow. Yes, we must respect man, but God is to be feared above all, because what He says, stands. No one can change God's Word. It remains the same yesterday, today, and forever. God said, "If you remain in your sins, and die in your sins, where I am, you cannot come."

Who is a wise person who would make heaven his final choice before time shall be no more on this earth? Therefore, if you want to make heaven your home, it is important to fear God. It is important to love the Lord with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. You must do what He commissions you to do in accordance to His will. If you live against God's will, you are depriving yourself of your right, but if you will fear God, you will be rewarded at the end of life's journey. Why live in fear, and remain in fighting within and without day by day? Why live in jeopardy every hour? Why not obey God's Word and make Him your final choice, and live a life of peace and happiness? He promised you a life of enjoyment in this world, and a life of relaxation by faith in God, but you must learn to trust and obey Him. If you remain in your own ways and attitudes, then you are doing yourself a displeasure.

Listen to what Psalm 55:5 says: "Fearfulness and trembling are come upon me, and horror hath overwhelmed me." That is what happens when one lives a life of sin and despair. You are living in fearfulness and trembling, not wanting to die, but at the same time refusing to make Christ your final choice. I remind you: "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon"

(Isaiah 55: 6, 7). Why not make a decision today to live and fear God, and to know that your life would be happy as you ponder your path from day to day?

In the book of James, chapter 4, verses 7 and 8, the apostle said, "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded." Being double-minded is what causes fear and fighting. If you are double-minded, you will not be able to find the blessings that come from the hand of the Lord. Verses 9 and 10: "Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up." Oh, what a blessing it is to make God your final choice! He is a God who cares beyond our imagination. If we, by faith, live and serve Him, He will bless us. He will guide and direct us. Our hearts will be satisfied. We will have no need of fear, doubting, and trembling.

God desires to bless you through this broadcast. If you will only submit your thoughts to God and ask Him to direct you, to give to you that which is right and just that you may be able to do what He commands of you, your life can be happy. You can find that life is more than just for living. Don't take it for granted that life is just for living. Life possesses something for us beyond human understanding. God wants man here and now to live a happy, peaceful, and a contented life; but in a life of sin, it will not be possible. Man must turn from sin and turn to God. He must ask God to direct His paths, and to give him a heart to fear and to love and to serve Him.

You must make a choice, whether you will serve God or the devil. You know where you are standing; you know who you are serving; you know who you are obeying. You also know the resistance you have whether towards evil or good. In most cases, people are more drawn to evil than good. Why not accept God today? He will direct your paths. He will keep you in the hollow of His hand and give you a hope that when your passing days on earth are done, your soul shall rest in peace with God.

One writer, who enjoyed the blessings of God, wrote—

*When peace like a river attendeth my way,
When sorrows like sea-billows roll,
Whatever my lot, thou hast taught me to say,
"It is well, it is well with my soul."*

*My sin—O the bliss of this glorious thought!—
My sin, not in part but the whole,
Is nailed to his cross and I bear it no more;
Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, O my soul!*

What a blessing it can be when you can, out of a joyful and a pure heart, declare to the world, "I've found my Lord, and He is mine!" Today, He is not hard to be found. You can find Him if you will seek Him.

Jesus said, "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." You can be relieved of the fighting and fear within and without by making God your final choice and by

GEMS FROM THE BOOK OF ROMANS

LOVE WORKS NO ILL

Scriptures: Romans 13:8-10; Romans 12:9, 10; I John 3:16-18; Galatians 5:13, 14; I Peter 1:22; I Peter 3:8, 9; I Thessalonians 3:12.

Romans 13:8 Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law.

9 For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

10 Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.

Romans 12:9 Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good.

10 Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another.

I John 3:16 Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.

17 But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?

18 My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth.

Galatians 5:13 For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another.

14 For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

I Peter 1:22 Seeing ye 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.

I Peter 3:8 Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous:

9 Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing; but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing.

I Thessalonians 3:12 And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you.

Memory Verse: Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.

—Romans 13:10.

Aim: To reveal the evidence of true, godly love.

INTRODUCTION

“Love—the high esteem which God has for His human children and the high regard which they, in turn, should have for Him and other people. Because of the hundreds of references to love in the Bible, it is certainly the most remarkable book of love in the world. It records the greatest love story ever written—God’s unconditional love for us that sent His Son to die on the cross (John 3:16; I John 4:10).

saying to Him in a simple tone, “Have Thine own way, Lord! Have Thine own way! Thou art the Potter; I am the clay. Mould me and make me after Thy will, While I am waiting, Yielded and still.” That is what you need to do today—yield yourself unto God. Don’t take it for granted. Whatever you serve is your god. If you will yield to God, you will be blessed. If you are yielding to the devil, you will be cast out forevermore. I am certain, if you are conscious, you want to be blessed throughout your entire being; and when time shall be no more on earth for you, you shall receive the eternal reward that is awaiting for those who have served the Lord with fear and trembling. May God bless you today and help you to make a final decision, to make Him your choice, and to seek to know that He is God, and beside Him there is none else.

All the promises of God are faithful and true, but what the devil has is destructive. He robs you of the value of your soul; he robs you of the value of your life; he robs you of the value of your integrity; he robs you of the fact of thinking properly. You need to make the devil know that there is a God who can be served, and He is a God of truth. He is a God who gives unto mankind all the blessings that one’s heart can desire.

Do you know, Friends, that the Lord has something beyond your imagination for you? Yes! “There is peace and joy in the Lord today, More than all in this world of sin; There’s a happy life in the holy way, Praise the Lord, I have entered in!” If you will only seek God today, you can enter in. Why live without Him every hour? Why do you allow your heart to live under *fearfulness*, a condition that is so unpleasant and filled with discomfort? Why not seek God and ask Him to cleanse your heart from double-mindedness and live in purity before Him as you live your life among others? You can be an example if you will only yield yourself to the Lord. Allow Him to have His way in your life, and say, “Lord, I am Thine; whatever it takes, I will serve You throughout my days.”

In many occasions, you are bound and battered. You are found living in a fighting state, all because your life is mangled with sin. If you will choose God, peace and joy can be yours. Your life can be yours to enjoy. May God bless you as you make that final decision, which is most important. †

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“There are two Greek words we find for love. One is *Phileo*, which means ‘to have ardent affection and feeling.’ The other is *Agapao*, which means ‘to have esteem’ or ‘high regard.’ The word *agape* is the term of Christianity. This word for love is used several ways in the Scriptures. Agape love expresses the nature of God and the love He would have us to have for one another. As someone has said, ‘Love can only be known from the actions it prompts.’ ”—*Nelson’s Illustrated Bible Dictionary*.

MEDITATIONS

OBEY THE WORD—Romans 13:8—Love one another—Some people have misunderstood the first part of this verse. It does not mean you cannot buy a house or a car on monthly payments. As long as you make your payments you don’t “owe” the bank! This part of the verse refers back to chapter 13, where we are told to show due respect and obedience to civil authority. As to Christians, Paul goes on to say that what we owe is love for one another; and in doing this, we are fulfilling the law of Christ. **Verse 9**—A person who has true love in his heart for his brother, or others, will not be guilty of the things spoken of in this verse. He will love his neighbor.

A GOOD NEIGHBOR—Romans 13:10—Worketh no ill—Love will not cause one to return evil for evil, but rather good for evil. Christians are different! They will endeavor to help where they can, for your neighbor is not limited to the one who lives next door. The good Samaritan is an example of this.

LOVE IS GREATLY NEEDED—Romans 12:9—Without dissimulation—This simply means your love is to be real! To pretend to love someone when you don’t is being hypocritical. That is one of the things you need to abhor, among many other things. **Verse 10**—Being kind to all men with brotherly love and in honor preferring one another requires a spirit of humility.

UNDERSTANDING LOVE WE ARE TO HAVE—I John 3:16—The love of God—Consider the love of God. God loved His Son so much, yet His love for us was so great it caused Him to restrain Himself and allow sinful men to crucify Jesus! Since God loved us so much, John said that we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.

LOVE IN ACTION—I John 3:17—This world’s good—There are many needy people in this world, and there are organizations that are working to help such people, but that does not excuse the Christian from his duty to help those he can, especially to those who are brethren, as John spoke of in verse 16. **Verse 18**—Here again, we are reminded that our love must be real. As was stated in the Introduction, “Love can only be known from the actions it prompts.”

OLD COVENANT EXPIRED—Galatians 5:13—Called unto liberty—Reading a couple verses before this one, we see that Paul was teaching that the Old Covenant had expired, that it was not necessary to circumcise the children, along with other practices, which were only types of the real things that were to come. However, they were not to use the liberty they had in a sinful way, for there was a new law in force that forbade living after the flesh. **Verse 14**—The law

of love was in effect, and “love worketh no ill to his neighbor.”

THE WAY TO HAVE A PURE HEART—I Peter 1:22—In obeying the truth—Jesus said, “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” (John 8:31, 32). The truth liberates you from the bondage of sin. It is no wonder that so many professed Christians still live in sin! To be a true Christian, you must obey the Word of God. In the experience of salvation, the love of the world, ill-will toward others, etc., is removed and true love is given to fill the heart.

A GREAT NEED—I Peter 3:8—Finally—When the Word of God is lived out in our hearts, we will strive to be of one mind. Jesus prayed for His disciples to be one. The apostle Paul told the saints at Corinth that there should be no divisions among them, and that they all should speak the same thing. Peter tells us that we are not only to be of one mind, but to have compassion for one another, to love as brethren, be pitiful, and to be courteous. What a different world we would have if this teaching was put into practice! **Verse 9**—If the verse we have just considered was put into practice, we would not have what Peter speaks of in the first part of this verse. Obey the Word and you will have God’s blessings.

A WORLDWIDE NEED—I Thessalonians 3:12—The Lord make you to increase—This lesson has dealt with the thought of our loving one another as brethren. Peter points out here that our love is not just for other saints, but it is to be shown to all men. He also points out that our love is to increase.

CONCLUSION

Love is something taught throughout the Bible, especially in the New Testament. The “Great Commandment” is found in both: “And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength” (Mark 12:30). It is safe to say that the more we love God, the more we will love one another. The love chapter (I Corinthians 13) tells us some of the things love does for us. One of those is: “Love never fails.”

FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION

1. Why is love so important in living the Christian life?
2. What is the meaning of the Greek word *agapao*?
3. Can a person really love in word alone (I John 3:18)?
4. What is the connection between love and unity?
5. What is the fulfilling of the law? †

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DEALING WITH CHANGE

2016 Cayman Convention Message by Bro. Harley McClung



I AM VERY thankful for the opportunity to be in Cayman again. I appreciate Bro. James in extending to me an invitation to be here, and you have greeted us very warmly. We appreciate it so much. We like to be where we're wanted. I don't want to be where I am not wanted. You have made us feel very, very glad that we're here. It's a good thing to come where it's warm.

I left West Virginia on Monday morning about three o'clock. We had snow on the ground. It was very, very cold, and my son sent a text to me yesterday morning and said that it was 17 degrees. So you people here might have some concerns and worries, but you don't have any cold weather. God has blessed you. He has given you so many, many blessings. Many times people worry and fret over this or that, but a lot of people have situations that they deal with, too. Sometimes it seems like the devil wants to make our situations so big; but in reality, every one has his problems and situations.

If you're in sin tonight, you have problems, because the way of a transgressor is hard. You might not realize how hard you're having it, but if you would come over to the other side, you could clearly see how much better it would be. The devil has people blinded in sin so that they really believe they have the good life, when in reality, they have it so hard. So we're here to do our little bit to try to help you to understand that you need to make a change in your life.

Come over to the good side if you haven't already. Get in this race that will yield to you one day that great and wonderful crown, that crown of achievement, that crown that you can have and hold throughout the ceaseless ages of eternity. You can be rewarded so greatly. If you're not willing to come over to the Lord's side, you're going to receive some rewards, too, but those rewards are not going to be to your delight. They're going to be harsh. They, too, are going to be greater than anyone's expectation. So, we want to try to convince and to persuade you to change over from living that life of sin, and to come over to live the good life.

If you have your Bibles, I invite you to turn with me to Romans, chapter 12, verse 2: "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." I would like to entitle my thoughts, "Dealing with Change." Notice what Paul said in this scripture. He said that we are not to be conformed to this world. The world has people so blinded, so wrapped up. People's hearts are so entwined with the world, and they love the world. When they love the world, the love of the Father is not in them. Make no mistake about it. You cannot serve two masters. You must either serve almighty God, or you are going to serve the world. No other way about

it, now. There is one or the other. To be on God's side, you have to give up the world. So Paul has said, "We are not to be conformed, not to pattern our lives after the world, but we are to be transformed."

TRANSFORMED

The word *transformed* means, "changed." The only way you can change is to have a renewing of your mind. Listen to me: Do you know why a lot of people won't change, even when they come into a house of worship? They hear the truth of the gospel preached, they see the reasoning that God does with them, but they come to the service with a set mind, "They're not going to change me. I'm going to listen to the music. I'm going to listen to the message, but they're not going to change my mind." Do you know what happens? They don't change. I've already said that if you're not willing to get off the devil's side and get over on the Lord's side, you're in great danger. It's a serious, serious matter.

We have to have our mind changed and have it changed for a reason, a purpose; that is, so that we can prove or discern what is good, what is acceptable, and what is the perfect will of God. Do you know what the perfect will of God is? The perfect will of God is that none should perish, but that all should come to repentance. By the help of the Lord, I'll have more to say about that in a moment.

Well, let me say to you that it is a difficult thing for people to change. It's proven. Quite frankly, sometimes I find it a bit amusing. Last night I came into service, and I went over to greet Bro. Norman and Sis. Virginia. I said to Sis. Virginia, "I was here three years ago, and you sat in that very place." She said, "Yes, I sit here all the time. I don't move."

I went over to get my lunch, so after lunch I had to go back to the church, because I left my glasses there after prayer meeting. Cleaning was being done. As I was going out, there were Bibles on the pews, so I said to one of the ladies, "These Bibles are here to mark people's places?" "Oh, yes! That's where they sit. No one is going to take their place." People don't want to change. It's hard to get people to change.

I have a little story here from "Winds of Change" by Tony Llewellyn—

A lady sat in my seat in church just the other day. She's a very nice person. In fact, she's a good friend. And I can easily sit somewhere else. No big deal. But I like my seat. It's on the right just as you enter the church sanctuary. It's nice because I can rest my arm on the end. It's a good seat, but I wouldn't raise a fuss over something as unimportant as a seat, and I never hold a grudge. Actually, it was just three months ago she took my seat and I have no idea why. I've never done any-

thing to her. I've never taken her seat, or anything that belonged to her. And now I suppose I'll have to come to church an hour early just to get my seat. You know, I think she took it deliberately, because it's one of the best seats in the house. And she had no business taking it, and I don't see why I should have to go to church two hours early just to get what's rightfully mine! This is the way great social injustices begin: inconsiderate people taking other people's seats!

IT IS HARD TO CHANGE

Now listen: It's a hard thing for people to change; saints and sinners alike. I'll tell you something tonight, there are some things about Bro. Alvin that you will never get him to change on. There are some things about Bro. James that you won't get him to change on, either. But I want to tell you something else, too, there are some things you're not going to get me to change on. That's the way with all of us.

Dear Sinner Friends, it is a hard thing for you to change from a life of sin to come over to the Lord's side. It is. How do I know? I was there once, and I know how many messages I heard. I know how many services I attended. I know what it really was to change. It's a very difficult thing. As a matter of fact, we find that there have been studies on human behavior—on how difficult it is to get people to change. It is well-documented.

This is from the Internet. A person by the name of Sam Thomas Davies said—

We all want to improve our health, our wellness and our happiness. But in order to achieve our goals, we need to break bad habits and form good ones that actually stick. Yet despite our good intentions, we often fail to act on them. There's no doubt about it: change is hard. And no matter how hard we try to change, the comforts of eating sugary snacks, shopping and online surfing are difficult to resist. People try everything, but despite our unremitting effort to change, many return to our vices and with greater voracity. Why do we fail to break bad habits? To answer that question, one needs to look at our perceived ability to judge one's impulsive behaviors. The illusion of self-control promotes bad behavior. Restraint bias is common; one thinks, I can resist temptation, but when a person has an inflated self-control belief, that person is exposed to greater temptation and increased impulsiveness. Now, that's science.

One of the reasons why, and it's a big one, people have a difficult thing to change is because there's an adversary in the world. Satan is real. He does not want to let go his subjects. He has all the intelligence, all the years of experience on how to hold on to his subjects. Yes, he does! He knows your weaknesses. He knows your frailty and how to hold on to you. He knows how to keep you from thinking like you ought to, to come over on the side that's good for you. He capitalizes on it every way he can. So tonight, I want you to know that it is a difficult thing for you to change if you're in sin; but it's for your well-being, if you will change.

If we're on the Lord's side, we should never, ever, ever change. There are some things though that we need to change, but other things we shouldn't change. If you're on God's side, never change from being on His

side. You're on the winning side. I like to be on the winning side. You want to be on the winning side, because on the winning side is where we ultimately then can meet the goal, or go to the place where we're striving to obtain. You should never, ever compromise. Let me tell you something, as I've said before, Satan is trying to get people to change; not to go higher, but to let down.

CHANGING FOR THE BETTER

The apostle Paul said, "We need to grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." We need to come on up, go on to higher ground. All the time we need to have more knowledge than we've had before. If we have knowledge, we have more light, and we have more blessings by which to walk in. We will have more of God to help us. In tough times, and in all times, we need God. We need God! Dear Sinner, if you're here without God, you need God, because you're "in perilous times," Paul said.

Jesus came to seek and to save the lost, at least, the ones who would be changed. Again, not every one will be changed. Jesus' disciples came to Him one time and said, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" Do you know what Jesus said? "Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." You have to be converted; you have to be changed. You have to get out of that old life and come over to the new life. We need to leave the kingdom of darkness and come to the place where we are in God's kingdom. We need to change. The word *convert* means, "to turn one's manner of living to another manner of living." We need to leave the kingdom of darkness and come over to the kingdom of God's dear Son. Listen to me, that is a great change! In darkness, there is obscurity in your way of thinking. You really can't comprehend. You can't understand what's good for you. You need to come over into the kingdom of God's Son, where there is life, where there is the beauty of God's understanding. We can have it there for us, on a daily basis, to show us what is good for us, where to go, and how to get there.

On another occasion, there were some people who came to Jesus. They said, "Jesus, Pontius Pilate took some blood and mingled it with the sacrifices of the Galileans." Do you know what Jesus said? "Suppose ye that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." The word *repent* means, "to change." It doesn't mean *just to be sorry*. A lot of people are sorry, but they really don't come through to really repent. They don't change the direction of their travel. They don't get off the broad way and on to the strait and narrow way. They were sorry they got caught, not sorry that they did the deeds.

We have to come to the place where we are "godly" sorrowful. We are genuinely sorry that we have broken the laws of almighty God, and we are so condemned in that action that we're willing to change. Change from the kingdom of darkness, the broad way that leads to destruction, and get over into the strait and narrow way, where we can be blessed of almighty God. Again, change is difficult, but if you want to go to heaven, you

have to change. I'm being true to you tonight. I know you don't want to go to hell. You know you don't want to go to hell. You want to go to heaven; but if you want to go to heaven, then you have to get on the road that leads to heaven. You can't go to heaven on the broad way. It's going to destruction. It's headed for hell. You need to get over on the strait and narrow way, the way that is going to lead you to eternal glory. You know, too, it is because God has requirements.

CHANGE IS A PART OF LIFE

Do you know there are requirements in all walks of life? It seems like people readily accept a lot of requirements. As I approached the airport and came through customs here, there was a big sign that listed requirements for visitors coming to your fair island, and it stated what would happen if we didn't meet those requirements. We'd go to jail. Well, I accepted that. I don't want to go to jail, and I'm not going to break any of those requirements. Well, God has requirements, too; and if you want to get along with God and want to go where He is, you are going to have to meet the requirements. You're going to have to surrender to His requirements. His requirements are: to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with God. That's one of the reasons why so many people won't change. It is because they're not willing to humble themselves to God. They're not willing to surrender their will to God's will.

Heaven is a holy place, filled with glory and with grace; and sin is not going to go there. It will stop you at the door, bar you out forevermore. Sin is not going to go to heaven. If God allowed sin into heaven, it would make heaven less than heaven is. It would make heaven like this world is, and God's not going to allow that. No! Dear Ones, if you want to go to heaven, you have to get rid of sin and the sin business. You have to change and come over to the holy way; the way that is free from sin. Let's be clear: what requirements God has will never change. No, there is no such thing as a modern religion. The Word of God is forever settled in heaven. It will not change. "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever" (Hebrews 13:8). Malachi 3:6 says, "I am the Lord, I change not."

Sin is repulsive to God. If you're living in sin, let me give you a description of how repulsive that is to God: Jesus was hanging there on the cross, giving His life's blood. That was for you, Sinner. That was for me. Jesus was hanging there with you on His mind. He was hanging there for you. He wanted to pardon your sins. He was carrying your sins there on Calvary. Jesus was writhing in pain and agony. He came to a place where His Father turned His back on Him. He said, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Because sin was repulsive to God. Don't you think for a minute that you can continue a life of sin and ever go to where Jesus Christ is. It's not going to happen. If you want to go to heaven, you have to get rid of sin and the sin business. Sin is repulsive to God. Again, I've been there, and I understand how difficult change is; but change, you must!

We find a people who were so resistant to Jesus' teachings. He told them what I am telling you tonight, and they crucified Him. They didn't crucify Him for His good works. They didn't crucify Him for healing the

sick. They didn't crucify Him for helping the poor, for feeding the multitudes. They crucified Him because of His words, because of His doctrine, and because He told them that they needed to leave a life of sin if they wanted to be a part of His kingdom. They didn't want to be a part of His kingdom. They wanted to live their lifestyle. They didn't want to change.

We see the same element in the world today. We have conventions and revivals. We put forth effort. There's great amount of prayer that has gone up for you, Sinner. There are people who have fasted. There are people who went through travail for you to try to get you to change. Yes, we see the same element in the world today. Many times when people put forth an effort to try to help people to change, what they face is persecution, because Jesus said, "If they persecuted Me, they're going to persecute you, too." That is the very fact of the matter.

Paul, too, encountered persecution. While he was preaching in Thessalonica, there were some people who came to Jason (the man in authority), and said, "You know, this man is trying to turn our world upside down." That is what people really think when we're trying to get them to change. "Oh, you're turning my whole world upside down." No, we're trying to get you, like Jesus and Paul were, to get your world right side up. We're trying to get you in the right place, in a place where you can live the good life. Then you can relate to what all that was sung here in the song service. You can raise your hand and relate to what is being sung. You can have that glory in your soul.

THE WORD OF GOD WILL CHANGE YOU

The Word of God will change a person. The Word of God changes a person. That is why the apostle Paul said, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation." The gospel of Christ works a revolution in a man's heart. It creates a great disturbance. It brings conviction to the guilty sinners; not to subvert, but to *convert* (change); not to destroy, but to *save*. The blood of Jesus Christ washes away sin, and when that happens, there is a great change in an individual. He no longer has sin in control. Now he has God in control. There is a great change when God comes into a heart! It is the heart that controls us. "Out of it are the issues of life" (Proverbs 4:23). There's a great change. Who changes? The mighty, the educated, the proud, the self-righteous. They become as little children. The rich and influential seek entrance into the kingdom of God. Seekers of position and power now seek to be servants. Salvation changes one's purpose and passion. It really does! Salvation changes one's vision.

The writer of "Amazing Grace," John Newton, said, "I was blind, but now I see. My eyes are opened. I see the glory and the good of almighty God." You need to have this vision. You need to have this understanding, because the Bible clearly says that without this vision, people perish. You don't want to perish. You need to have a vision. Listen, whenever you change from the devil's side and come over to the Lord's side, there's a great change. Your eyes are going to be opened. Your understanding is going to be clear of what is really good for you. It's true that the gospel and salvation bring a great change. That is why Paul said, "If any man be in

Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." Sinner Friend, you might be thinking even more than what I've already said, "Why, why, do I want this change?" Well, I'll give that to you. That's a good question, and you need to fully examine why you need this change. You need to search your heart and your life. You need to actually look at someone who has made the change and see how good he has it.

Jesus told us about a man who began looking on the other side. He saw how other people had such great value. He had possessions and started giving due consideration to them. Jesus said, "The kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy [Listen to me.] thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field." Why? Because there was great treasure in there. "Again the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls: Who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it." Because you see, he saw the value. He saw that whatever he was giving up was just trivial compared to what he was getting.

YOU NEED TO CHANGE MASTERS

Tonight, you can make the change from a life of sin and come over to a life of servitude to the Good Master, the One who loves you. He loved you so much that He gave His life's blood to purchase you, to pardon you, to free you, to give you the good life, and the hope that anchors your soul through the ceaseless ages of eternity, let alone time; but again, change is hard. I get that; I understand that change is hard.

The problem why so few are willing to change to God's way is that they don't comprehend the benefits. Let me say to you, you can't do that on the devil's side. You need to come over to have that experience. You can't really taste of God's benefits over here in the life of sin. You have to leave that before you can get a taste. That's why the Psalmist said, "O taste and see that the Lord is good," but you have to taste. You have to try it out. You have to come over and make the change. Give it a chance. Let God give you just a little taste. Give Him a chance. Make the change tonight.

Many put greater emphasis on the temporal instead of the eternal soul, but this merchant man of whom I spoke of, put great emphasis on his soul. If you are unwilling to make the change, you are considering your soul of very low value. A great mistake! This merchant man was willing to give all because he put the proper value on his soul. Listen to me: The soul is the most valuable thing you have. That's why we read, "What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"

*All this world, its wealth and honor,
Cannot sate the human breast;
But when filled with God, our Father,
Every want is fully blest.*

*My soul is satisfied,
My soul is satisfied;
I am complete in Jesus' love,
And my soul is satisfied.*

Why is my soul satisfied? Because I made the change. Your soul can be made completely satisfied if you're willing to make the change. Change is hard, I know, but it is not impossible. What you have to do is to step out and take a little bit of God's Word and believe it. Step out on His promises, or step out and just taste it for yourself and see that the Lord is good.

THE PRODIGAL SON CHANGED

The merchantman who gave up all he had so that he could have the Pearl of Great Price, gave up the way of destruction to follow the Good Shepherd. He gave up the worldly pleasures for joy unspeakable and full of glory. He gave up darkness, and he gained a lighted pathway. He gave up doubt to obtain trust. He gave up strife to be at peace with God and man. He sold the state of poverty to purchase great riches. He left sorrow and came to a life of bliss. He went from weariness to the place of complete rest. He left the husks. Yes, he left the husks and came back to his father's house. You know the story—

A certain man had two sons. One came to his father and said, "Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me." Quite presumptuous! Every one of us want all that we can get. We actually have expectations of "give me, give me, give me." We actually expect God to give us, give us, give us. At one time, all of us were prodigals. All of us went away from Father's house. Sinner, you are away from Father's house. The Bible said that this young man took all of the substance that his father had given him.

God has given us many blessings. Look around! Bro. Shippy preached beautifully yesterday, and he reminded us of what it was like in the yesterdays. None of us came here today riding a horse. None of us had to ride a bicycle. God has given us beautiful transportation. He has satisfied our mouths with good things to eat. He has blessed us richly. He has given us so many blessings.

Dear Sinner Friend, God has blessed you, too. What are you using His blessings for? Are you living a riotous life? The prodigal son went into a far country and wasted his life on riotous living. Listen to me: "Sin will take you farther than you want to go, Slowly but wholly taking control; Sin will keep you longer than you want to stay; Sin will cost you far more than you want to pay." That's why you need to make a change; that's why you need to get off the road that is costing you so much and leading you to places where you really are having to partake of meager means. This young man found himself feeding hogs. Quite despicable for a Jewish man, but hungry. He thought about filling his belly with the husks that the swine ate; but thank God, God was true to him.

God is true to you, Sinner Friend. He is true to you. God is trying to bring you to your senses. God brought the prodigal to his senses. He said, "I know what I will do. I'll make a change. I'll change this status now because this is no good for me. I don't like it here. I don't want the husks. I want something that is so much better for me. I'm going back to father's house."

Do you know what the prodigal found whenever he started back? He found a father there with open arms.

If you are willing to make a change tonight, that's what you will find. You'll find Jesus. He'll give you good things to eat. He'll give you manna from heaven. He'll put the best robe on you—the white robe of righteousness. He'll bless you far more than this feeble minister can teach you, but you have to make the change. You have to step out.

As I've already said, Satan is real. He's your adversary. He's doing everything to keep you from making the change. He's holding on to you. He's trying to tell you in your ears that you would make a mistake, but he's a liar. Remember, he's the father of lies. He's not telling you the truth. You need to step out. The prodigal came back to father's house, and he traded bondage for freedom. That's what Jesus is offering you—freedom! Freedom from sin's tyranny and bondage. The prodigal gave up death and gained eternal life.

My Friends, can you see the benefits of making a change? I truly, truly hope so. Yes, as I've already said, it's very difficult to change. Make no mistake about it, but change you can, because God is there to help you. Not only is God there to help you, but every one of us. We will help you with everything we possibly can, and God will give to you the grace and the power. All you need to do is to take the step.

I know as people get older, it is so much harder. It is so much harder for them to change. One man told me that being in church for 40 years, he could count on his fingers the older people that he saw saved. Why? Because as people get older, the more set they are in their ways. It is harder then for them to change. It's very difficult to teach old dogs new tricks. If you want to go to heaven, change you must. Let me tell you, today you are the youngest you will ever be again in your life. Even though you might be up in years, you can still change today. God's mercy is extended. He wants you to make the change. The devil is trying very hard to keep you from making that change.

CONCLUSION

Jesus said in Revelation 3:20, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." Anyone! "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely" (Revelation 22:17). Young and old. It makes no difference.

Paul was a mighty apostle, because he tried to change people's hearts. He was apprehended. They would have actually killed Paul, but because he was a Roman, he made an appeal to Caesar. Before he went to Caesar, he stood before Agrippa and made his appeal. So eloquently did he preach to Agrippa. Paul told Agrippa all the things that God had done for him, how God had changed him, how He brought him over to the kingdom, and now he was so blessed. King Agrippa said to Paul, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian."

Sinner Friend, almost is not good enough. You must be all together persuaded in order to make the change. Almost is but to be lost. You must change. You must change the way you think, you must change your heart, change the way you're traveling, and you must change your master. Therefore, knowing the terror of the Lord,

I stand before you, and I am trying to persuade you to change.

We're going to offer you an invitation song. We're going to sing "Almost Persuaded."—

*"Almost persuaded" now to believe;
"Almost persuaded" Christ to receive;
Seems now some soul to say,
"Go, Spirit, go thy way,
Some more convenient day
On Thee I'll call."*

*"Almost persuaded," come, come today;
"Almost persuaded," turn not away;
Jesus invites you here,
Angels are ling'ring near,
Prayers rise from hearts so dear,
O wand'rer, come!*

*"Almost persuaded," harvest is past!
"Almost persuaded," doom comes at last!
"Almost" cannot avail;
"Almost" is but to fail!
Sad, sad that bitter wail,
"Almost," but lost!"*

Dear Ones, please be willing to be persuaded tonight. Make the change, and on the authority of God's Word, and all witnesses here who have made that change, we can make a promise that you'll never be sorry.

Let us stand. †

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THE CHILDREN'S CORNER



THEY FLY AWAY

A Bible Lesson by Sis. Rebecca Bland

SPRING had come at last to our little farm on the hill. We children happily left our heavy winter stockings and shoes in the closet and ran barefoot out into the yard, where the gusty March wind blew our hair into our eyes and our skirts around our knees.

After we had played for a little while, we heard our mother's voice from the back porch. "Come get these clothes and hang them up on the line," she called. "As windy as it is today, they should be dry in no time."

We ran to get the laundry basket, and we helped each other hang the clothes on the long clothesline that stretched across the backyard. We wrestled the wind for control of the sheets and towels, pushing the clothespins down as far as they would go to anchor the clothes firmly on the line. As we ran back to the house with the empty laundry basket, we could hear the clothes flapping on the line behind us, tugging to free themselves from the clothespins.

We played for awhile longer outside, and then ran to the house when our mother called us for lunch. Anxious to spend more time outside in the beautiful spring weather, we rushed through our lunch and then started on the dishes without even being reminded.

"Go check on the clothes," Mom said to me after we had finished the dishes. "They're probably dry already."

I ran outside to the clothesline, and then stopped short in surprise. There was a big gap in the clothes that were hanging on the line. I turned and ran back into the house. "Mom!" I said. "One of the sheets is missing from the clothesline!"

"Well, go find it!" she said. "It's got to be out there somewhere!"

I went back outside and looked again, but the sheet was nowhere to be seen. In a few moments, I was joined by my mother, who was as perplexed as I was. "Well, of all things!" she said. "Something that big ought to stick out like a sore thumb!" But the sheet was gone.

"We'd better take the rest of the clothes down before they disappear, too," she said. I ran to the house for the laundry basket, and we hurried to take the clothes from the line.

I was folding towels in the living room a short time later when I happened to look out of the large front window. To my surprise, I saw something white lying in the middle of the road that ran past our front yard. I ran to the window for a better look. "Mom!" I called. "I see the sheet! It's out in the road!"

"In the road!" she exclaimed. "How can that be?" She thought for a moment. "The only way it could have gotten there was for it to fly right over the roof of the house!"

I ran to retrieve the sheet before it could be run over by a car. In my mind's eye, I could picture the large white sheet sailing over the house and coming to rest on the road. There wasn't a lot of traffic on that road, but what if a car had been passing by at that very moment? I smiled to myself as I imagined the shocked look on the driver's face. No one expects to see a sheet flying through the air in front of him as he drives down the road!

My father smiled, too, when my mother told him the story that evening. "Well," he said, "it does get windy up here on this ridge. That wind was powerful today, even down in the valley where I was." He shook his head. "It still is pretty amazing. All of the clothespins must have come off at the same time!"

I've never forgotten the day the sheet flew over our house. It was a story we laughed about for a long time. But sometimes when things fly away, it's not funny at all. People can go through hard times, losing their health or their money or a job they enjoy. That is why the Bible tells us we should not set our affection on things of this earth. That means we should not care more about our earthly possessions than we do about our souls.

In Proverbs 23:5 we read, "Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not? for riches certainly make themselves wings; they fly away as an eagle toward heaven."

Jesus once told a story about a rich farmer who rejoiced in his earthly possessions and ignored his soul. As this farmer was planning for the harvest, he realized he would have more crops than he'd ever had before. "I will pull down my barns and build greater barns," he said to himself. "And then I will just take it easy for a long, long time. I will eat, and drink, and be merry, enjoying all the riches I have gathered for myself!"

Just then, a voice from heaven called to the farmer. "Thou fool!" the voice of God said. "Tonight, your soul will be required of you. You will leave this world and go into eternity. Then who will have your riches?"

In this story, Jesus reminded us that we had nothing when we came into this world, and that we can take nothing with us when we leave this earth. The wisest decision we can make is to give our souls into God's keeping, and then to labor for Him for as long as we live. In this way, we will lay up treasures in heaven. Our heavenly treasures will never fly away!

Activity

Jesus said that we should lay up treasures in heaven, because nothing can take those treasures away from us. He gave three examples of things that sometimes happen to earthly treasures, but that cannot happen to treasures laid up in heaven. Can you find those three examples? (HINT: The answer is found in the first gospel book of the New Testament.)

Answers to Last Month's Activity

There's a little chorus we sometimes sing about how to find joy ... **true** joy. Were you able to fill in the missing words?

J - O - Y, J - O - Y,

This is what it means:

Jesus first,

Yourself last,

And **o**thers in between. †

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE KINGDOM AND THE CHURCH

By G. E. Tyler



“And when he was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come, he answered them and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you.”—Luke 17:20, 21.

THERE SEEMS to be much confusion in the religious world on the subject of the kingdom of God. Most of it concerns the mesmerizing glorification of a literal kingdom being established on this earth by misapplication of symbols in the book of Revelation, and the effort to appeal to the natural desires of the flesh. In this article, I am not going to deal directly with the fallacy of the doctrines of the rapture and a future millennial kingdom of 1,000 years duration. Rather, I want to emphasize Christ’s teaching that the kingdom of God is a present reality, showing His establishment of the Church of God, and revealing the relationship between the kingdom and the church. An understanding of the similarity between the kingdom of God and the Church of God will dispel any myths about a millennial reign and enable God to reveal a vision of the singular nature of His church.



What the Kingdom of God is NOT

To comprehend what the kingdom of God is, I first want to state what the Bible says it is not. The kingdom of God is not an earthly literal kingdom. Romans 14:17 says distinctly, “For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.” Let that filter through any misguided perceptions you may have had previously. “For the kingdom of God is NOT meat and drink ...” It does not pertain to the natural man. It is not an earthly kingdom. Notice also our text in Luke 17:20, 21, “And when he was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come, he answered them and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you.” This is not complicated, Dear Reader! One cannot behold the kingdom of God with the natural eye. It is not physical. It is “within you.” I’ll have more to say about that momentarily.

Furthermore, the kingdom of God is not of this natural world. The Lord Jesus was brought before Pilate and very clearly set forth this truth in John 18:33-39, “Then Pilate entered into the judgment hall again, and called Jesus, and said unto him, Art thou the King of the Jews? Jesus answered him, Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee of me? Pilate

answered, Am I a Jew? Thine own nation and the chief priests have delivered thee unto me: what hast thou done? Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence. Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice. Pilate saith unto him, What is truth? And when he had said this, he went out again unto the Jews, and saith unto them, I find in him no fault at all.” No other authority than Jesus Christ proclaimed, “My kingdom is not of this world.”

What the Kingdom of God IS

Mark 1:14, 15 reads, “Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel.” *The kingdom of God is a present reality!* The time was fulfilled in the ministry of Christ Jesus and He said it was “at hand,” at that very moment—not way out in the future. He preached, in essence, that if a person repented and believed what He was preaching that the person would immediately enter the kingdom of God. And every individual who meets those conditions enters into that same kingdom. There is only one kingdom of God. Remember that as we proceed.

I refer again to Luke 17:20, 21, “And when he was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come, he answered them and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you.” *The kingdom of God is a spiritual kingdom!* It is within you. It is not observed as a natural kingdom. The Bible says so!

Also, the kingdom of God is not limited to the duration of 1,000 years. *The kingdom of God is an everlasting kingdom.* Once it was established by Christ and the Apostles after Him, it has no end. When Daniel was a captive in Babylon, King Nebuchadnezzar had a dream in which he saw an image which had a head of gold, breast and arms of silver, belly and thighs of brass, legs of iron, feet part of iron and part of clay. Then the king saw a stone that was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces. Daniel told the king the dream and its interpretation. Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonian kingdom was this head of gold. Daniel said that after thee shall arise another kingdom inferior [Medo-Persian], and another third kingdom of brass [Grecian kingdom of Alexander the Great], which shall bear rule over all the earth. And the fourth kingdom shall be strong as iron [Roman kingdom]. Then Daniel says in chapter 2, verse 44, “And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever.” It was during Roman rule that Jesus came and set up His kingdom, and it shall stand forever!

Comparisons Between the Kingdom and the Church

Now, I would like to make some comparisons between the kingdom of God and the Church of God, hoping that the reader will grasp that they are essentially one and the same.

Firstly, notice that *the entrance into the kingdom of God is identical to entrance into the Church of God*. To enter the kingdom, one must be born again or saved. John 3:1-7, "There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him. Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born? Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again." Who can deny that the new birth is the mode of entrance into the kingdom of God? And every one who is born again is in the one kingdom of God. A translation takes place in the new birth. Colossians 1:12-14, "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." So every one who is born again is redeemed and forgiven of his sins.

Now, how does one become a member of the Church of God? One must be saved. Acts 2:47, "Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved." This is the only way into the church—be saved, born again, redeemed, forgiven. So the mode of entrance into the Church of God is identical to the mode of entrance into the kingdom of God.

Furthermore, *the body of membership in the kingdom of God is identical to the body of believers who make up the Church of God*. God has one kingdom and only the born again makes up its membership. God has only one church and only the redeemed are in it. Those who are born again and the redeemed are one and the same. Acts 8:12 shows that those who believed entered the kingdom of God and were baptized—"But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women." When the Philippian jailer asked the question, "What must I do to be saved?" he was told, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." He believed and was baptized the same night. Jesus said in Matthew 16:18 that He would build His church. How? By adding to the church daily such as should be saved. All who are genuinely saved are members of the one and selfsame church. All the redeemed are in her.

Think about this—*the King of the kingdom is identical to the Head of the Church of God*. I already mentioned that Pilate asked Jesus, "Art thou a king then?" Jesus answered, "Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice" (John 18:37). Jesus Christ is the King of the kingdom of God. The apostle Paul confirmed this in I Timothy 1:17, "Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen." Jesus is referred to as the "King of kings" (I Timothy 6:15).

Jesus is also the Head of the church—Colossians 1:17, 18, "And he is before all things, and by him all things consist. And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence." This is confirmed in Ephesians 5:23, "For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body." So the very same One who heads up the church is also Head or King of the kingdom.

As we continue our effort to show the reader that the kingdom and the church are virtually identical, consider the fact that *the regulations which rule the kingdom are identical to statutes which govern the Church of God*. The law of the kingdom of God is the Word of God. Isaiah 8:20, "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." Also, the statutes which govern the church are the very same scriptures. I Corinthians 15:3, 4, "For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures." There are not two separate sets of laws governing the kingdom and the church. Only the Bible.

Also, *the duration of the kingdom is identical to everlasting nature of the church*. As previously stated the duration of the kingdom of God is not a mere 1,000 years or 1,007 as some teach. It shall stand forever! II Peter 1:11, "For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." It is an everlasting kingdom. The Church of God will exist forever. Ephesians 3:21, "Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen." World without end—that is forever. Paul said in Ephesians 3:14, 15, "For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named." The family of God is the Church of God and the church is on earth and in heaven. We know heaven is forever. When a saint dies, he simply changes his address from earth to heaven.

Finally, *the kingdom which Christ will deliver to the Father in the last day is identical to the church He will deliver to the Father at the last day!* I Corinthians 15:24, "Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power."

Compare that scripture with this—Ephesians 5:25-27, “Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.” Who can deny that the kingdom of God and the Church of God are one and the same?

Conclusion

This brief essay is more than just an exercise in terminology. As I said at the outset, an understanding of the similarity between the kingdom of God and the Church of God will not only dispel any myths about a millennial reign, but also enable God to reveal an understanding of the singular nature of His church. Why do people in general believe in the justification of myriads of churches, accepting the existence of sectarianism as normal, while at the same time acknowledging but one kingdom of God? All pretty much agree there is not a variety of kingdoms of God—rather, only one! Well, when we see the kingdom/church relationship, it dawns on the conscientious mind that as God has one kingdom, so He has one church. If we really grasp the significance of what is revealed in the Scriptures concerning the similarities between the kingdom and the church, I believe it will assist in allowing God to give us a vision of the glorious bride of Christ—the Church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth. †

MISSIONARY PAGE

2016 REPUBLIC OF BENIN NATIONAL CONVENTION REPORT Hego-Tanme

Our national convention began on Wednesday, November 30, and continued through Sunday, December 4. Theme: “In Obedience, There Is Good Reward.” Theme Text: “If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land.”—Isaiah 1:19.

Each morning prayer meeting was held at 5:45. General services as well were held throughout the days.

WEDNESDAY

The first service was opened by Bro. Jean H. Hessou, the host pastor, at 7:00 P.M. Also, this service was dedicated to prayer and exhortation. We thank God for our visiting brethren and ministers from Nigeria.

THURSDAY

10:00 A.M.—Speaker: Bro. Jean H. Hessou. Title: “In Obedience, There Is Good Reward.” Texts: Isaiah 1:16-20; Proverbs 25:12. In his message, he said, “To obey God, you need the Spirit of faith, because God is in heaven and gave us commandments for us to obey.” Bro. Hessou also mentioned the example of Abraham, Noah, and other saints who received good rewards through obedience.

2:30 P.M.—Speaker: Bro. Patrick Fanama. Title: “Obedience Is the Key to the Storehouse of God’s Bless-

ings.” Text: Micah 6:6-8. Excerpts: “Adam and Eve disobeyed God and lost their key by eating the forbidden fruit and were sent out of the Garden of Eden. Saul also rebelled against God’s commandments and did according to his will and not God’s. There are requirements of obedience for all ages.”

7:00 P.M.—Speaker: Bro. John Mosimabale. Title: “Sow in Righteousness and Reap Eternal Life.” Texts: Isaiah 1:18-20; Hosea 10:12, 13. Excerpts: “If you truly sow righteousness, you will reap eternal life. The Israelites received warning from Moses and Joshua, but they chose to disobey. This is the reason why they spent much more time than usual in the wilderness.”

FRIDAY

10:00 A.M.—Speaker: Bro. Bernard Donwawhe. Title: “On Which Soil Are You Building Your House?” Texts: “Matthew 7:24-27; Isaiah 1:18-20. Excerpts: “In life, there are two different grounds: the good and bad ground—obedience and disobedience; the good and bad reward—blessings and cursings. The ground on which you build your house depends largely on the type of reward you will receive.”

2:30 P.M.—Speaker: Bro. Patrick Fanama. Title: “The Bridegroom Is Ready.” Texts: Revelation 19:6-9; Matthew 22:2-10. Excerpts: “Are you ready for the coming of the Bridegroom? In all of God’s creation, man is the only creative being who has left his place. The animals are still in their places. Jesus is the Bridegroom.”

7:00 P.M.—Speaker: Bro. Okereke Ogbonnaya. Title: “Obedience Is the Way to Come Out from Deception.” Texts: Isaiah 1:19; Jeremiah 7:23, 24. This message was divided into two parts: obedience and its rewards—ways to come out of deception. Bro. Okereke stressed that obedience is a command of God, and the same obedience was required right from the Garden of Eden.

SATURDAY

10:00 A.M.—Speaker: Bro. Okereke Ogbonnaya. Title: “A Great Invitation.” Texts: Isaiah 1:18-20; Matthew 11:28-30. In his message, he said that if we received an invitation from our local president of our nation, we will see ourselves as important people. Let us reason together with God and be humble to Him.

2:30 P.M.—This service was a special service, which was divided into three classes: adult, youth, and children.

7:00 P.M.—Speaker: Bro. John Mosimabale. Title: “Search for the Old Paths and Walk Therein.” Texts: Jeremiah 6:16, 17; Genesis 1:26. Excerpts: “The creation of man is different from all other creation. The Bible says, ‘God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him.’ God gave man the ability to think, the will to know, and the power of choice. Man also has the ability to know good from evil, which allows him to decide to choose to follow good or evil.”

We will like to inform you that all the services were blessed with altar calls.

SUNDAY

After our morning devotions, 20 candidates were baptized.

10:00 A.M.—Sunday school classes.

11:00 A.M.—Speaker: Bro. Okereke Ogbonnaya. Title: “Receiving the Word.” Text: I Thessalonians 2:9-16. He said that we must receive the Word of God with an open heart. This has to come with happiness from the receiver.

In this service, ordinations took place, whereby four ministers were ordained: Christopher Akakpo, Isidore Ogoutandi, Richard Hessou, and Antoine Mahoutin Hessou.

7:00 P.M.—Feet-washing and Holy Communion. †

PREPARING SERMONS FOR EFFECTIVE PREACHING

By Bro. Oluwole Josiah

Text: Matthew 13:52

Editor’s Note: *This message was delivered to the ministers gathered at the Church of God Minister’s Meeting in Okposi, Ebonyi State, Nigeria.*

INTRODUCTION:

Certainly, as ministers, God puts in our hearts both the desire to preach and the content of the message, and yet we have our part to play—a part that certainly challenges us.

When one feels God sharing something with him during times of study and meditation in scripture, there is often a desire to share with others through a sermon or a piece of writing. God, who desires to be known, uses our preaching to tell people about His nature, character, heart, mind, and purpose as revealed and embodied in Jesus Christ.

As Martin Luther said, “Beyond all the might and the power of the world and of all creatures, Christ proves his ability to draw the hearts of men to himself through the Word alone.” Our preaching should deliver God’s Word, the gospel, to God’s beloved children.

In emphasizing the importance and power of that type of preaching, Martin Luther said, “The lips are the public reservoirs of the church. In them alone is kept the Word ... Unless the Word is preached publicly, it slips away. The more it is preached, the more firmly it is retained. Reading it, it is not as profitable as hearing it, for the live voice teaches, exhorts, defends, and resists the spirit of error. Satan does not care about the written Word of God, but he flees at the speaking of the Word”—*Luther’s Works*, volume 18, p. 401).

Drawing from above, we see the need to effectively deploy the gift of preaching to the benefit of the church in the harvesting of souls, as well as strengthen by the same means those whose souls have been planted in Zion.

Defining effective preaching—*To be effective* means in part, “having the power to produce a required effect or effects, or producing decided or decisive effect.”

Preaching serves the following purposes:

1. To save souls through the declaration of God’s ultimate love (I Corinthians 1:21). It brings sinners to the point of contrition and initiates repentance (Matthew 3:1-6; John 4:28; Acts 2:37).

2. To encourage and build the church, preparing them for heaven (II Timothy 4:1, 2).

3. To sustain the purity and value of the church through constant reminders (Titus 2:1-10).

4. Generally, preaching reveals God’s will and path for His people. For preaching to be effective, it must completely reveal the will of God and cause the people to understand it (Nehemiah 8:7, 8).

It then follows that effective preaching is the preaching that is designed to achieve the above purposes. If preaching fails to achieve the above, then it is no doubt obviously ineffective.

SERMONS:

Sermons are the preacher’s preaching package. It is the address we make in the capacity of the mouth pieces of God to His people. Although sermons are often spoken, a lot of preparation goes into their preparation if its desired goal is to be met, or if it is to be effective. An effective sermon may be divided into three main parts: preparation, delivery, and evaluation.

Preparation—This is the key. Every successful preacher began with good preparation. To be effective does not come by chance. It is not a stage performance nor a mere talk show. You want results—eternal results—and so you must prepare, and prepare well, whether you are preaching to one or to many.

The following steps will be helpful in preparing for the pulpit:

1. *Study*—The subjects of most sermons often come to us as an idea, an inspiration, and/or a thought which flows into our minds during the period of studying the Word. “Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (II Timothy 2:15).

While our hearts could be flowing with a number of issues, walking in the Spirit makes it easier for God to direct us on what thought is appropriate and necessary for the day.

Many are of the notion that we only study the Bible and nothing more. The broader our knowledge of issues, the better we can address them when they affect members of our congregation.

2. *Prayers*—Praying underscores our dependence on God. If we fail to pray, we will fail to be effective. Jesus is our example in prayer. He spent valuable time praying. We often find ourselves relishing in offering services without giving ourselves to building our personal relationship with God. The rule is: “Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding” (Proverbs 3:5).

3. *Meditation*—This is the period where we are silent before God and ponder on His Word, His church, and His Work. A lot of inspiration is missed when we fail to engage in meditation. The strength of inspiration is drawn from meditation. Message topics can oftentimes be impressed on the heart by the Spirit when we make meditation a cardinal point of preparation in the task of bearing a message before the church. Meditation and study are different. While studying gleans knowledge, meditation allows the soul to feed on the spiritual knowledge to produce faith, deeper understanding, and broader vision.

4. *Notes*—It is important for the sermon bearer to always learn to take notes. Because our memory can be short at times, and because we may forget, it is important for us to jot down what is revealed at the time of meditation and study. This will be a point of reference when delivering the message. In Revelation 1:19, John was asked to write down what he was shown in the vision.

It may not be a habit of mature preachers to stick hard to notes, but the beginner preacher must learn to build his thoughts through his notes. A number of preachers are not focused and often veer off the main issue of their message, but with notes it is possible to stay close to what was revealed without deviating from the course.

5. *Memorize*—When you examine Peter’s preaching in Acts 2:14-36 and Acts 3:12-26, you will observe a large body of text quoting relevant Scriptures. Without adequate memorization, the preacher may have to virtually ponder and pour through Bible pages at every single reference. Preaching can be boring in such situations. But an intermittent interjection of relevant passages from the memory can inject vigor in the delivery of a message.

6. *Audience analysis*—Understanding the need of the congregation is important in being an effective preacher. You may bring a message because it seemed good in your mind, but if that is not the need of the congregation, you may be laboring for nothing. How many times have you heard a preacher say, “I prepared something, but when I got here, God gave me something else to preach”? This is because what we prepared won’t meet the need of the church. That is why as a watchmen, we must be so spiritually involved that God will always give us the proper understanding of the need of the congregation.

Delivery—This is the actual presentation of the message to the congregation.

The following points can determine an effective delivery of the message:

1. *Voice*—The voice mode is often a communication of how serious a message could be. “Cry aloud, spare not,” could depict a serious warning. A soft and a quiet speaking voice could depict calmness, and used as an effort to encourage. It could be conversational, like that of Jesus with the woman at the well in John 4. As a public speaker, all of this could be combined to achieve the desired goals. Do not yell just for the sake of it, and do not be unnecessarily cold or you could transfer that weakness to the congregation as they listen. Mean business and be as enthusiastic as you can be.

2. *Focus on the message*—In an attempt to give preambles and deep backgrounds, many a preacher veer off completely from the main idea and the message. We must learn to stay on the message and ensure we do not bring in too many divergent and unconnected themes that could make listeners lose interest in the message or get more interested in the digression rather than the message. And sometimes “less is more” should be the motto. “When less is more, the content is king and the presenter is the servant.” Long messages should be rare. They do occur a few times. Knowing when to stop is key to effectiveness.

3. *Speak clearly*—Use words easy to be understood, and use vivid examples. Some short stories and parables, as Jesus did, could be deployed to drive the point home. Use the right words for what you mean to say. Courageously use words without leaving trace of ambiguity. It will be unfair to allow for too many questions after preaching. Mean what you say, and say what you mean. If you truly understand your audience, then you must speak to all. If there are those who would need an interpreter, let it be provided.

4. *Apply the sermon*—Let the sermon be applied. After bringing the scripture and explaining its content, the message rests within its application. It involves how that scripture affects the spiritual condition of the listener. When Jesus expounded the parable of the sower, and the parable of the tares, He brought out the implications. Their application is the moral drawn from the stories, which in turn, affect an action on the listeners. Peter told his audience about the prophecies regarding Jesus, stressed that Jesus Christ was actually the Christ, and now it was time for them to turn to God in repentance (Acts 2).

Evaluation—This is measuring the effectiveness of the message or messages. The effectiveness of the preaching therefore can be assessed by seeing whether our preaching has achieved or created the effect desired. We can know this through feedback. Feedback can be immediate or delayed. Feedback helps us to adjust, or correct an error, and improve our work, or it could be a commendation and demands us to sustain our efforts.

1. *Immediate feedback*—Peter’s audience was “pricked in their hearts,” leading them to ask, “What shall we do?”

2. *Delayed feedback*—This could be seen in the lives of the congregation with time.

3. *Testimonies*—People can come up to preachers to express how blessed they were by the sermon. Some may testify in a later service how they were blessed. We must be open to criticism as well.

General tips on preaching:

1. Follow up your messages with fervent prayers. Sometimes the effect of that message may be seen as we labor further on the souls involved.

2. Walk the talk—As preachers of God’s Word, it is important that we do what we preach. People may forget what you preach, but they will never forget what you do. Character is what you do when no one is watching you.

3. Do not use the pulpit to settle scores. Members of your congregation can sense your inclinations and you may lose their trust. This will make your messages ineffective, no matter how well intentioned they may be.

4. Do not be negative all the time or preach down at the congregation. You must love the flock, and you must show it in your preaching. There are times when there is a need for rebukes, yet there must be encouragement as well. You find both in Isaiah one.

5. Preach the truth—Never twist God’s Word to support what you want to say. Always let the Scriptures speak for itself and expound what the original author intended to say.

6. Be patient as you await the fruits of your preaching. Never try to force it, or be discouraged when it appears you are not making progress. Be fervent in prayer and commitment to God. He that winneth souls is wise.

CONCLUSION:

Although preaching dwells in the realms of the gift of prophecy [Ed. Note: Many today consider prophecy and preaching the same.], it is likely that a minister of God should possess this gift. If he lacks it, it may affect his effectiveness. We have a window to request from God what we lack. However, the condition for becoming a minister, which is "apt to teach" should cover this area.

God feeds His children through the preaching of the Word. "Preach the word, be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all long suffering and doctrine" (II Timothy 4:2) was the charge to Timothy, and it is still the charge to all of us today.

This paper is by no means a complete manual for effective preaching of the Word. This is only for us all to digest and work out straight paths for ourselves to ensure our service is acceptable and rewarded.

God bless you all. †



Dear Young People,

Greetings in the name of the Lord. I trust April 2017 finds you on the Lord's side. I have been sharing chapters from Bro. Naylor's book, "Heart Talks," which I feel are so valuable to young people. Below is the next chapter. God bless and keep you!

In His service,

Bro. Greg Tyler

PUTTING CLOUDS OVER THE SUN

From "Heart Talks," by the late C. W. Naylor

A LITTLE BOY was walking down the street rejoicing in the possession of a bright new penny. He was going to buy some candy with it. He could almost taste it already, but just then he dropped his penny upon the sidewalk. An older boy seized it and started off. The little boy began to cry and demanded his penny, but the other boy only laughed derisively. It was a mean trick. It spoiled the whole day for the boy, and ever after when he thinks of the incident, he will have an unpleasant feeling. The older boy put a dark cloud over the little fellow's sun that day, and the shadow will be cast upon him through other days.

A number of persons were sitting in a room talking over a matter. During the conversation one man made a charge against another, comparing him half contemptuously with a man whose conduct had been quite unbecoming. The charge was like a dagger in the man's

heart. He knew it was both untrue and unjust. He was conscious of the uprightness of his conduct. He had always held the other man in high esteem, and to be thus publicly wounded by him was almost unbearable. He made no defense, but he went out of that room with an aching heart, humiliated and wronged. His friend had put a great cloud over his sun. Years have passed, but the darkness of that cloud has not yet all passed away. When he thinks of the injustice, there is still a pang in his heart. He does not feel bitter toward the other; he has forgiven; but the close tie has been broken. He has never since been able to confide in the one who did him such an injury.

A faithful minister had labored for years for souls. He had been successful; he had been a blessing to many. One day a certain person spoke of him half jestingly in a manner that aroused the suspicions of some others who were present. These suspicions grew until they became whispers, and the whispers grew till they became open charges. The minister could not prove them to be false. They hindered his labors. They bowed down his head with sorrow. Someone had put a cloud over his sun and over his name, and for years the dark shadow of it rested upon his life.

How easy it is to put a cloud over someone's sun, to make some life dark that might have been bright! It may seem only a little thing, but sometimes a little cloud can make a dark shadow. We may not see either the cloud or the shadow, but the heart that is darkened both sees and feels. How many times parents, by unkind words or actions, becloud their children's sky! One way in which parents do this is by telling the faults of their children to visitors, in the presence of the children. There is scarcely anything more disheartening to a child than this. He feels humiliated and hurt. He feels, and justly feels, that he has been mistreated. It sinks down into his soul and rankles there. It discourages him, and if it is often repeated he comes not to care if he is at fault. Constant reproof and faultfinding make a child's life gloomy and sad. That is not the way to cure faults; it is the way to make them worse.

I once knew a young saint who had a rich experience of salvation. A certain relative who opposed her religion began finding fault with her and kept doing so at every opportunity. The result was that that young life was beclouded and a deep melancholy settled down over her. Her cheerfulness gave way to sadness and moroseness. The song of joy, once so often upon her lips, was stilled. Someone had put a cloud over her sun, and her life was never what it otherwise might have been.

Children may darken the hearts and lives of their parents. How many times is the mother-heart or father-heart grieved by the conduct of the children! It may be that they are only thoughtless, or they may be disobedient and wilful. Young people, cherish your parents, try to make their lives as bright as you can. They have many cares. These are enough for them to bear without your adding a single one. When you have grown older and they have gone out of your life, you may look back with a pang of regret at the times when you caused their hearts to ache. Brighten their lives while you may; then when you look into the open grave where Father

or Mother is being laid to rest, your conscience will not smite you.

We are told that “no man liveth unto himself.” There is a circle of influence about our lives that affects every other life that we touch. We brighten or darken the lives about us. We lighten or make heavier the burdens of others. Every unkind word or look makes a shadow on some life. Every slighting remark, every sarcastic fling, every contemptuous smile, puts a cloud over somebody’s sun. Lack of appreciation has darkened many a life. How much better it would be to take away the clouds, to banish the gloom! You can do this just as easily as you can bring clouds. It is just as easy to speak kind words as to speak unkind ones, and you will feel much better over it yourself. You can encourage and help, you can speak words of appreciation. When people please you, let them know it. When people do well, or even when they try to do well and fail, you can show that you appreciate their efforts. You can be cheerful and courteous and kind. That will make sunshine for others. There are enough clouds in life at best in this world of sorrow. Be a sunshine-bearer. Drop a little good cheer into every life you touch. No matter what you are by nature, you can form the habit of being cheerful and encouraging. Even when you have heavy burdens yourself, you can be encouraging and helpful to others.

Do not let your troubles be mirrored on your face. One’s face can smile and his words can be cheery if his own heart does ache. I am not writing a mere theory. I know what pain and gloom and heaviness are. I know what burdens are. During the first few months of my illness every one knew how I felt. My face told the story without words. I finally saw that that would not do, and deliberately set to work to get the gloom out of my face and out of my words. You who read what I write know something of my success. You can do the same. †

OUT OF BOX 88

Dear Saints,

Your magazine is a blessing to my soul. I always look forward to receive the next one. It helps keep my eyes focused on things above. You give such good examples on how to live true Christians. We don’t hear much about righteousness or holiness from pulpits around here. ... May God bless you with courage, and blessings towards you all.

—A. M., Maine

Please keep up the good work. I really enjoy reading The Way of Truth magazine. There are so many different topics I like in it, too. Sometimes I keep some and read them again the next year. Sometimes I give them to other people. They enjoy them, too. ... May the Lord bless and keep you safe in His care.

—A. K., Kentucky

Dear Sir,

I thank you sincerely for the July-December 2016 magazines submitted to me. It is true that the light of the gospel will continue to shine unto all men, especially to those of us who have confidence and faith in the message of God to us all. ... I am heartily happy to follow your pattern of gospel teachings.

—J. M., Ghana †

GOD’S REMEDY FOR SIN

By the late R. R. Byrum

IN VIEW of the facts presented in the preceding chapter, it may properly be said that sin exists in two forms—committed and inherited, or actual transgression and a deranged moral nature that gives a tendency to that which is sinful. Because of these two forms of sin man has a *double need* in salvation. He needs salvation from each. He first needs to be justified from committed sins, or, in other words, he needs to be brought into right relationship to God; and, second, he needs right character effected in himself.

Sin in Regenerated a Ground for a Second Cleansing

It has been the common belief of Christians that depravity in some sense remains in believers after regeneration. The most devout Christians of the ages have testified to this remaining depravity after their conversion. And that such is the condition of the converted has also been held by practically all church creeds. ... Dr. Miley in his Systematic Theology says, “That somewhat of depravity remains in the regenerate, or that regeneration does not bring to completeness the inner spiritual life, is a widely accepted doctrine. Indeed, exceptions are so few that the doctrine must be regarded as truly [universally].” ...

But the idea of remaining depravity in the regenerated does not necessarily carry with it the doctrine of a second cleansing from depravity in this life. Many who have strongly held the former have as emphatically denied the possibility of one’s being delivered from this remaining depravity before the hour of death. ...

What are the proofs of sin in believers? ... We call attention first to John 15:1-6, where Jesus describes a cleansing or purging of those who have been converted under the figure of the purging of branches of a vine. A purging of believers implies something in them from which to be purged, and that must be a second cleansing, because all who have believed are already cleansed from committed sins. It will be noticed that the Father is represented as the husbandman, Christ the vine, and men (v. 6) or his disciples (v. 5) branches of the vine. They are said to be “in” Christ (v. 2), and “if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature” (II Corinthians 5:17), or has been regenerated. This is certain. They are not, as some wrongly suppose, merely justified and not regenerated. This is shown, not only because of the last-mentioned text, but also because to be in Christ is to be in his church or kingdom, for “except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God” (John 3:3). [Being “born again” is regeneration.]

Purge as used in this text means to cleanse. The original word, *kathairo*, means, according to the very best Greek authorities, “to cleanse from sin.” The idea that it is a cleansing of the outward life instead of the heart is wrong for the reason that the Scriptures constantly enjoin upon men this cleansing of the life; it is not done by God. ...

That this inner cleansing is referred to is also evident from other parts of Jesus' discourse and prayer recorded in John 14-17, of which this vine figure is a part. It agrees with the prayer for their sanctification (17:17) that they might be kept from the evil of the world. It agrees also with the promise of the baptism of the Holy Ghost, the sanctifier.

Nature of Justification, Regeneration, Sanctification

A definition of this second cleansing from depravity naturally leads to the question of the distinction between regeneration and entire sanctification. What is justification? What is regeneration? and how does it differ from entire sanctification? That a distinction is to be made, not in time but in the nature, between the work of justification and that of regeneration is certain. These two are different in their nature. Justification effects right relations with God; regeneration produces right character in us, enabling us to live right. "It [regeneration] differs from justification in this, that while the latter is an act of grace *for* or *toward* us, the former is a work done *in* us by which our nature is regenerated, the heart renewed and changed, enabling us to love God and his holy law.—Hoke on Holiness. In the words of some of the older theologians, "*Justification is salvation from the guilt of sin, regeneration is salvation from the reigning power of sin, and sanctification is salvation from the indwelling of sin.*" This statement is clear and Scriptural.

But at the very moment a person is justified he needs to be given power over the reigning power of depravity so that he can refrain from at once falling again into sin and thus again incurring guilt. This overcoming of the power of depravity must be either by a complete restoration of the deranged moral nature or by a suppression of its reigning power by the incoming of the greater power. But inasmuch as human nature as now constituted is depraved, and the person who comes to God for justification was depraved in infancy, before he ever committed an imputed sin, it is reasonable to expect that when he comes to God repenting of his sins he should be forgiven and restored to that same state in which he was before he sinned. But it is also reasonable to expect that God will give him power over depravity, to refrain from sinning again. This suppression of depravity is in the Bible called regeneration, or a new birth, receiving a new heart, or becoming a new creature, because of the practical effects resulting in a new manner of life. This reasoning is given to show the possibility of distinguishing between regeneration and sanctification rather than as proof of sanctification as being subsequent to regeneration—of this subsequence the Scriptures furnish the proof.

It would be useless for God to forgive a sinner if he did not thus bring depravity into subjection to the Spirit of God. We have already shown that, though depravity is suppressed, yet it exists in the regenerated. Therefore a subsequent cleansing from this depravity is real, Scriptural, reasonable, and according to normal Christian experience. †

—Chapter IV of *Holy Spirit Baptism and The Second Cleansing* has been condensed for this issue.

April 2017

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Alvin A. Craig, Radio Minister

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