

A stylized illustration of a hand in a light tan color, shown from the side, with fingers slightly curled as if holding and releasing small, light green seeds. The hand is positioned in the upper left quadrant of the cover. The background is a dark grey, textured surface that transitions into a light yellow-green field at the bottom, representing soil. The seeds are scattered across this field, following a path from the hand.

# Sowing the Seed 3

20 Sermon Outlines  
by Wayne Greeson

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# Introduction & Thanks

It's been over 15 years since I put together the first two volumes of *Sowing The Seed*. Those volumes were sermons collected from a number of gospel preachers. I prepared overhead charts for use with an overhead projector for each lesson. The volumes were well received, widely used and are still available for purchase at: <http://www.faith-facts.com/sermons.html>

A lot has changed since then in sermon preparation and presentation with the explosion in the accessibility and use of the personal computer, the internet and presentation software and hardware. Many sermons today are researched on the internet, composed on a computer in a word processor and presentation software, and presented from the pulpit with a computer and an LCD projector. Then the final presentation can be distributed on CD, DVD and the internet.

Fifteen years ago, every sermon I prepared, I prepared an overhead chart or charts to present with the lesson. Today, every sermon I prepare and present is done in and with PowerPoint. Since few, if any, preachers use overhead projectors today, it made no sense to include overhead charts with these outlines and impractical to publish PowerPoint presentations with each sermon. (Complete PowerPoint presentations for each sermon will be available for a small cost per sermon. Please email me for details.) So where do these "low tech" sermon outlines fit into the "high tech" preacher's pulpit arsenal?

Every sermon, no matter how "high tech" and elaborate the presentation must begin with a good foundation of subject, substance and sequence. I pray that these sermons will provide that for you. I wrote all the sermons in this volume. This is not to say that all the thoughts are completely original as I draw from a variety of sources. It is my usual practice to record and attribute any original sources in my sermon notes. I only included sermons in this volume that were not based wholly on or from another source. It is possible that portions of these sermons or an even an entire sermon may have come from another source or author which I did not record at the time the sermon was prepared. Please let me know if you find unattributed material.

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I want to personally thank David Padfield for all his work, help and encouragement. David has built a great and useful website that contains a lot of good material. David has repeatedly asked me to contribute material to the web site. He particularly urged me to compile this sermon outline book. Hopefully, more material will follow. Thank you David.

In the parable of the sower, Jesus proclaimed "A sower went out to sow his seed" (Lk. 8:5). As "the seed is the Word of God" (Lk. 8:11), this raises an important question we must ask ourselves; "Is the seed yet in the barn?" (Hag. 2:19). As the Preacher of Ecclesiastes urged, "In the morning sow your seed, And in the evening do not withhold your hand; or you do not know which will prosper, Either this or that, Or whether both alike will be good" (Eccl. 11:6). Christians must be busy in the kingdom, "Sowing the Seed." I pray and hope that this book will assist you in that divine task.

Yours in Christ,

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# What Jesus Thought of the Scriptures

## Matthew 4:4

**Introduction:** The Bible is a book that no one can ignore. You may scorn it, laugh at it or reject it, but you cannot ignore it. The Bible cannot be ignored because it is not just another book. The Bible is a book that claims to be the Word of God, a revelation from the Almighty Creator, the Key to the mysteries of the Universe, the Owner's Manual to guide our lives.

Those who have rejected the Bible have laughed and scorned it. Some time ago I went to a debate over the question, "Is the Bible the Word of God?" The man who said "No, the Bible is not the Word of God," called the Bible primitive, superstitious, cruel, immoral, blasphemous, contradictory and full of lies. This man could not simply ignore the Bible, he had to realize its claims to be authored by God and either accept or reject them.

I would like us to study the opinion of one person concerning the Bible. This person was not a renown scholar, nor a great historian, nor an author of volumes or of any written text. Yet this person is the most well-known and greatest man who ever lived on this earth. Both his friends and his enemies must recognize the tremendous influence, Jesus Christ the Son of God has had upon our world. Even those who reject Jesus as the Son of God cannot deny his impact upon millions and that his life, influence and teachings serve as the foundation of our modern culture.

What did Jesus think about the Bible? At the time he walked upon this earth, he had what we call the Old Testament which is over two-thirds of our Bible today. What did Jesus say about the scriptures? When we understand his use and opinion of the scripture, we can learn and appreciate the Bible all the more.

### I. From God

#### A. The Bible claims to be from God.

1. The Bible claims to be "inspired by God," that is God gave his message through human authors.
2. Men have debated and argued the inspiration of the Bible down through the years.

#### B. But what did Jesus say concerning the Bible?

1. "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God" (Mt. 4:4).
  - a. Jesus quoted from the Scriptures, Deuteronomy 8:3. Jesus quoted from the Scriptures, Deuteronomy 8:3.
  - b. The scriptures are from God.
  - c. Every word comes from God.
  - d. The scriptures give life because they are from God.
2. "Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled" (Mt. 5:17-18).
  - a. The "yod" is the smallest letter in the Hebrew alphabet.
  - b. The "tittle" is an accent mark like an accent mark.
  - c. Jesus considered the scriptures inspired down even to the smallest "jot" and the "tittle."

3. “The same day the Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to Him and asked Him, saying: ‘Teacher, Moses said that if a man dies, having no children, his brother shall marry his wife and raise up offspring for his brother. Now there were with us seven brothers. The first died after he had married, and having no offspring, left his wife to his brother. Likewise the second also, and the third, even to the seventh. Last of all the woman died also. Therefore, in the resurrection, whose wife of the seven will she be? For they all had her.’ Jesus answered and said to them, ‘You are mistaken, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God. For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels of God in heaven. But concerning the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was spoken to you by God, saying, “I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob”? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living’ ” (Mt. 22:23-32).
  - a. Jesus quoted from the scriptures Exodus 3:6.
  - b. The words were from God to Moses at the burning bush years after Abraham, Isaac and Jacob had died.
  - c. Yet, the scriptures said, “I am the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob,” not “I was their God.”
  - d. Jesus taught that even the tense in the scriptures is from God.

## II. All True

- A. To many people want their Bible to be like their religion “cafeteria style.”
  1. At a cafeteria one picks only what they want to eat.
  2. Far too many want to pick and choose what they want in the Bible and leave the rest.
  3. Example-A preacher was trying to teach a woman about baptism. He told that the Bible says that one must be baptized to be saved in Mark 16:16. She replied, “Not in my Bible.” “Sure it is. Here let me look at your Bible and show you.” Sure enough, it wasn’t there. She had cut out every passage mentioning baptism.
- B. Many people claim to accept Jesus, but reject the Bible.
  1. Such people claim that the Old Testament is filled with myths and legends, such as the Creation account.
  2. What did Jesus say about the Genesis account of Creation?
    - a. “And He answered and said to them, ‘Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning “made them male and female,” and said, “For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh”? So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate’ ” (Mt. 19:4-6).
      - 1) Jesus quoted from the second chapter of Genesis with approval.
      - 2) Jesus asked, “Have you not read?”
    - b. Jesus also referred to the account of Abel. “[T]hat on you may come all the righteous blood shed on the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar” (Mt. 23:35).
    - c. Jesus believed and taught the Genesis account of Creation.
  3. What about the Bible’s account of the Flood in the days of Noah?
    - a. I have talked with those who call the Flood account a myth, but they profess to be Christians.
    - b. Jesus believed and taught about Noah and the Flood just as the scriptures recorded

- the event.
- c. “But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only. But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be” (Mt. 24:36-39).
4. What about Moses?
- a. Many modern day liberal critics claim that Moses did not really write the first five books of the Old Testament. They say that these books were the fictitious works of several priestly writers years after the events they purport to tell about.
  - b. The Master teacher asked, “Did not Moses give you the law?” (Jn. 7:19).
  - c. And again, “For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me; for he wrote about Me” (Jn. 5:46).
5. What about Jonah?
- a. “You don’t really believe that Jonah story about a man being swallowed by a fish, do you?”
  - b. If Jesus believed the Bible, what do you suppose he said about Jonah?
    - 1) “Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered, saying, ‘Teacher, we want to see a sign from You.’ But He answered and said to them, ‘An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. The men of Nineveh will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and indeed a greater than Jonah is here’” (Mt. 12:38-41).
    - 2) Jesus called Jonah a “prophet.”
    - 3) Jesus used the event as a sign of the resurrection. If Jonah was not in the great fish, then Jesus did not really die and was not resurrected.
    - 4) Jesus said the men of Nineveh would stand at the Judgment Day.
6. What about Daniel?
- a. Daniel is one of the most debated and attacked books of the Bible.
  - b. “Therefore when you see the ‘abomination of desolation,’ spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place” (whoever reads, let him understand)” (Mt. 24:15).
  - c. Jesus called Daniel a “prophet.”
  - d. Jesus quoted from what Daniel had written.
7. What about the rest of the Old Testament?
- a. Jesus in his teaching constantly refers to the writings of the Old Testament.
  - b. He referred to almost every period of history recorded in the Old Testament: the creation of man, the institution of marriage, the death of Abel, the days of Noah and the flood, the destruction of Sodom, the history of Abraham, God at the burning bush, the manna in the wilderness, the miracle of the brazen serpent, the wanderings of David, the glory of Solomon, the ministry of Elijah and Elisha, the trip and preaching of Jonah and the martyrdom of Zechariah.
- C. Jesus accepted all of the Bible, not just part of it.
- 1. If one accepts Christ, then they must accept all of the Bible.

2. Jesus said the Old Testament Scriptures were all fulfilled in him.
3. “Then He said to them, ‘O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?’ And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself... Then He said to them, ‘These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me.’ And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures. Then He said to them, ‘Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day’ ” (Lk. 24:25-27, 44-46).

### III. Sole Authority

- A. The Bible cannot simply be a good story book or history from God.
  1. The Bible not only claims to be from God, but also it claims to be the sole authority to guide our lives through this world to the next world.
  2. “How can a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed according to Your word. With my whole heart I have sought You; Oh, let me not wander from Your commandments! Your word I have hidden in my heart, That I might not sin against You! Blessed are You, O Lord! Teach me Your statutes! With my lips I have declared All the judgments of Your mouth. I have rejoiced in the way of Your testimonies, As much as in all riches. I will meditate on Your precepts, And contemplate Your ways. I will delight myself in Your statutes; I will not forget Your word.” (Psa. 119:9-16).
  3. Those men who mock and laugh at the Bible do so not so much from unbelief as they do so from convenience.
    - a. Most atheists are atheists of convenience rather than by conviction.
    - b. They simply do not want to obey and follow God’s Word, they do not want the authority of God’s Word.
- B. What did the Master Teacher teach about the authority of God’s Word?
  1. In questions and disputes?
    - a. Time and again through the Lord’s life, people came to him with questions or trying to entrap him.
    - b. The Lord invariably referred to the Scriptures as the final authority, the infallible standard against which there was no appeal.
    - c. When people came to him with questions his first response would be to answer with “What is your reading of it?” or “Have you not read?”
  2. The question of the Sabbath (Mt. 12:1-7).
    - a. Twice Jesus asked about what the scriptures said.
    - b. “Have you not read about David?” (vs. 3).
    - c. “Have you not read in the Law?” (vs. 5).
  3. The question on Divorce (Mt. 19:1-5).
    - a. Jesus asked, “Have you not read...?” (vs. 4).
    - b. Jesus quoted from two texts to answer the question, Genesis 1:27 and 2:4.
    - c. We can and should settle the question of divorce today in the same way.
  4. The question of Eternal Life (Lk. 10:25-28)
    - a. Jesus began by asking, “What is written in the Law?” (vs. 26).
    - b. He didn’t want to know what men felt or the opinions of men, he wanted to know what the Word said.

5. The question of the Resurrection (Mt. 22:23-33).
  - a. Jesus told those who asked, “You err, not knowing the scriptures or the power of God” (vs. 29).
  - b. “But concerning the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was spoken to you by God, saying...” (vs. 31).
  - c. Jesus emphasized that when they read the scriptures, that was God speaking to them.
- C. Jesus taught the eternal and abiding nature of the authority of God’s Word.
  1. Scripture cannot be broken. “ ‘I and My Father are one.’ Then the Jews took up stones again to stone Him. Jesus answered them, ‘Many good works I have shown you from My Father. For which of those works do you stone Me?’ The Jews answered Him, saying, ‘For a good work we do not stone You, but for blasphemy, and because You, being a Man, make Yourself God.’ Jesus answered them, ‘Is it not written in your law, ‘I said, ‘You are gods’ ’? ‘If He called them gods, to whom the word of God came (and the Scripture cannot be broken)’ ” (Jn. 10:30-35).
  2. The Word of God is sure. It is from Him and it is His authority.
  3. “Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away” (Mt. 24:35).

#### **IV. Relied Upon**

- A. Jesus not only believed taught and followed God’s Word, he depended on it to make it through this life!
  1. During His Temptations
    - a. “For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin” (Heb. 4:15).
    - b. Matthew 4:1-10-Jesus faced all the temptations Satan could muster, armed solely with the Word of God. For each temptation thrust at him, Jesus parried with a counter-thrust with the sword of the Spirit, the scriptures. Three times Satan tried to tempt him, each time the Lord replied, “It is written...”
      - 1) “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God” (vs. 4).
      - 2) “You shall not tempt the Lord your God” (vs. 7).
      - 3) “You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve” (vs. 10).
  2. During His Sufferings
    - a. “...who, in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of His godly fear, though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered” (Heb. 5:7-8).
    - b. As Jesus hung on the cross, he depended on the Word to get him through.
      - 1) “And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, ‘Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?’ that is, ‘My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me’ ” (Mt. 27:46 quoting Psa. 22:1).
      - 2) “And when Jesus had cried out with a loud voice, He said, ‘Father, “into Your hands I commit My spirit” ’ ” (Lk. 23:46 quoting Psa. 31:5).

## V. Will Judge

A. Of all the things Jesus taught concerning the Word of God, we should remember is judgment.

1. “Then Jesus cried out and said, ‘He who believes in Me, believes not in Me but in Him who sent Me. And he who sees Me sees Him who sent Me. I have come as a light into the world, that whoever believes in Me should not abide in darkness. And if anyone hears My words and does not believe, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world. He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him—the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day. For I have not spoken on My own authority; but the Father who sent Me gave Me a command, what I should say and what I should speak. And I know that His command is everlasting life. Therefore, whatever I speak, just as the Father has told Me, so I speak’ ” (Jn. 12:44-50).
2. Many will stand in judgment before the Lord and say, “How did we know what to do?”
3. And he will silently point to the Bible and say “You had this, my Word! And yet you failed to heed and follow the Word.”

**Conclusion:** Jesus thought and taught that the scriptures are from God, all true, our sole authority, to be relied upon and will judge us. If you believe in Jesus you must believe in the scriptures.

# Wise Advice

## James 1:19

**Introduction:** There is plenty of good advice to be found for the one willing to hear it. But there are few words of advice, more succinct and wise than those found in James 1:19: “So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath.”

### I. Swift To Hear

#### A. Some will not hear

1. Jesus urged us “He who has ears to hear, let him hear!” (Mt. 13:9).
2. Jesus warned of those who will not listen, “Therefore I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand.” (Mt. 13:13).

#### B. What are we to listen to?

##### 1. God’s Word

- a. “One who turns away his ear from hearing the law, Even his prayer is an abomination.” (Prov. 28:9).
- b. “Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls. But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does” (Jas. 1:21-25).
- c. Listen.
  - 1) Have a receptive mind.
  - 2) Be teachable.
  - 3) Listen attentively to the reading and teaching of God’s Word.
- d. “A wise man will hear and increase learning, And a man of understanding will attain wise counsel,” (Prov. 1:5).
- e. “Hear instruction and be wise, And do not disdain it.” (Prov. 8:33).

##### 2. To each other

###### a. To Encourage

- 1) Listening is one of the highest compliments you can pay to anyone.
- 2) The best conversationalist is merely a good listener.
- 3) Many people fail to make a favorable impression because they fail to listen.
- 4) Example: The phone company had a most cantakerous customer. He cursed and raved and threatened to pull the phone out of the wall. He refused to pay charges, he wrote letters to the papers complaining of the phone company, he filed complaints with the Public Service Commission and started lawsuits. Finally, the phone company sent in their best representative. The rep went and listened to the man pour out his complaints and said “yes” and sympathized. The customer raved on and the rep listened, for three hours. The rep went back and listened some more. The rep visited the irate customer four times and listened. The rep even even joined a committee in support of phone customers the complainer was

planning to start. After a few visits of listening, the customer dropped all his complaints and paid his bill.

b. For Advice

- 1) Parents—“Listen to your father who begot you, And do not despise your mother when she is old” (Prov. 23:22).
- 2) The Wise—“Incline your ear and hear the words of the wise, And apply your heart to my knowledge” (Prov. 22:17).
- 3) “Apply your heart to instruction, And your ears to words of knowledge” (Prov. 23:12).
- 4) “Listen to counsel and receive instruction, That you may be wise in your latter days” (Prov. 19:20).

c. For Correction

- 1) “The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, But he who heeds counsel is wise” (Prov. 12:15).
- 2) “A wise son heeds his father’s instruction, But a scoffer does not listen to rebuke” (Prov. 13:1).
- 3) “The ransom of a man’s life is his riches, But the poor does not hear rebuke” (Prov. 13:8).
- 4) “The ear that hears the rebukes of life Will abide among the wise” (Prov. 15:31).
- 5) “He who disdains instruction despises his own soul, But he who heeds rebuke gets understanding” (Prov. 15:32).

## II. Slow To Speak

### A. When not to speak:

1. When you have nothing to say.
  - a. We have two ears and one mouth, which should remind us to listen twice as much as we speak.
  - b. “In the multitude of words sin is not lacking, But he who restrains his lips is wise” (Prov. 10:19).
2. When you have nothing good to say.
  - a. “He who has knowledge spares his words, And a man of understanding is of a calm spirit” (Prov. 17:27).
  - b. “If anyone among you thinks he is religious, and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this one’s religion is useless” (Jas. 1:26).
3. When you are angry.
  - a. It takes the character of self control to keep you mouth shut.
  - b. “Do not be rash with your mouth, And let not your heart utter anything hastily before God. For God is in heaven, and you on earth; Therefore let your words be few” (Eccl. 5:2).
4. When you are going to be contentious.
  - a. “Lend every man thine ears, but few thy tongue.”
  - b. “Better is the poor who walks in his integrity Than one who is perverse in his lips, and is a fool” (Prov. 19:1).
  - c. You cannot win an argument.
  - d. The best way to win an argument is to avoid it like rattlesnakes and grizzly bears.
  - e. If you lose an argument, you lose it. If you win an argument, you lose it.
    - 1) Triumph over someone, shot their argument full of holes and prove them wrong.

What then? You feel fine. But what about them? If you have made them feel inferior and hurt their pride, they will resent you.

- 2) “A man persuaded against his will, is of the same opinion still.”
  - 3) I heard of a fellow who was a truck salesman, an unsuccessful truck salesman. He won lots of arguments with customers but he did not sell many trucks. The problem was not teaching him to talk, but teaching him how to refrain from talking. When he learned this lesson he became a star salesman.
  - 4) “If you argue and rankle and contradict, you may achieve a victory sometimes; but it will be an empty victory because you will never get your opponent’s good will.” Benjamin Franklin
  - 5) “Here lies the body of William Jay,  
Who died maintaining his right of way—  
He was right, dead right, as he sped along,  
But he’s just as dead as if he were wrong.”
  - 6) Example: Jesus before Pilate, “held his peace.”
5. When you are going to cut down another.
- a. God placed our ears out in the open, but place our tongue behind our teeth.
  - b. “For we all stumble in many things. If anyone does not stumble in word, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle the whole body. Indeed, we put bits in horses’ mouths that they may obey us, and we turn their whole body. Look also at ships: although they are so large and are driven by fierce winds, they are turned by a very small rudder wherever the pilot desires. Even so the tongue is a little member and boasts great things. See how great a forest a little fire kindles! And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity. The tongue is so set among our members that it defiles the whole body, and sets on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire by hell. For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and creature of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by mankind. But no man can tame the tongue. It is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. With it we bless our God and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the similitude of God. Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be so. Does a spring send forth fresh water and bitter from the same opening? Can a fig tree, my brethren, bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Thus no spring yields both salt water and fresh” (Jas. 3:2-12).
- B. Think before you speak
1. “He who answers a matter before he hears it, It is folly and shame to him” (Prov. 18:13).
  2. “A fool vents all his feelings, But a wise man holds them back” (Prov. 29:11).
  3. “The heart of the righteous studies how to answer, But the mouth of the wicked pours forth evil” (Prov. 15:28).
  4. “The heart of the wise teaches his mouth, And adds learning to his lips” (Prov. 16:23).

### III. Slow To Wrath

- A. Righteous Wrath: Love of Right—“And when He had looked around at them with anger, being grieved by the hardness of their hearts, He said to the man, ‘Stretch out your hand.’ And he stretched *it* out, and his hand was restored as whole as the other” (Mk. 3:5).
- B. Foolish Wrath: Lack of Self Control
  1. No Self control—“He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, And he who rules

his spirit than he who takes a city” (Prov. 16:32).

a. Example: One who gets mad at an inanimate object that will not work, cussing and throwing a fit.

b. Example: Getting mad at others over little things.

2. Foolish—“Do not hasten in your spirit to be angry, For anger rests in the bosom of fools” (Eccl. 7:9).

3. No Understanding—“Do not turn to the right or the left; Remove your foot from evil” (Prov. 4:29).

4. “Temper is a valuable thing, don’t lose it.”

C. Sinful Wrath: Lack of Righteousness

1. Unrighteousness—“[F]or the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God” (Jas. 1:20).

2. Dangerous—“But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. And whoever says to his brother, ‘Raca!’ shall be in danger of the council. But whoever says, ‘You fool!’ shall be in danger of hell fire” (Mt. 5:22).

3. Put Away—“Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice” (Eph. 4:31).

4. “But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth” (Col. 3:8).

D. Three points to consider about anger:

1. “Why are you angry?” (Gen. 4:6).

2. “Is it right for you to be angry?” (Jonah 4:4).

3. “ ‘Be angry, and do not sin’: do not let the sun go down on your wrath” (Eph. 4:26).

**Conclusion:** Everyone of us here today need James’ advice. His advice is not just for a few, he says, “let every man.”

# The Abundant Life

## John 10:7-10

**Introduction**—“Then Jesus said to them again, ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. All who ever came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture. The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly’ ” (John 10:7-10).

Jesus came into a world of sin and death. Darkness ruled men’s lives. “What then? Are we better than they? Not at all. For we have previously charged both Jews and Greeks that they are all under sin. As it is written: ‘There is none righteous, no, not one; There is none who understands; There is none who seeks after God. They have all turned aside; They have together become unprofitable; There is none who does good, no, not one’ ” (Romans 3:9-12).

The bright glory of God is withheld from those who spiritually separate themselves from God. So awful, so tragic is this separation from God by sin, it is called death. Paul described one in sin as “But she who lives in pleasure is dead while she lives” (1 Tim. 5:6). The dreadful consequences of sin are described, “And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others” (Eph. 2:1-3).

But Jesus came as a light in a world of darkness, sin and death, to offer life. “But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved)” (Eph. 2:4-5).

How? “Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life” (Jn. 5:24).

Then in baptism, one dies to sin and lives to Christ. “Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it? Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. For he who has died has been freed from sin.<sup>8</sup> Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him,” (Rom. 6:2-8).

Jesus proclaimed his mission, “ I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.”

1. Jesus has provided us not only our physical life, but an avenue to spiritual life. But, he has not simply promised life, mere existence, a mere presence or being, but much more.

2. Jesus has promised a life of abundance. A fulness, a richness, a sweetness, an overflowing, a enriching experience. Life that has the future in its arms. Life that has untold capabilities.

A life without Christ is sin, darkness and death; a life that is a mere breath, a mere shell of existence. It is a life without purpose, without meaning, futile and empty. Men without Christ through the ages have bitterly complained about the emptiness of life.

“The Life of Man is a long march through the night, surrounded by invisible foes, tortured by weariness and pain, towards a goal that few can hope to reach and none may tarry long. That Man is the product of causes which had no prevision of the end they were achieving; that his origin, his growth, his hopes and fears, his loves and his beliefs, are but the outcome of accidental collocations of atoms” (Bertrand Russell).

“Behold 83 years passed away! What cares! What agitation! What anxieties! What ill-will! What sad complications! and all without other result except great fatigue of body and mind, and disgust with regard to the past, and profound sentiment of discouragement and despair with regard to the future” (Talleyrand).

“Strike out a few sages, and the crowd of human beings is nothing but a horrible assemblage of unfortunate criminals, and the globe contains nothing but corpses. I tremble to have to complain once more of the Being of Beings in casting an attentive eye over this terrible picture. I wish I had never been born” (Voltaire).

“Where is my home? For it do I ask and seek, and have sought, but have not found it. O eternal everywhere, O eternal nowhere, O eternal—in vain!” (Nietzsche).

The famous atheist of the last century, Robert Ingersoll, spoke these words at his brother’s grave. “Life is a narrow vale between two cold and barren peaks of eternities. We strive in vain to look beyond the heights. We cry aloud, and the only answer is the echo of a wailing cry.”

These men were brilliant, geniuses. They were widely admired and acclaimed. Yet, without Christ they were the walking dead. Life is only in Christ. Only through him can we rise above our mundane tragic existence. But the life he gives is not mere breath. It is a life that elevates us above this world. It is a life of abundance, full, complete and overflowing.

## **I. Beauty**

### **A. Beauty is of and from the Lord.**

1. “One thing I have desired of the Lord, That will I seek: That I may dwell in the house of the Lord All the days of my life, To behold the beauty of the Lord, And to inquire in His temple” (Psa. 27:4).
2. “For all the gods of the peoples are idols, But the Lord made the heavens. Honor and majesty are before Him; Strength and beauty are in His sanctuary” (Psa. 96:5-6).
3. To see the Lord with the eye of faith is to see the beauty of his great love with which he loved us. His abundant grace and rich mercy he shed on us is an inexpressible beauty. It is like the warm, life giving rays of the sun after the darkest storm.

### **B. The abundant life gives an appreciation of beauty.**

1. “Beauty is in the eye of the beholder.” The abundant life of the Christian, gives as eye

- for the appreciation of beauty.
2. “To the materialist philosopher the beautiful is a mere accident, and therefore rare. To the spiritualist philosopher the beautiful is the rule, the law, the universal foundation of things, to which every form returns as soon as the force of accident is withdrawn” (Amiel, *Journal Intime*).
  3. “The lines have fallen to me in pleasant places; Yes, I have a good inheritance” (Psa. 16:6). “My heritage is beautiful to me!”
  4. The believer can truly appreciate life and this world, every breath, every step, every laugh, every cry is full of beauty and meaning. It is overwhelming in its grandeur and unassuming in its simplicity.
  5. “It is something to which we do not wake up till late in life—to wit, the illimitableness of the provision in Nature for beauty. Common consent awards beauty to the rainbow. Reflect that every drop of water in the ocean, or in the hydrated rocks or in the vapor floating over Saturn, has in it the possibility of rainbow coloring. In fact all matter has color of which the rainbow is only a specimen...If we come down to this plain plodding earth, cultivation of aesthetic sense will bring out beauty everywhere, from the grandeur of mountain scenery to aesthetic curves and colors revealed only by the microscope...Looking across the scale in this way the evidence of theism from beauty itself becomes convincing. Beauty becomes a messenger of and from God...” (C. Caverno, *I.S.B.E.*).
  6. “The heavens declare the glory of God; And the firmament shows His handiwork. Day unto day utters speech, And night unto night reveals knowledge. There is no speech nor language Where their voice is not heard. Their line has gone out through all the earth, And their words to the end of the world. In them He has set a tabernacle for the sun, Which is like a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, And rejoices like a strong man to run its race. Its rising is from one end of heaven, And its circuit to the other end; And there is nothing hidden from its heat” (Psa. 19:1-6).
  7. Psalm 8.
  8. “Never lose an opportunity of seeing anything that is beautiful; for beauty is God’s handwriting—a wayside sacrament. Welcome it in every fair face, in every fair sky, in every fair flower, and thank God for it as a cup of Blessing” (Emerson).
  9. “I pray thee, O God, that I may be beautiful within.”

## II. Joy

- A. The life Jesus gives is abundant in that it is rich with joy.
  1. “But I have trusted in Your mercy; My heart shall rejoice in Your salvation” (Psa. 13:5).
  2. “May my meditation be sweet to Him; I will be glad in the Lord” (Psa. 104:34).
  3. The joy of the Lord transcends the plane of this world. Joy is our wings to take us above the very day life of this world. Joy lifts us above the fleeting moments and through the pleasures, happiness, doubts and disappointments of this world.
- B. “Whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory” (1 Pet. 1:8).
  1. The joy of the Lord fills our being and gives meaning and purpose to our everyday. It is something no man can take.

### III. Love

A. Christ gives us a life full of love.

1. “No one has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love has been perfected in us. By this we know that we abide in Him, and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit. And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son *as* Savior of the world. Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. And we have known and believed the love that God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him. Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as He is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love. We love Him because He first loved us” (1 Jn. 4:12-19).
2. We have a divine love. A love towards God, a love towards others, a love of self that is not selfish, but grows and shares.
  - a) “Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us” (Rom. 5:5).
  - b) “...that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height...” (Eph. 3:17-18).
3. Christians have a love that surpasses knowledge. A love that is active not passive; that expresses itself in kindness, gentleness, sympathy, concern, devotion and vigorous work.
  - a) “This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you” (Jn. 15:12).
  - b) “Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good. Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another” (Rom. 12:9-10).

### IV. Fulfillment

A. Psychologists tell us that fulfillment is a basic human need. After the basics of survival, food, water and shelter are provided, Man needs fulfillment. We need to see and to know that our lives have meaning and purpose. All men have a deep longing to be satisfied, fulfilled. Christ came to meet that need.

1. “The backslider in heart will be filled with his own ways, But a good man will be satisfied from above” (Prov. 14:14).
2. “He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water” (Jn. 7:38).
3. “Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us” (Eph. 3:20).
4. The only way which man’s deep longing can be fulfilled is by the “living water” offered by Christ. It goes far beyond what we could ever need or ask for.
5. “My faith has never been stronger; my hope has never been brighter; my head has never been clearer; my heart has never been calmer; my life has never been purer. I love all; I hate none. My love for some lifts my soul into the realm of the sublime. I am willing to die today; I am willing to die; I am willing to live a 1,000 years, to tell the old, old story of Jesus and his love. My friends are dearer to me; association with them is sweeter to me; my sympathy for suffering souls is stronger; my love for all the

pure, the true, the beautiful, the good and the sublime—from the bud, the blossom, the babe, up to Him from whom all blessings flow—is truer, tenderer, sweeter, than ever before...I sleep soundly, dream sweetly, and ‘rejoice evermore.’ ‘The Word’ is sweeter and stronger to me than ever before. O it is delightful to love and be loved, to do whatsoever duty demands! My vanity is all gone. What people say does not bother me. I’ll never waver, but always to the right be true” (T.B. Larimore).

6. “As for me, I will see Your face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake in Your likeness” (Psa. 17:15).

## V. Glory of Immortality

- A. Benjamin Franklin wrote this epitaph that was never used: “Revised Edition, The Body of Benjamin Franklin, Printer (Like the cover of an old book, Its contents torn out, And stripped of its lettering and gilding,) Lies here food for worms. Yet the work itself shall not be lost, For it will (as he believes) appear once more, In a new, And beautiful Edition, Corrected and Amended By The Author.”
- B. “But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you” (1 Pet. 5:10).
  1. “Glory”-beauty, majesty, brightness, brilliance, splendor.
  2. Jesus promised us life in abundance Now! The beauty, joy, love and fulfillment begin now. Yet, the most amazing thing is although it begins now, it never ends. The abundant life, unceasingly carries forward into the Glory of immortality.
  3. If one doesn’t appreciate and radiate the abundant life now, then they will never reach the glory portion in eternity. Eternity is an extension of the beauty, joy, love and fulfillment Jesus gives us in this life carried to a higher plane!
  4. “The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together. For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope; because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now. Not only that, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body” (Rom. 8:16-23).
    - a) The whole creation is eagerly awaiting the revealing of the glory of God’s sons. Like a parade out of sight in the distance and the spectators anxiously crane their necks to see the brilliance.
    - b) 1 Corinthians 15:40-44, 50-57.

**Conclusion:** If you are not a Christian, a follower of Christ, you do not and cannot have the abundant life. You may have the beauty, joy, love and fulfillment of this world, but it is like a thirsting man drinking from a mud puddle, when there is a pure flowing stream just beyond the hill. Come and partake in the abundant life that begins now and never ends.

# How The Lord Can Work For You

## 1 Samuel 14:6

**Introduction**-The Lord is ready and willing to work for you. Throughout the Bible he worked for many a Bible character. We can learn how to have the Lord work for us by the example of Jonathan in the Old Testament. It is Jonathan who said, “it may be that the Lord will work for us” (1 Sam. 14:6).

Saul was anointed king by Samuel and proclaimed by the people as worthy. Saul was able to lead the Israelites against the Ammonites and win a great victory. But after two years a more fierce enemy, the Philistines threatened the Israelites. The Philistines had a war machine of 30,000 chariots, 6,000 horsemen and a vast army. In fear the Israelites hid in caves, thickets, holes and pits and many fled for the other side of the Jordan. The Philistines had not only a numerical advantage, but a great advantage in weapons. The Israelites had no swords or spears to defend themselves.

Under these severe conditions, Saul the king and Jonathan his son gathered a small army of 600 men and camped at Gibeah across from the Philistine garrison at Michmash. There the small band continued while Saul hesitated, waiting for something to happen. Then Jonathan bravely decided to quit waiting and engage the enemy.

(Read text 1 Samuel 14:1-23.)

Notice verse twenty-three, “So the Lord saved Israel that day.” If we can find out how the Lord worked for Jonathan against the Philistines to win a great battle and victory, we can learn how the Lord will work for us today in our battles.

### I. Go Out Instead Of Sitting Down

- A. “Now it happened one day that Jonathan the son of Saul said to the young man who bore his armor, ‘Come, let us go over to the Philistines’ garrison that is on the other side.’ But he did not tell his father. And Saul was sitting in the outskirts of Gibeah under a pomegranate tree which is in Migron. The people who were with him were about six hundred men” (1 Sam. 14:1-2).
  - 1. Although the enemy was nearby. Saul was sitting under the shade of a pomegranate tree, resting, waiting and hesitating. Yet, he was the king, general and commander-in-chief.
  - 2. Meanwhile, Jonathan was busy out looking for the enemy and a battle. He was tired of the sitting, the hesitation and the indecision. He headed directly for the Philistine garrison up on top of a rocky hill.
  - 3. What a contrast between Saul the king and Jonathan his son.
  - 4. The Lord worked for Jonathan, because first Jonathan worked for the Lord. Jonathan put the Lord to work by putting himself to work.
  - 5. The Lord used the faith and courage of Jonathan to deliver Israel from her enemies.
  - 6. The proverb is true, “The Lord helps those who help themselves.”
  - 7. Jesus said, “According to your faith let it be to you” (Mt. 9:29).
- B. Too often I hear and see Christians sitting, hesitating and complaining.
  - 1. “The church isn’t growing like it used to.”

2. "Why don't we do the work that should be done?"
3. "We just don't seem to be accomplishing much these days."
4. Jonathan's example shows us the solution:
  - a. Stop sitting around talking and complaining and get up and get out and get to work for the Lord.
  - b. Stop spending hours of making plans and spending little or no time getting out and working.
  - c. Stop waiting for everyone else, someone else to lead the way and get out there and get busy.
  - d. We can make all kinds of plans, but for the Lord to work for us, for this congregation to grow and prosper and the enemy put on the run, then we need to get up, get out and get into the battle.
  - e. We can't sit around all the time in the camp making plans, that was Saul's mistake. Plans have their place, but when you spend hours and days and weeks and months making plans and never get up and do the work that needs to be done, there never will be a battle and there never will be a victory.
  - f. We could say, "Well, we don't have any defeats," but then again we won't have any victories either.
5. Jonathan knew where the enemy was and what needed to be done. He stopped sitting under the shade of the trees and got up into the mountains and fought the enemies.
6. Work that needs to be done:
  - a. Physical work around the building. There is no need to sit around and complain about a room that needs painting, a pipe that needs fixing, a cobweb that needs cleaned up. You don't have to wait for someone to tell you to do it or a special day to work and clean up the building
  - b. Spiritual work of teaching and visiting needs to be done. Don't wait for someone to tell you or ask you. There is always a need for class teachers because many are sitting back at camp and a few brave souls are out doing the work.

## **II. Recognize The Lord Gives Victory Regardless Of Numbers**

- A. "Then Jonathan said to the young man who bore his armor, 'Come, let us go over to the garrison of these uncircumcised; it may be that the Lord will work for us. For nothing restrains the Lord from saving by many or by few' " (1 Sam. 14:6).
  1. The Philistines had 30,000 chariots, 6,000 horsemen and an army as the sand on the seashore and yet only two Israelites Jonathan and his armor bearer headed out to handle the Philistine garrison.
  2. Jonathan said, "That can't stop the Lord, so it's not going to stop me."
  3. But they were not alone! The Lord of Hosts, the Almighty God was with them!
  4. One person with God on his side is a majority!
- B. It doesn't matter how small a number this congregation may be.
  1. In the eyes of the numerous denominations in this city, we are small and insignificant in number.
  2. In the eyes of the world, we are terribly small.
  3. In the eyes of the Lord, it doesn't matter how few or how many are in this congregation!
  4. Some Christians may get discouraged and think that this congregation is far too small to reach and teach the gospel to this entire community.

- a. Our number doesn't stop the Lord, why should it stop you?
  - b. There is no restraint to the Lord to save by many or few.
  - c. Jonathan recognized that the Lord could deliver Israel from the might Philistine army with only 600 men or even only two men.
5. We need to stop reflecting on numbers and start reflecting on quality.
- a. There is no need to be discouraged at our numbers, we are not here for numbering, we are here to worship and work for the Lord!
  - b. There can be thriving and growth, if we recognize that the Lord first wants quality, not quantity.
  - c. Have you ever went out and bought something at the cheapest price possible and the next day it fell apart. You learned that quality and not the lowest price is important. The Lord wants his people to be quality, people of the character of Jonathan.
  - d. Can you imagine Jonathan telling his sword bearer, well its just you and I here and I am discouraged, so let's give up and go home.
  - e. We need to recognize that if the Lord can save with one, he can save with 100 or 150 of this congregation. He will work for us, if we will work for him.

### III. Be Ready To Fight Where Ever

- A. "Then Jonathan said, 'Very well, let us cross over to these men, and we will show ourselves to them. If they say thus to us, "Wait until we come to you," then we will stand still in our place and not go up to them. But if they say thus, "Come up to us," then we will go up. For the LORD has delivered them into our hand, and this *will be* a sign to us' " (1 Sam. 14:8-10).
1. Jonathan had two battle plans:
    - a. Plan A: We will fight them here.
    - b. Plan B: We will fight them there.
  2. Jonathan was ready to fight the Philistines down in the valley or up on the mountain. He was ready to fight the enemy where ever he might be.
  3. The skeptic might have said, "But Jonathan, you are forgetting Plan C, running as fast as we can back to camp for the shade of those pomegranate trees."
  4. Jonathan had no Plan C. He had no plans to retreat.
- B. Christians need to be ready to fight the enemy here or there; in the valley or on the mountain; anywhere, everywhere.
1. We need to eliminate Plan C from our plans.
  2. We need to eliminate any plans to take to our heels and flee.
  3. There are souls to be saved and we cannot wait for them to wander into the building where we can jump on them and pour the gospel down their throats. We must be ready to take the gospel where ever there are lost souls, here and there and every point between.
  4. Are we hindered because the lost simple don't want to come to us here? They expect us to come into their homes? They expect us to teach them through the radio?
  5. The Lord is not going to work for us, if we are not willing to fight for him whenever and where ever the opportunity presents itself.

### IV. Ignore the Mockery

- A. "So both of them showed themselves to the garrison of the Philistines. And the Philistines said, 'Look, the Hebrews are coming out of the holes where they have hidden.' Then the

men of the garrison called to Jonathan and his armorbearer, and said, 'Come up to us, and we will show you something.' Jonathan said to his armorbearer, 'Come up after me, for the LORD has delivered them into the hand of Israel' ” (1 Sam. 14:11-12).

1. Jonathan got his sign from the Lord when the Philistines challenged him to come up and fight.
  2. But as Jonathan and his armor bearer made there way up the hill, the Philistines began to mock, jeer and laugh at them.
  3. There were plenty of things to laugh about as far as the Philistines were concerned:
    - a. Most of the Israelites were in hiding shaking in fear.
    - b. Here came two men against a garrison of at least twenty men.
  4. This did not stop or even slow down Jonathan. He kept on going and kept on climbing.
- B. One of the greatest and most fearsome weapons of Satan is mockery.**
1. Satan mocks God's people:
    - a. "You can't do it, it can't be done."
    - b. "You are too small to do the Lord's work."
    - c. "You don't have enough money to do the Lord's work."
    - d. "You never did anything before, and you never will be able to do anything."
    - e. "If you come crawling out of your holes and come out to fight me, I'll show you a thing or two."
  2. People will mock the gospel:
    - a. "You don't really believe God expects us to obey all his will?"
    - b. "You don't really believe God will condemn all those who are not baptized?"
    - c. "You think you are the only ones going to heaven."
    - d. "You are too narrow or too strict."
  3. The worse defeat God's people can face is backing down to the mockery of Satan and his human helpers.
  4. Examples:
    - a. Two prize fighter will mock one another before a big fight.
    - b. Two Super bowl teams will laugh at the other team.
    - c. Why? To destroy the morale and fight of their adversary.
  5. If you are a faithful child of God, you will face laughter, mockery, sneers, insults and severe criticism. Do what Jonathan did. Ignore the mockery, keep climbing the hill and consider it a sign from God of a great victory to come.

## **V. Work Hard to Reach and Fight the Enemy**

- A. "And Jonathan climbed up on his hands and knees..." (1 Sam. 14:13).**
1. Jonathan had to work hard to get to the top of the hill to fight the enemy.
  2. Not only did he climb the hill, but he climbed up on his hands and knees!
    - a. Have you ever walked up a steep incline, that's difficult. It is even more difficult to go up the rugged side of a steep hill having to climb with your hands and knees.
    - b. Example: Just ask my wife about climbing up a mountain. She and I went back backing in the Appalachian Mountains. You should have heard her going up the first mountain. "When are we ever going to get to the top?" "I can't wait to get to the top and start going down."
  3. And don't suppose that the Philistines let Jonathan stop and take a breather by the time he got to the top of the hill. "Wait a minute fellows, time out. I need a breather."
  4. Jonathan was not only willing to go out and find the enemy to fight, he was willing to

exert himself to get to and at the enemy

**B. Do we have Jonathan's dedication?**

1. Do you have the determination to get up and find the enemy?
2. Are you ready to climb, work hard to reach the enemy and do battle?
3. We will wait for someone to walk in the front door of the building, grab and throw'em in the baptistry and make a Christian? It just doesn't work that way.
  - a. If you want to convert people, you need to go where they are. You have to work hard to reach and teach the lost.
  - b. If you want your children to learn the Bible, you need to get down on your hands and knees and teach them.
  - c. If expect denominationalism to be fought, you have to be willing to take up the battle.
4. You can't climb hard and then give up and sit down. When Jonathan got to the top of the hill, he went right to work and in a little while had slain twenty men.

**VI. Inspire Your Fellow Soldiers**

**A.** While Jonathan and his armor bearer were fighting the Philistine's in their own garrison on the top of the hill, the Lord sent an earthquake that shook the Philistine camp.

1. Meanwhile, back in the Israelite camp the watchmen could see a commotion going on in the garrison and the Philistines "melting away," they are clearing out, retreating.
2. Saul heard the report and quickly, "Let's have a count to see who is missing." And whatdoyouknow, Jonathan and his armorbearer are missing. "Well what's Jonathan doing over there in the camp of the Philistines?" "Well it looks like he is winning the victory."
3. One of the greatest things Jonathan did was inspire his fellow soldiers.
  - a. There were only 600 faithful soldiers with Saul, but they quickly joined Jonathan in battle.
  - b. Not only the 600 went into battle beside Jonathan, but all the Israelite turncoats in the Philistine camp, turned against the Philistines.
  - c. And guess who started crawling out of the caves and thickets and pits to fights? Those Israelites who had gone into hiding.
  - d. What started with the courage and faith of two men, grew to 600, then to all the nation.
  - e. A great army came out inspired by Jonathan and chased the Philistines all the way back to Philista.
4. The conclusion was "the Lord saved Israel that day." How did the Lord save Israel?
  - a. Because Jonathan went out to do battle with the enemy.
  - b. All the rest of the Israelites looked over to the mountaintop and saw Jonathan fighting and routing the enemy and each one said to himself, "See where Jonathan stands, I am going to take my place by his side and fight right along with him."

**B.** Don't stand back and wait.

1. "I'll wait for someone to tell me to do personal work."
2. "I'll wait for someone to tell me to do visiting."
3. "I'll wait for someone to ask me to teach a class."
4. When work need to be done, get up, go out and do it. Don't wait for someone else to do it or tell or ask you to do it. Be an inspiration for others to get out and work shoulder to shoulder with you.

5. Others will say “Look someone is out doing the Lord’s work, I should be out there with them, shoulder to shoulder, side by side working with them.”
  - a. Husbands and wives inspire one another to work together to do the Lord’s work.
  - b. Parents inspire your children to work together to do the Lord’s work.
  - c. Brothers and sisters stir up one another to do the Lord’s work.
  - d. Families need to inspire one another in the work of the Lord.

**Conclusion:** The Lord can work for you, if you will but put yourself into the work of the Lord. If you are not a Christian, the very first step is to enlist in the Lord’s army, by faith, repentance, confession and baptism. If you are soldier of the Lord that has surrendered or retreated, it is time to get up on your feet and come to the Lord in repentance, confession and prayer. Get up, get out and work for the Lord and the Lord will not be restrained by the victory he will give to you.

# Little Foxes

## Song Of Solomon 2:15

**Introduction:** (Read context Song Of Solomon 2:8-15)

God often uses the creatures of this world to teach us lessons about life. Isaiah uses the ox and the donkey (Isa. 1:3). David uses the horse and mule (Psa. 32:9). Job refers to the beasts and birds (Job 12:7). There are lessons to be learned from the stork, turtle, dove, crane, ants, locust, cony, spider and more.

Here “little foxes” are used to illustrate a lesson for us. “Foxes, jackals, little foxes, are very common in Palestine, and are particularly fond of grapes. They often burrow in holes in hedges round the gardens and, unless strictly watched, would destroy whole vineyards. Their flesh was sometimes eaten in autumn, when they were grown fat with feeding on grapes. Thus Theocritus says—‘I hate the foxes with their bushy tails, Which numerous spoil the grapes of Mecon’s vines, When fall the evening shades.’ And Aristophanes compares soldiers to foxes, because they consume the grapes of the countries though which they pass” (Burrows quoted by S. Conway in *The Pulpit Commentary*, “Song of Solomon,” vol. 9, p. 57-58).

We must recognize the need to bear fruit in our lives (Jn. 15:1-8). Paul lists the “fruits of the Spirit” we must cultivate and bear (Gal. 5:22-23). We must be careful in our cultivation and be watchful for the “little foxes” that will spoil the vines. “You ran well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth?” Paul asks those who had allowed the “little foxes” to run unhindered (Gal. 5:7). Notice that the vines are not lost because they are cut down or uprooted nor are they hindered from bearing fruit. The vines grow and bear fruit but little negligences, small indulgences that are not watched and curbed and the fruit is spoiled on the vine. The “little foxes” that can spoil the fruit of the Spirit are the small vices, the slight attitudes that we often overlook. They are fox-like when they slyly sneak up and overtake us (See, Gal. 6:1). Let us consider some of these little foxes that spoil the fruit we should bear.

### I. Selfishness Spoils Love

- A. Selfishness is the “little fox” of our time. This generation has been named by the media as the “Me” generation.
- B. Saul’s selfishness (1 Sam. 20:31-32).
  - 1. It destroyed his love for God.
  - 2. It destroyed his love for David.
  - 3. It destroyed his love for Jonathan.
  - 4. It destroyed his love for himself.

### II. Discontent Spoils Joy

- A. Haman’s Discontent (Esther 5:11-13).
  - 1. Haman had a good job and family.
  - 2. Despite all the good things he had, he allowed a little discontent to spoil everything.
- B. We can allow discontent to spoil our joy.
  - 1. God has given us so much that blesses us and gives us joy.
  - 2. If we allow the little fox of discontentment to settle in our heart it will spoil our joy.

- C. You can see the discontent on some people's faces.

### III. Worry Spoils Peace

- A. "Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things" (Mt. 6:31-32).
- B. Darius' worry spoiled his sleep. "Then the king arose very early in the morning and went in haste to the den of lions" (Dan. 6:19).
  - 1. There are those who lie awake at night worrying about tomorrow.
  - 2. Do you allow worry to spoil the peace of your sleep?
- C. Martha allowed the little fox of distraction to spoil her peace. "But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her" (Lk. 10:42).
  - 1. What worries take your mind off the "good part?"

### IV. Impatience Spoils Longsuffering

- A. "Therefore do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward. For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise" (Heb. 10:35-36).
- B. The impatience of James and John (Lk. 9:52-56).
- C. Impatience is a sly fox.
  - 1. It steals our longsuffering towards others.
  - 2. It attempts to excuse our behavior.

### V. Bitterness Spoils Kindness

- A. The bitterness of the Pharisees had hardened their hearts. "And He entered the synagogue again, and a man was there who had a withered hand. So they watched Him closely, whether He would heal him on the Sabbath, so that they might accuse Him. And He said to the man who had the withered hand, 'Step forward.' Then He said to them, 'Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?' But they kept silent. And when He had looked around at them with anger, being grieved by the hardness of their hearts, He said to the man, 'Stretch out your hand.' And he stretched it out, and his hand was restored as whole as the other" (Mark 3:1-5).
- B. Some have allowed bitterness to spoil any kindness towards others.

### VI. Laziness Spoils Goodness

- A. "Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need." (Eph. 4:28).
- B. "I went by the field of the lazy man, And by the vineyard of the man devoid of understanding; And there it was, all overgrown with thorns; Its surface was covered with nettles; Its stone wall was broken down" (Prov. 24:30-31).
- C. The goodness has gone out of our nation.
  - 1. Laziness has taken it away.
  - 2. The sweet fruit of moral uprightness quickly rots when the desire to work is replaced by sloth.

### VII. Doubt Spoils Faith

- A. “The other disciples therefore said to him, ‘We have seen the Lord.’ So he said to them, ‘Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe’ ” (Jn. 20:25).
- B. We all have questions.
  - 1. The problem comes when we do not actively seek out answers to our problems.
  - 2. There are those who allow their little foxes of doubts spoil their faith.
  - 3. They do not take care of the doubts; they do not look for answers; they do not seek out the evidence (Mt. 7:7-8).

### VIII. Pride Spoils Meekness

- A. Uzziah’s pride spoiled his meekness. “And he made devices in Jerusalem, invented by skillful men, to be on the towers and the corners, to shoot arrows and large stones. So his fame spread far and wide, for he was marvelously helped till he became strong. But when he was strong his heart was lifted up, to his destruction, for he transgressed against the LORD his God by entering the temple of the LORD to burn incense on the altar of incense” (2 Chron. 26:15-16).
- B. he women of Jerusalem. “Moreover the LORD says: ‘Because the daughters of Zion are haughty, And walk with outstretched necks And wanton eyes, Walking and mincing *as* they go, Making a jingling with their feet, Therefore the Lord will strike with a scab The crown of the head of the daughters of Zion, And the LORD will uncover their secret parts” (Isa. 3:16-17).

### IX. Love Of Pleasure Spoils Self-Control

- A. The prodigal son—“And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, journeyed to a far country, and there wasted his possessions with prodigal living” (Lk. 15:13).
- B. “When you sit down to eat with a ruler, Consider carefully what is before you; And put a knife to your throat If you are a man given to appetite. Do not desire his delicacies, For they are deceptive food. Do not overwork to be rich; Because of your own understanding, cease! Will you set your eyes on that which is not? For riches certainly make themselves wings; They fly away like an eagle toward heaven” (Prov. 23:1-5).
- C. “By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward.” (Heb. 11:24-26).

**Conclusion:** The only way to deal with the “little foxes” is to hunt them down and destroy them. “But bring here those enemies of mine, who did not want me to reign over them, and slay them before me” (Lk. 19:27).

sermon idea from Dwight Moody

# Blaming God

## Genesis 4:13

**Introduction:** Sin brings a horrible burden of guilt to the sinner. In the words of Cain, “My punishment is greater than I can bear!” (Gen. 4:13). Men have devised many excuses to try to alleviate the burden of their guilt. None of these excuses have been as despicable as those clothed in religious terms. When men seek to excuse their sins, they end up blaming God.

### I. Flesh Too Weak

#### A. Born with a sinful nature?

1. “Man is prone too sin as the sparks fly upwards.”
2. “We are just human.”
3. “He can’t help it, he is only human.”

#### B. But what does God say?

1. “Truly, this only I have found: That God made man upright, But they have sought out many schemes” (Eccl. 7:29).
2. Sin and guilt don’t come from man’s nature, but from one’s choice to sin. “The soul who sins shall die. The son shall not bear the guilt of the father, nor the father bear the guilt of the son. The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon himself” (Ezk. 18:20).

#### C. Acquired a sinful nature?

1. “...there is no denying that human beings have a sinful nature. The Calvinists have argued that man is born with it. The truth is that it is cultivated by habit and practice. But regardless of whether inherited or cultivated, to deny the existence of a sinful nature in a human being is wrong” (“The Further Impact Of Calvinism,” *Sentry*, June 30, 1986, p. 9).
2. If men have a sinful nature, why does Paul say twice men are not tempted beyond their ability to bear? “No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it” (1 Cor. 10:13).
3. What about Jesus who became flesh and was tempted as we are and resisted temptation?
  - a. “Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people” (Heb. 2:17).
  - b. “For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh” (Rom. 8:3).

### II. Temptation Too Strong

#### A. Tempted by God?

1. Some want to blame God for their temptations. “Why did God do this to me?” “Why is God tempting me?”
2. James denies God tempts us to do evil. “Let no one say when he is tempted, ‘I am tempted by God’; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt

anyone. But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.” (Jas. 1:13-15).

**B. Cannot bear temptation?**

1. “We are told that all men do sin but that no one has to sin. Well, state it any way you desire, that which I ‘cannot avoid’ I ‘have to’ do” (*The Sower*, September/October, 1985, p. 5).
2. Paul said we are “able to bear” temptation. “No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it” (1 Cor. 10:13).

**C. Live in a sinful world?**

1. Adam blamed Eve for his sin.—“Then the man said, ‘The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate’ ” (Gen. 3:12).
2. But Job resisted the temptation of his wife.—“But he said to her, ‘You speak as one of the foolish women speaks. Shall we indeed accept good from God, and shall we not accept adversity?’ In all this Job did not sin with his lips” (Job 2:10).
3. For every example of one who gave in to a particular sin, there is an opposite example of one who resisted the temptation.

**III. Law Too Difficult**

**A. Cannot understand God’s Word?**

1. But Paul said we could, “...by which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ” (Eph. 3:4).
2. Paul said we could understand. “Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is” (Eph. 5:17).

**B. Cannot keep God’s Word?**

1. Some argue long and loud that one cannot keep God’s Word.
2. Moses said God revealed His Word that we may do it all of it? “The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but those things which are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law” (Deut. 29:29).
3. God’s instructions and commandments are not too difficult to understand and obey. “...if you obey the voice of the LORD your God, to keep His commandments and His statutes which are written in this Book of the Law, and if you turn to the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul. For this commandment which I command you today is not too mysterious for you, nor is it far off. It is not in heaven, that you should say, ‘Who will ascend into heaven for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?’ Nor is it beyond the sea, that you should say, ‘Who will go over the sea for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?’ But the word is very near you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may do it. See, I have set before you today life and good, death and evil” (Deut. 30:10-15).
4. Moses’ words are repeated in the New Testament concerning the New Covenant (Rom. 10:6-18).

#### IV. Judgment Too Hard

##### A. God is too hard?

1. One talent man claimed that his master was too hard – “I knew you were a hard man”
  - a. “Then he who had received the one talent came and said, ‘Lord, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you have not sown, and gathering where you have not scattered seed’ ” (Mt. 25:24).
  - b. The accusation was untrue.
    - 1) He gave them his goods.
    - 2) He gave to every man according to his ability.
    - 3) He only reaped where he had sown.
    - 4) He expected no more from each servant than his ability.
    - 5) He richly rewarded those who were faithful over a few things.
    - 6) He expected no more from the “one talent” man, then he expected from his other servants.
  - c. The one talent man has the audacity to accuse his master of being hard, when in reality his master had been most fair and generous.
2. How many today accuse God of being too hard?
  - a. How can God expect everyone to be baptized? That is too hard.
  - b. How can God expect no divorce except for adultery? (See, Mt. 19:10).

##### B. God’s way not fair?

1. There are many today who complain that the Lord’s way is not fair.
  - a. How can God expect Christians to repent and confess the sins they commit?
  - b. This is too hard?
2. Jews accused God–“The way of the Lord is not fair.”
  - a. God said His ways are fair. “Yet you say, ‘The way of the Lord is not fair.’ Hear now, O house of Israel, is it not My way which is fair, and your ways which are not fair?... Yet the house of Israel says, ‘The way of the Lord is not fair.’ O house of Israel, is it not My ways which are fair, and your ways which are not fair?” (Ezk. 18:25, 29).
  - b. God’s fairness is seen in his righteousness judgment and provision for repentance. “Yet the children of your people say, ‘The way of the LORD is not fair.’ But it is their way which is not fair! When the righteous turns from his righteousness and commits iniquity, he shall die because of it. But when the wicked turns from his wickedness and does what is lawful and right, he shall live because of it. Yet you say, ‘The way of the LORD is not fair.’ O house of Israel, I will judge every one of you according to his own ways” (Ezk. 33:17-20).

##### C. Judgment too harsh?

1. Some complain that for God to judge us upon what we have done would be too harsh.
2. Once in a Bible class I had a fellow object that God would not judge us based upon what we have done. I turned and read Romans 2.
3. God plainly tells us that we will be judged upon the basis of our deeds and that there will be those who will be rewarded for their continuing to do good. “But we know that the judgment of God is according to truth against those who practice such things. And do you think this, O man, you who judge those practicing such things, and doing the same, that you will escape the judgment of God? Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance? But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart

you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who ‘will render to each one according to his deeds’: eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor, and immortality; but to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness — indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, on every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek; but glory, honor, and peace to everyone who works what is good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For there is no partiality with God. For as many as have sinned without law will also perish without law, and as many as have sinned in the law will be judged by the law (for not the hearers of the law *are* just in the sight of God, but the doers of the law will be justified” (Rom. 2:2-13).

**Conclusion:** When we sin let us not make the further mistake of trying to excuse our sin by blaming God. It is false to excuse sin claiming the flesh is too weak, the temptation was too strong, the law or command was too difficult or God’s judgment is too hard. Instead, we should humbly confess our sin before Him and seek His forgiveness. If you have never have named Christ as your Savior you need to “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins” (Acts 2:38). If you are a Christian in sin, you need to “Repent therefore of this your wickedness, and pray God if perhaps the thought of your heart may be forgiven you” (Acts 8:22).

# At The Cross-Roads

## Jeremiah 6:16

**Introduction:** “Thus says the LORD: ‘Stand in the ways and see, And ask for the old paths, where the good way is, And walk in it; Then you will find rest for your souls. But they said, ‘We will not walk in it’ ” (Jer. 6:16).

### I. “Thus says the LORD...”

- A. Some say that a powerful and wise Creator made this world and then left us without guidance to fend for ourselves.
  - 1. God has not left us in the dark, without any reasons, answers or hope.
  - 2. God has spoken to us and we must listen! “Thus says the Lord...”
    - a. “Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it; for the time is near” (Rev. 1:3).
    - b. “Hear and give ear: Do not be proud, For the LORD has spoken” (Jer. 13:15).
  - 3. If you fail to listen now, you will hear his voice later!
    - a. “Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth—those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation” (Jn. 5:28-29).

### II. “Stand at the cross-roads...”

- A. The Almighty Lord of Hosts asks you . . .
  - 1. Go to the “ways,” the place where the roads meet, the “cross-roads.”
  - 2. A place of travel, commerce, rest, exchange.
  - 3. A place of decision! “Which road shall I take?”
- B. There are two roads to consider at the cross-roads.
  - 1. “Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it” (Mt. 7:13-14).
- C. We should “stand,” carefully, thoughtfully deliberate which path to take.
  - 1. “Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you are disqualified” (2 Cor 13:5).
  - 2. “Test all things; hold fast what is good” (1 Thess. 5:21).
  - 3. “These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so” (Acts 17:11).

### III. “and see, and ask for the ancient paths, where the good way is...”

- A. The Lord addresses the problem that many have stumbled from the ancient path and forgotten the good way of the Lord.
  - 1. “Because My people have forgotten Me, They have burned incense to worthless idols. And they have caused themselves to stumble in their ways, From the ancient paths, To walk in pathways and not on a highway” (Jer. 18:15).
    - a. This is the problem in the denominational world. Many so-called “religious” people

are walking, but not in the ancient paths given by the Lord.

- b. Likewise, there are Christians who forget the Lord who bought them out of the slavery of sin. They plunge themselves and their Lord into sorrows by walking the paths of sin.

B. We need to go to the right source and see and ask for the ancient paths.

1. The mountain, the house of the Lord—"Many people shall come and say, 'Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, To the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, And we shall walk in His paths.' For out of Zion shall go forth the law, And the word of the LORD from Jerusalem" (Isa. 2:3).
  - a. "I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will guide you with My eye" (Psa. 32:8).
  - b. "Good and upright *is* the LORD; Therefore He teaches sinners in the way" (Psa. 25:8).
  - c. "He restores my soul; He leads me in the paths of righteousness For His name's sake" (Psa. 23:3).

C. The ancient path is holy and simple.

1. "Who is wise? Let him understand these things. Who is prudent? Let him know them. For the ways of the LORD are right; The righteous walk in them, But transgressors stumble in them" (Hos. 14:9).
2. "A highway shall be there, and a road, And it shall be called the Highway of Holiness. The unclean shall not pass over it, But it shall be for others. Whoever walks the road, although a fool, Shall not go astray" (Isa. 35:8).

D. The ancient path begins with Jesus.

1. "Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me' " (Jn 14:6).
2. "God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds" (Heb. 1:1-2).

#### IV. "and walk in in it..."

A. The Lord requires we walk in the ancient path he shows us.

1. "And now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require of you, but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all His ways and to love Him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul" (Deut. 10:12).
2. "You shall walk in all the ways which the LORD your God has commanded you, that you may live and that it may be well with you, and that you may prolong your days in the land which you shall possess" (Deut. 5:33).
3. "But this is what I commanded them, saying, 'Obey My voice, and I will be your God, and you shall be My people. And walk in all the ways that I have commanded you, that it may be well with you' " (Jer. 7:23).
4. "He has shown you, O man, what *is* good; And what does the LORD require of you But to do justly, To love mercy, And to walk humbly with your God?" (Mic. 6:8).

B. The walk is...

1. In newness of life—"What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it? Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as

Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life” (Rom. 6:1-4).

2. Worthy of the Lord—“...that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God” (Col. 1:10).
3. In Him—“As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him” (Col. 2:6).
4. By the same rule—“Nevertheless, to the degree that we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us be of the same mind” (Phil. 3:16).
5. By faith—“For we walk by faith, not by sight.” (2 Cor. 5:7).
6. In love—“And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma” (Eph. 5:2).
7. In the light—“But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin” (1 Jn. 1:7).

**V. “then you will find rest for your souls.”**

A. The Lord promises rest at the end of the path.

1. “Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls” (Mt. 11:29).
2. “There remains therefore a rest for the people of God” (Heb. 4:9).
3. “...and to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels” (2 Thess. 1:7).

**VI. “But they said, ‘We will not walk in it.’”**

A. How generous, how powerful is the Lord’s offer and yet the people rejected it.

B. Jesus faced the same attitude.

1. “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing!” (Mt. 23:37).

**Conclusion:** What are you doing at the cross-roads? Everyone must stand at the cross-roads and decide which path to take in life. Will you take the ancient paths, where the good way is, or tell the Lord “I will not walk in it.”

# Your Heavenly Father's Feelings

## Matthew 6:9

**Introduction:** “And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen do. For they think that they will be heard for their many words. Therefore do not be like them. For your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him. In this manner, therefore, pray: ‘**Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name**’ ” (Mt. 6:7-9).

I want you to allow the reality of those words to sink slowly into your heart. Jesus told us that we are to address the Almighty Jehovah, the Creator and Sustainer of the cosmos as “our Father.” This is a powerful and magnificent thought.

Far too often people think of God as far removed from us and our everyday lives and concerns. Many seem to picture God as an inanimate, impassive and impersonal force unconcerned and unfeeling about you and I.

God is not a god far away and not near at hand. God is not an impersonal force, but a very personal God who is full of care, concern and feeling for you and I. God is so interested and concerned about you, that He calls Himself, your Father.

### I. The Almighty God Is Your Heavenly Father

#### A. God is the Father of all men.

1. “Have we not all one Father? Has not one God created us?” (Mal. 2:10).
2. “God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands. Nor is He worshiped with men’s hands, as though He needed anything, since He gives to all life, breath, and all things. And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings, so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us; for in Him we live and move and have our being, as also some of your own poets have said, ‘**For we are also His offspring**’ ” (Acts 17:24-28).

#### B. God promised a special relationship for the faithful.

1. God promised Jeremiah: “In those days the house of Judah shall walk with the house of Israel, and they shall come together out of the land of the north to the land that I have given as an inheritance to your fathers. But I said: ‘How can I put you among the children And give you a pleasant land, A beautiful heritage of the hosts of nations?’ And I said: ‘**You shall call Me, “My Father,” And not turn away from Me**’ ” (Jer. 3:18-19).
2. God promised Hosea: “Now when she had weaned Lo-Ruhamah, she conceived and bore a son. Then God said: ‘Call his name Lo-Ammi, For you are not My people, And I will not be your God. Yet the number of the children of Israel Shall be as the sand of the sea, Which cannot be measured or numbered. And it shall come to pass In the place where it was said to them, “You are not My people,” There it shall be said to them, ‘**You are sons of the living God.**’ Then the children of Judah and the children of Israel Shall be gathered together, And appoint for themselves one head; And they

shall come up out of the land, For great will be the day of Jezreel!’ ” (Hosea 1:8-11).

C. The fulfillment of God's promise to be our Father is through Jesus Christ.

1. “While He was still talking to the multitudes, behold, His mother and brothers stood outside, seeking to speak with Him. Then one said to Him, ‘Look, Your mother and Your brothers are standing outside, seeking to speak with You.’ But He answered and said to the one who told Him, ‘Who is My mother and who are My brothers?’ And He stretched out His hand toward His disciples and said, ‘Here are My mother and My brothers! For whoever does the will of My Father in heaven is My brother and sister and mother’ ” (Mt. 12:46-50).
2. “For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: ‘I will dwell in them And walk among them. **I will be their God, And they shall be My people.**’ Therefore ‘Come out from among them And be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, And I will receive you.’ **I will be a Father to you, And you shall be My sons and daughters, Says the LORD Almighty**” (2 Cor. 6:16-18).
3. God wants to be your God. The Lord Almighty wants to be your Father.
  - a. While everyone of us have an earthly father, not everyone had a good father. Some may not even know their earthly father. Others had mean and abusive fathers.
  - b. There is a basic need and desire deep in the heart of every child to have a good and loving father. A father that loves them and cares for them and provides for them.
  - c. Whatever kind of earthly father you had, you can have the very best father. God wants to be your God. The Lord Almighty wants to be your Father.

## II. Your Heavenly Father Loves You

A. Our heavenly Father often expressed his love for his people.

1. “ ‘You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles’ wings and brought you to Myself. Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then **you shall be a special treasure to Me** above all people; for all the earth is Mine. And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.’ These are the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel” (Ex. 19:4-6).
2. “For the LORD’s portion is His people; Jacob is the place of His inheritance. He found him in a desert land And in the wasteland, a howling wilderness; He encircled him, He instructed him, He kept him as the apple of His eye. As an eagle stirs up its nest, Hovers over its young, Spreading out its wings, taking them up, Carrying them on its wings, So the LORD alone led him, And there was no foreign god with him” (Deut. 32:9-12).
3. “When Israel was a child, I loved him, And out of Egypt I called My son. As they called them, So they went from them; They sacrificed to the Baals, And burned incense to carved images. I taught Ephraim to walk, Taking them by their arms; But they did not know that I healed them. I drew them with gentle cords, With bands of love, And I was to them as those who take the yoke from their neck. I stooped and fed them” (Hos. 11:1-4).

B. Our heavenly Father often expressed his love for certain individuals.

1. “He called his name Solomon. Now the LORD loved him” (2 Sam. 12:24).
2. “He will choose our inheritance for us, The excellence of Jacob whom He loves. Selah” (Psa. 47:4).
3. “The way of the wicked *is* an abomination to the LORD, But He loves him who follows righteousness” (Prov. 15:9).

C. Our heavenly Father gives us good gifts.

1. "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. Or what man is there among you who, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!" (Mt. 7:7-11).
2. "Are not two sparrows sold for a copper coin? And not one of them falls to the ground apart from your Father's will. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows" (Mt. 10:29-31).

D. Our Father's love is seen in his salvation.

1. "Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and our God and Father, who has loved us and given *us* everlasting consolation and good hope by grace" (2 Thess. 2:16).
2. "What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written: 'For Your sake we are killed all day long; We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.' Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:31-39).
3. "Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is" (1 Jn. 3:1-2).

### III. You Can Make Your Heavenly Father Angry With You

A. "For the LORD your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God" (Deut. 4:24).

1. "...for you shall worship no other god, for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God" (Ex. 34:14).
2. "God is jealous, and the LORD avenges; The LORD avenges and is furious. The LORD will take vengeance on His adversaries, And He reserves wrath for His enemies; The LORD is slow to anger and great in power, And will not at all acquit the wicked. The LORD has His way In the whirlwind and in the storm, And the clouds are the dust of His feet" (Nahum 1:2-3).

B. Our heavenly Father hates sin and is angry with the sinner.

1. "These six things the LORD hates, Yes, seven are an abomination to Him: A proud look, A lying tongue, Hands that shed innocent blood, A heart that devises wicked plans, Feet that are swift in running to evil, A false witness who speaks lies, And one who sows discord among brethren" (Prov. 6:16-19).
2. "...so that there may not be among you man or woman or family or tribe, whose heart turns away today from the LORD our God, to go and serve the gods of these nations,

and that there may not be among you a root bearing bitterness or wormwood; and so it may not happen, when he hears the words of this curse, that he blesses himself in his heart, saying, 'I shall have peace, even though I follow the dictates of my heart'—as though the drunkard could be included with the sober. The LORD would not spare him; for then the anger of the LORD and His jealousy would burn against that man, and every curse that is written in this book would settle on him, and the LORD would blot out his name from under heaven" (Deut. 29:18-20).

3. " 'Woe to the rebellious children,' says the LORD, 'Who take counsel, but not of Me, And who devise plans, but not of My Spirit, That they may add sin to sin; Who walk to go down to Egypt, And have not asked My advice, To strengthen themselves in the strength of Pharaoh, And to trust in the shadow of Egypt! Therefore the strength of Pharaoh Shall be your shame, And trust in the shadow of Egypt Shall be your humiliation'" (Isa. 30:1-3).
4. "Rather, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice they sacrifice to demons and not to God, and I do not want you to have fellowship with demons. You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the Lord's table and of the table of demons. Or do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than He?" (1 Cor. 10:20-22).

#### **IV. You Can Hurt & Disappoint Your Heavenly Father**

A. Our heavenly Father is not only angry but hurt when you do wrong.

1. " 'But what do you think? A man had two sons, and he came to the first and said, "Son, go, work today in my vineyard." He answered and said, 'I will not,' but afterward he regretted it and went. Then he came to the second and said likewise. And he answered and said, "I go, sir," but he did not go. Which of the two did the will of his father?' They said to Him, 'The first.' Jesus said to them, 'Assuredly, I say to you that tax collectors and harlots enter the kingdom of God before you' " (Mt. 21:28-31).
2. Place yourself in this father's place. How would you feel if your son promised to go and work for you and then did not go? Wouldn't you feel angry? Wouldn't you feel hurt? Wouldn't you feel disappointed?

B. Time and again through the scriptures we can read of the pain, hurt and disappointment of the Father in heaven.

1. "I was sought by those who did not ask for Me; I was found by those who did not seek Me. I said, 'Here I am, here I am,' To a nation that was not called by My name. I have stretched out My hands all day long to a rebellious people, Who walk in a way that is not good, According to their own thoughts" (Isa. 65:1-2).
2. "Oh, that My people would listen to Me, That Israel would walk in My ways!" (Psa. 81:13).
3. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing!" (Mt. 23:37).

#### **V. Your Heavenly Father Has Compassion Toward You**

A. Our heavenly Father carries us like children.

1. Oh, to be carried like a child safe and secure in my father's arms. As a child, he seemed so strong, so big, so tender. I felt as though nothing could harm me as long as I was in my father's arms.

2. "There is no one like the God of Jeshurun, Who rides the heavens to help you, And in His excellency on the clouds. The eternal God is your refuge, And underneath are the everlasting arms; He will thrust out the enemy from before you, And will say, 'Destroy!' " (Deut. 33:26-27).
  3. "Even to your old age, I am He, And even to gray hairs I will carry you! I have made, and I will bear; Even I will carry, and will deliver you" (Isa. 46:4).
- B. Our heavenly Father has great compassion.
1. "The LORD is merciful and gracious, Slow to anger, and abounding in mercy. He will not always strive with us, Nor will He keep His anger forever. He has not dealt with us according to our sins, Nor punished us according to our iniquities. For as the heavens are high above the earth, So great is His mercy toward those who fear Him; As far as the east is from the west, So far has He removed our transgressions from us. As a father pities his children, So the LORD pities those who fear Him. For He knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust" (Psa. 103:8-14).
  2. "Hear, O LORD, when I cry with my voice! Have mercy also upon me, and answer me. When You said, 'Seek My face,' My heart said to You, 'Your face, LORD, I will seek.' Do not hide Your face from me; Do not turn Your servant away in anger; You have been my help; Do not leave me nor forsake me, O God of my salvation. When my father and my mother forsake me, Then the LORD will take care of me" (Psa. 27:7-10).
  3. "But Zion said, 'The LORD has forsaken me, And my Lord has forgotten me.' 'Can a woman forget her nursing child, And not have compassion on the son of her womb? Surely they may forget, Yet I will not forget you. See, I have inscribed you on the palms of My hands; Your walls are continually before Me" (Isa. 49:14-16).

## VI. You Can Make Your Heavenly Father Proud & Joyous

- A. When you were a child didn't you want to your very best so that your father would notice and be proud of you?
1. What child does not want to make his father proud and happy?
  2. Even as adults, we often do things and think how it would have pleased our father to know what we did.
  3. Your heavenly father wants to be proud and happy of his children. Wouldn't you want to make the God of heaven proud and pleased with you?
- B. Consider the three parables of Luke 15 and what they teach us of the pride and joy our heavenly father can have when we turn to him.
1. "What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he loses one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness, and go after the one which is lost until he finds it? And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbors, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost!' I say to you that likewise there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance" (Luke 15:4-7). "Even so it is not the will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish" (Mt. 18:14).
  2. "Or what woman, having ten silver coins, if she loses one coin, does not light a lamp, sweep the house, and search carefully until she finds it? And when she has found it, she calls her friends and neighbors together, saying, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found the piece which I lost!' Likewise, I say to you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents" (Lk. 15:8-10).
  3. (Read and comment on Luke 15:11-32)

**Conclusion:** What does your heavenly Father feel about you? Are you “the child of your Father which is in heaven?”

“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the tax collectors do so? Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect” (Mt. 5:43-48).

(Close with “My Father’s Eyes”)

## **My Father’s Eyes**

I may not be every mother’s dream for her little girl.  
And my face may not grace the mind of everyone in the world.  
But that’s all right as long as I can have one wish I pray.  
When people look inside my life, I want to hear them say.

She’s got her Father’s eyes, her Father’s eyes  
Eyes that find the good in things,  
When good is not around.  
Eyes that find the source of help,  
When help just can’t be found.  
Eyes full of compassion, seeing every pain.  
Knowin’ what you’re going through, and feeling it the same.  
Just like my Father’s eyes, my Father’s eyes, my Father’s eyes  
Just like my Father’s eyes.

And on that day when we will pay for all the deeds we have done,  
Good and bad they’ll all be had to see by everyone  
And when you’re called to stand and tell just what you saw in me,  
More than anything I know, I want your words to be,

She had her Father’s eyes, her Father’s eyes  
Eyes that found the good in things,  
When good was not around.  
Eyes that found the source of help,  
When help would not be found.  
Eyes full of compassion, seeing every pain.  
Knowin’ what you’re going through, and feeling it the same.  
Just like my Father’s eyes, my Father’s eyes, my Father’s eyes  
Just like my Father’s eyes.

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# Giants and Grasshoppers

## Numbers 13:32-33

**Introduction:** For 400 years the sons of Israel were in Egypt. From 70 persons they grew to a nation of over two million souls. Then there arose a Pharaoh who did not know Joseph and enslaved the Hebrews. The Lord remembered his promise to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and with a mighty hand he displayed his power through ten plagues and delivered Israel from their bondage. Miraculously, Israel crossed the Red Sea, then journeyed south to Mount Sinai. Over a year they camped at Sinai, while Moses received the law from God.

Then Israel marched to the southern edge of the promised land, Canaan. This was the land promised 400 years before, the land “flowing with milk and honey.” The Lord instructed Moses to send spies to spy out the land. “Send men to spy out the land of Canaan, which I am giving to the children of Israel; from each tribe of their fathers you shall send a man, every one a leader among them” (Num. 13:2). Notice that the Lord had already given Israel the land, yet they had to go in and possess the land.

The twelve spies were sent out. “So they went up and spied out the land from the Wilderness of Zin as far as Rehob, near the entrance of Hamath. And they went up through the South and came to Hebron; Ahiman, Sheshai, and Talmi, the descendants of Anak (the family of giants), were there. (Now Hebron was built seven years before Zoan in Egypt.) Then they came to the Valley of Eshcol, and there cut down a branch with one cluster of grapes; they carried it between two of them on a pole. They also brought some of the pomegranates and figs. The place was called the Valley of Eshcol, because of the cluster which the men of Israel cut down there. And they returned from spying out the land after forty days” (Num. 13:21-25).

### I. The Report: Giants!

#### A. The report of ten of the spies:

1. “Now they departed and came back to Moses and Aaron and all the congregation of the children of Israel in the Wilderness of Paran, at Kadesh; they brought back word to them and to all the congregation, and showed them the fruit of the land. Then they told him, and said: ‘We went to the land where you sent us. It truly flows with milk and honey, and this is its fruit. Nevertheless the people who dwell in the land are strong; the cities are fortified and very large; moreover we saw the descendants of Anak there. The Amalekites dwell in the land of the South; the Hittites, the Jebusites, and the Amorites dwell in the mountains; and the Canaanites dwell by the sea and along the banks of the Jordan’ ” (Num. 13:26-29).
2. “And they gave the children of Israel a bad report of the land which they had spied out, saying, ‘The land through which we have gone as spies is a land that devours its inhabitants, and all the people whom we saw in it are men of great stature. There we saw the giants (the descendants of Anak came from the giants); and we were like grasshoppers in our own sight, and so we were in their sight’ ” (Num. 13:32-33).

#### B. Synopsis of the report:

1. Ten spies admitted that the land was fruitful, just as God had said. It was indeed a land “flowing with milk and honey.”
2. “Nevertheless”—however, yet, but! A signal for an excuse. Watch out what comes

after a “nevertheless.”

3. Obstacles?
  - a. The people are strong.
  - b. The cities are large and fortified.
  - c. The land devours its inhabitants.
  - d. There are giants and we were “in our own sight” as grasshoppers.

## II. The Reaction: Moan, Murmur, Mutiny

A. The reaction of the people to the report of the ten spies.

1. “So all the congregation lifted up their voices and cried, and the people wept that night. And all the children of Israel complained against Moses and Aaron, and the whole congregation said to them, ‘If only we had died in the land of Egypt! Or if only we had died in this wilderness! Why has the LORD brought us to this land to fall by the sword, that our wives and children should become victims? Would it not be better for us to return to Egypt?’ So they said to one another, ‘Let us select a leader and return to Egypt’ ” (Num. 14:1-4).

B. Synopsis

1. **Moan**-Notice the immediate effect the report of the ten spies had on the people. They lifted up their voices and cried. They whimpered and whined all night.
2. **Murmur**-After the people got through moaning, they began to murmur. “If only we had died in Egypt or died in the wilderness.” They complained that their wives and children were going to be slain and plundered. They even went so far as to complain that they were better off in harsh bondage in Egypt.
3. **Mutiny**-The moaning turned into murmuring and the murmuring grew into outright mutiny. “Let us select a leader and return to Egypt,” the people plotted against Moses.
  - a. Moses later told of this rebellion. It was not just against Moses, it was against God.
  - b. “They also took some of the fruit of the land in their hands and brought it down to us; and they brought back word to us, saying, ‘It is a good land which the LORD our God is giving us.’ Nevertheless you would not go up, but **rebelled against the command of the LORD your God**; and you complained in your tents, and said, ‘Because the LORD hates us, He has brought us out of the land of Egypt to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites, to destroy us. Where can we go up? **Our brethren have discouraged our hearts**, saying, “The people are greater and taller than we; the cities are great and fortified up to heaven; moreover we have seen the sons of the Anakim there” ’ ” (Deut. 1:25-28).

## III. The Result: Failure

A. The rebellion caused the generation out of Egypt to fail to gain the promised land.

1. “ ‘How long shall I bear with this evil congregation who complain against Me? I have heard the complaints which the children of Israel make against Me. Say to them, “As I live,” says the LORD, “just as you have spoken in My hearing, so I will do to you: The carcasses of you who have complained against Me shall fall in this wilderness, all of you who were numbered, according to your entire number, from twenty years old and above. Except for Caleb the son of Jephunneh and Joshua the son of Nun, you shall by no means enter the land which I swore I would make you dwell in. But your little ones, whom you said would be victims, I will bring in, and they shall know the land which you have despised. But as for you, your carcasses shall fall in this wilderness. And

your sons shall be shepherds in the wilderness forty years, and bear the brunt of your infidelity, until your carcasses are consumed in the wilderness. According to the number of the days in which you spied out the land, forty days, for each day you shall bear your guilt one year, namely forty years, and you shall know My rejection. I the LORD have spoken this; I will surely do so to all this evil congregation who are gathered together against Me. In this wilderness they shall be consumed, and there they shall die' ” (Num. 14:27-35).

2. God gave the people just what they asked for.
  - a. They asked to die in the wilderness: “If only we had died in the land of Egypt! Or if only we had died in this wilderness!” (Num. 14:2).
  - b. God answered their prayer. “Say to them, ‘As I live,’ says the LORD, ‘just as you have spoken in My hearing, so I will do to you: The carcasses of you who have complained against Me shall fall in this wilderness, all of you who were numbered, according to your entire number, from twenty years old and above’ ” (Num. 14:28-29).
  - c. They complained their children would die. “Why has the LORD brought us to this land to fall by the sword, that our wives and children should become victims?” (Num. 14:3).
  - d. God answered their prayer. “But your little ones, whom you said would be victims, I will bring in, and they shall know the land which you have despised” (Num. 14:31).

#### IV. Giants Today

##### A. Consider the Christian life.

1. Through the mercy and grace of God Christians delivered from the bondage of sin and the taskmaster Satan with the mighty hand of God demonstrated in the glorious resurrection of Christ.
  - a. “...knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. For he who has died has been freed from sin” (Rom. 6:6-7).
  - b. “But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness” (Rom. 6:17-18).
2. As Israel was delivered from slavery to freedom, darkness to light through the Red Sea. Likewise, we are delivered through baptism in Christ.
  - a. “...all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea” (1 Cor. 10:2).
  - b. “Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life” (Rom. 6:3-4).
3. Now we stand ready to enter into the sweet rest of heaven that remains to the children of God, full of zeal, full of love, and we proclaim together, “All that the Lord commanded us, we will do.” We have seen the promises of the inheritance that awaits us. The captain of our salvation has gone before us. What will we do?

##### B. “Nevertheless”

1. How many pause, hesitate in uncertainty. “Nevertheless” yet, but, however, (Get ready for trouble...)
2. Yes, we have seen the land and we confess that it is a good land. But we have also seen

the obstacles that stand between us and our inheritance, the people are strong, the cities are large and fortified, the promise devours and there are giants and we are but grasshoppers in our own sight.

**C. Our Report: Giants!**

1. Work! Too often Christians are ready to possess the promises of God, but then they confront a little dirty four letter word, “work.” And there we saw the giants, great work to do and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight.
  - a. “Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling” (Phil. 2:12).
  - b. “...that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God” (Col. 1:10).
  - c. People do not like the word “work.” How do I know that? Mention a “work” party to clean the building and see how many show up. Just announce plans for personal “work” and watch people scatter.
  - d. “Work” is a giant and we are but grasshoppers in our own sight.
2. Other giants in the land?
  - a. Teaching Others
  - b. Attendance
  - c. Giving
  - d. The little distractions of life, job, car, busy work.
  - e. Family-Some allow their family to become an obstacle to the eternal promise.
  - f. Other members

**D. Our Reaction: Moan, Murmur, Mutiny**

Some people are like the ten spies. All they can see are the obstacles and the problems. Soon others are infected by their bad report.

1. **Moan**-Many Christians when confronted with the obstacles and problems lift their voices and cry all night long. “We cannot face it, we will not go up.” The progress of their spiritual lives and the church is stopped, their religion has lost its power, the only hymn they can now sing truly is “I Shall Not Be Moved.”
2. **Murmur**-After moaning, the murmuring begins. Murmuring over little things of life that irritate, detract and destroy. Dissatisfaction over anything and everything concerning other Christians, the church and/or the preacher.
  - a. When I think of murmuring, I cannot help but think of a couple of Christians I met several years ago. While I was in college, I was attending a congregation that had its share of problems. A new couple with three young children moved to town and began attending the congregation. At first, I considered them a welcome addition and strong workers. Then after to getting to know them better, I began to realize there was something very wrong. Every time I was around them, all they could do was complain: The congregation was awful and backward, the preacher was horrible, the classes were no good. How good and how much better were things back where we used to be. Why did we ever leave? We can’t wait to get out of here. Their attitude and grumbling affected several others and infected them with discontentment.
  - b. “How often we look upon grumbling as a little sin and not until we try to check ourselves in it do we find how complete is its possession of us, and how it is ready to spring upon us at all hours of the day under the slightest provocation...” The

preacher preaches too long, the singing is too slow, such and such a family is too snooty, no one is friendly to me, “and we are vexed and complain. It was a secret heart-grumble that led to Eve’s disobedience. Trace Israel’s downward course in Numbers, from discontent to lust, despising the Lord, speaking against His servants, provoking, tempting, doubting God, rebellion, presumption, discouragement, striving with, and speaking against God, and at last gross whoredom and idolatry” (unknown source quoted by Sidlow Baxter, *Explore The Book*, vol. 1, p. 176).

c. “Do all things without complaining and disputing” (Phil. 2:14).

#### 4. **Mutiny**

- a. When the moaning and complaining subsides, mutiny sets in. The problems are too great and we are small. There are giants and we are like grasshoppers in our own eyes.
- b. The rebellion spreads. Overnight ten men converted a camp of 2 million to unbelief. How quickly a congregation is embittered and destroyed.
- c. Some will just quit God.

#### E. **Our Result: Failure**

1. When we view our problems bigger than ourselves and we remove God from the picture, our failure is inevitable.
2. The downward spiral of moan, murmur and mutiny will take us to the level of grasshoppers in our own sight and in the sight of our giant problems.

### V. **Right Reaction: Action, Assurance, Allegiance**

#### A. **Action**

1. Caleb: “Then Caleb quieted the people before Moses, and said, ‘Let us go up at once and take possession, for we are well able to overcome it’ ” (Num. 13:30).
2. Instead of moaning, we need action! No hesitation, no backsliding, but determination and enthusiasm. Caleb and Joshua had tasted the promised land and no obstacle, no strong city, not even giants were going to stop them from entering.

#### B. **Assurance**

1. Moses: “Then I said to you, ‘Do not be terrified, or afraid of them. The LORD your God, who goes before you, He will fight for you, according to all He did for you in Egypt before your eyes’ ” (Deut. 1:29-30).
2. Murmuring is the coward’s way of showing dissatisfaction and dissatisfaction. It shows a lack of faith. We need bold, courageous faith. The assurance and confidence that God is with us, and who can stand against us.

#### C. **Allegiance**

1. In the face of a mutinous mob, Joshua and Caleb showed their faith and allegiance to the Lord and boldly stood their ground.
2. “If the LORD delights in us, then He will bring us into this land and give it to us, ‘a land which flows with milk and honey.’ Only do not rebel against the LORD, nor fear the people of the land, for they are our bread; their protection has departed from them, and the LORD is with us. Do not fear them” (Num. 14:8-9).
3. We need to humbly submit to God’s will. We need to have allegiance to his cause.

#### D. **God’s Result: Success!**

1. Submitting to God’s will and serving God’s way will succeed with God’s win.
2. The Hebrew writer uses the example of the rebellion in the wilderness to warn and exhort us. “Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says: ‘Today, if you will hear His voice, Do

not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, In the day of trial in the wilderness, Where your fathers tested Me, tried Me, And saw My works forty years. Therefore I was angry with that generation, And said, “They always go astray in their heart, And they have not known My ways.” So I swore in My wrath, “They shall not enter My rest.” Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God; but exhort one another daily, while it is called ‘Today,’ lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. For we have become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end, while it is said: ‘Today, if you will hear His voice, Do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion.’ For who, having heard, rebelled? Indeed, *was it* not all who came out of Egypt, led by Moses? Now with whom was He angry forty years? *Was it* not with those who sinned, whose corpses fell in the wilderness? And to whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest, but to those who did not obey? So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief. Therefore, since a promise remains of entering His rest, let us fear lest any of you seem to have come short of it. For indeed the gospel was preached to us as well as to them; but the word which they heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard it” (Heb. 3:7-4:2).

**Conclusion:** When the time comes that we are faced with obstacles to faith’s goal, what do we see?

Ten men who failed to see God  
Saw cities impregnably high;  
Two men, “looking off” unto God,  
Saw doom for those cities draw nigh.

Ten men who failed to see God  
Saw giant affrightingly tall;  
Two men, “looking off” unto God,  
Saw giants as grasshoppers small.

Ten men who failed to see God,  
Reported, “We’re certain to fail”;  
Two men, “looking off” unto God,  
Cried, “Up! for with God we prevail.”

Ten men who failed to see God  
Discouraged their brother men;  
Two men perceived *God everywhere*;  
Are you of the two—or the ten?

Sidlow Baxter, *Explore The Book*, vol. 1, p. 178

# What Is And Is Not Sin

## 1 John 3:4

**Introduction**-There is a great need among Christians to know and understand what sin is. It is just as important to know what sin is not.

### I. Sin Is: Sins of Transgression

#### A. Doing what God forbids.

1. Another way to put this is “breaking” the “Thou shalt nots.”
2. “Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law” (1 Jn. 3:4) (KJV).
3. This is a fundamental definition, the basis for understanding what is sin.

#### B. The “law” is the “law of God” (Rom. 7:25).

1. This law is also called “the law of faith” (Rom. 3:27) and “the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 8:2)
2. This is not the law of Moses, given to the Jews under the Old Testament Covenant, but the “law of Christ” given for all men under the New Testament Covenant (Gal. 6:2).

#### C. To “transgress” is to go beyond the boundaries or limits.

1. God’s law puts up a “no trespassing” sign on certain kinds of acts or behaviors.
2. When one goes beyond the limits of God he has sinned.

#### D. Most understand these sins.

1. We are not going to spend time discussing sins of transgression in this lesson since these sins should be self-explanatory.
2. While we are going to examine other “kinds” of sins, all sin must be found as a transgression of God’s law or it is not sin.
3. Mistaken or erroneous ideas of sin are concepts or opinions of men, not from God’s law.

### II. Sin Is: Sins of Omission

#### A. Too many make sins of “omission” a box they dump everything they feel bad about into and call it a “sin of omission.”

1. I have heard many Christians make the comment, “I don’t commit the big sins, but there are many sins I don’t know about. I suppose I commit many sins of omission.”
2. Some mistakenly believe that sins of omission are sins of ignorance. “The facts of the matter are these: when one obeys the gospel of Christ there are some sins that are done in ignorance both through omission and commission” (“John Calvin and Continual Cleansing,” *Gospel Truths*, vol. 4, no. 7, July 1993, p.3).
3. Let us understand something very fundamental about sins of omission. A sin of omission is not and cannot be a sin of ignorance.

#### B. “Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin” (Jas. 4:17).

1. The sinner knows to do good.
2. The sinner does not do the good he know to do.
3. By James’ definition, a sin of commission requires:
  - a. knowledge,
  - b. opportunity, and,
  - c. a wilful refusal to act.

4. The sin that James refers to is not something unknown or vague. It is known, “knows to do,” and it is wilfully refusing to act, “does not do it.”
  5. The examples show that sins of omission are obvious, wilful sins of which the sinner is well aware of.
- C. Examples of sins of omission.
1. “And that servant who knew his master’s will, and did not prepare himself or do according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes” (Lk. 12:47).
    - a. This servant knew to do good: his Lord’s will.
    - b. And he did not do it, he did not prepare himself, nor did according to his Lord’s will.
    - c. This fits James’ definition exactly.
  2. The rich young ruler (Mark 10:17-22).
    - a. The rich young ruler knew do to good, Jesus told him exactly what he needed to do.
    - b. The young man did not do it.
    - c. He committed a sin of omission.
  3. The Levite and priest in the parable of the good Samaritan committed sins of omission (Luke 10:30-37).
    - a. The Levite and the Priest knew the right and good thing to do.
    - b. Under the Law they had a duty to help those in distress even their enemies (Deut. 22:4; Ex. 23:4-5; Isa. 58:7).
    - c. Even though they knew the right thing to do, they did not do it.
    - d. They were guilty of the sin of omission.
  4. The “one talent” man in the parable of the Talents committed the sin of which James refers. “Then he who had received the one talent came and said, ‘Lord, **I knew** you to be a hard man, reaping where you have not sown, and gathering where you have not scattered seed. And I was afraid, and went and hid your talent in the ground. Look, there you have what is yours.’ But his lord answered and said to him, ‘You wicked and lazy servant, **you knew** that I reap where I have not sown, and gather where I have not scattered seed. So you ought to have deposited my money with the bankers, and at my coming I would have received back my own with interest’ ” (Mt. 25:24-27).
    - a. By his own mouth the “one talent” man condemned himself. He said, “Lord I knew you...” (vs. 24) the servant knew the right and good thing to do.
    - b. The servant’s Lord confirmed his servant’s knowledge: “you knew” (vs. 26).
    - c. Even though he did know what the good thing to do was, the servant did not do it.
    - d. The lord condemned the servant as wicked because he knew what he ought to have done, but he did not. He committed the sin of omission.

### III. Sin Is: Sins of Ignorance

- A. There is a third category or kind of sin that often gives people a lot of problems.
1. Most of the problems are a result of people trying to define sins of ignorance in their own terms rather than from the Bible (1 John 3:4).
  2. Many view sins of ignorance as those things that one does wrong that he does not know of, cannot know of and/or cannot remember.
- B. Sins of ignorance bring guilt and condemnation.
1. Under the Law of Moses. “If a person sins, and commits any of these things which are forbidden to be done by the commandments of the LORD, **though he does not know it, yet he is guilty and shall bear his iniquity**. And he shall bring to the priest a ram

without blemish from the flock, with your valuation, as a trespass offering. So the priest shall make atonement for him regarding his ignorance in which he erred and did not know it, and it shall be forgiven him” (Lev. 5:17-18).

2. Under the New Covenant of Christ. “But **he who did not know**, yet committed things deserving of stripes, **shall be beaten** with few. For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more” (Lk. 12:48).

C. Why are sins of ignorance blameworthy? Because:

1. The sinner could have and should have known.
  - a. God will not allow us to be tempted beyond what we are able to bear.
    - 1) “No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it” (1 Cor. 10:13).
    - 2) This certainly applies to all sin including sins of ignorance.
  - b. God has manifested a knowledge of sin:
    - 1) “manifest” *phaneroo* “1) to make manifest or visible or known what has been hidden or unknown, to manifest, whether by words, or deeds, or in any other way 1a) make actual and visible, realized; to make known by teaching; to become manifest, be made known; of a person, expose to view, make manifest, to show one’s self, appear; to become known, to be plainly recognized, thoroughly understood: who and what one is” (*Strong’s*, #5319).
    - 2) To atheists: “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, **because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them**” (Rom. 1:18-19).
    - 3) To all nations: “...but now **has been made manifest**, and by the prophetic Scriptures has been made known to all nations, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, **for obedience to the faith—**” (Rom. 16:26).
    - 4) To Christians:
      - a) “...having **made known to us** the mystery of **His will**, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself,” (Eph. 1:9).
      - b) “...the mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now **has been revealed to His saints**” (Col. 1:26).
2. The sinner has refused, rejected or conveniently “forgotten” knowledge.
  - a. Ignorance from refusing and rejecting knowledge.
    - 1) “My people are **destroyed for lack of knowledge**. Because **you have rejected knowledge**, I also will reject you from being priest for Me; Because **you have forgotten the law of your God**, I also will forget your children. The more they increased, The more they sinned against Me; I will change their glory into shame. They eat up the sin of My people; They set their heart on their iniquity. And it shall be: like people, like priest. So I will punish them for their ways, And reward them for their deeds” (Hos. 4:6-9).
    - 2) “Why has this people slidden back, Jerusalem, in a perpetual backsliding? They hold fast to deceit, They refuse to return. I listened and heard, But they do not speak aright. No man repented of his wickedness, Saying, ‘What have I done?’ Everyone turned to his own course, As the horse rushes into the battle. “**Even the**

**stork in the heavens Knows her appointed times**; And the turtledove, the swift, and the swallow Observe the time of their coming. **But My people do not know the judgment of the LORD**. How can you say, 'We are wise, And the law of the LORD *is* with us'? Look, the false pen of the scribe certainly works falsehood. The wise men are ashamed, They are dismayed and taken. Behold, **they have rejected the word of the LORD; So what wisdom do they have?**" (Jer. 8:5-9).

3) "His watchmen are blind, **They are all ignorant**; They are all dumb dogs, They cannot bark; Sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber. Yes, they are greedy dogs Which never have enough. And they are shepherds **Who cannot understand**; **They all look to their own way**, Every one for his own gain, From his own territory. 'Come,' one says, 'I will bring wine, And we will fill ourselves with intoxicating drink; Tomorrow will be as today, And much more abundant' " (Isa. 56:10-12).

4) "Let them alone. They are blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind leads the blind, both will fall into a ditch" (Mt. 15:14).

b. Ignorance from conveniently forgetting God and his Law.

1) "My people are **destroyed for lack of knowledge**. Because **you have rejected knowledge**, I also will reject you from being priest for Me; Because **you have forgotten the law of your God**, I also will forget your children" (Hos. 4:6).

2) "And even as **they did not like to retain God in their knowledge**, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting" (Rom. 1:28).

3) "**Because you have forgotten the God of your salvation**, And have not been mindful of the Rock of your stronghold, Therefore you will plant pleasant plants And set out foreign seedlings; In the day you will make your plant to grow, And in the morning you will make your seed to flourish; But the harvest will be a heap of ruins In the day of grief and desperate sorrow" (Isa. 17:10-11).

3. The sinner is without excuse in ignorance and blameworthy.

a. The ignorant Gentiles were without excuse when they sinned against God. "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because **what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them**. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that **they are without excuse**, because, although **they knew God**, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened....And even as **they did not like to retain God in their knowledge**, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting; being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; they are whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful; **who, knowing the righteous judgment of God**, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them" (Rom. 1:18-21, 28-32).

b. Ignorant Jews?

1) If the Gentiles were without excuse for their sins without God's Written Law,

how much more were the Jews without excuse.

- 2) They certainly could not plead innocence from their sins because of ignorance. They had and knew God's will.
- 3) "Therefore **you are inexcusable**, O man, whoever you are who judge, for in whatever you judge another you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things....Indeed you are called a Jew, and rest on the law, and make your boast in God, and **know His will**, and approve the things that are excellent, **being instructed out of the law**, and are confident that you yourself are a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness, an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, having the form of knowledge and truth in the law. You, therefore, who teach another, do you not teach yourself? You who preach that a man should not steal, do you steal? You who say, 'Do not commit adultery,' do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples? You who make your boast in the law, do you dishonor God through breaking the law?" (Rom. 2:1, 17-23).

c. Ignorant Christians?

- 1) Which group more closely applies to Christians today?
- 2) The ignorant Gentiles without God's revealed Will or the Jews who had God's Will?
- 3) One cannot become a Christian without knowing the will of God and being instructed out of the law.
- 4) One cannot enter and be a part of the New Covenant without this knowledge. "For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: **I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts**; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. None of them shall teach his neighbor, and none his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for **all shall know Me**, from the least of them to the greatest of them" (Heb. 8:10-11).
- 5) Christians who sin in ignorance are without excuse!

D. Examples of sins of ignorance

1. The Jews who sinned in ignorance in the OT.

- a. "The **ox knows its owner And the donkey its master's crib; But Israel does not know, My people do not consider**. Alas, sinful nation, A people laden with iniquity, A brood of evildoers, Children who are corrupters! They have forsaken the LORD, They have provoked to anger The Holy One of Israel, They have turned away backward" (Isa. 1:3-4).
- b. "Therefore my people have gone into captivity, Because **they have no knowledge**; Their honorable men are famished, And their multitude dried up with thirst" (Isa. 5:13).
- c. "For My people are foolish, They have **not known Me**. They are silly children, And they have **no understanding**. They are wise to do evil, But **to do good they have no knowledge**" (Jer. 4:22).
- d. "O LORD, are not Your eyes on the truth? You have stricken them, But they have not grieved; You have consumed them, But they have refused to receive correction. They have made their faces harder than rock; They have refused to return. Therefore I said, 'Surely these are poor. They are foolish; For **they do not know the way of the LORD**, The judgment of their God. I will go to the great men and speak to them, For they have known the way of the LORD, The judgment of their God.' But these

have altogether broken the yoke And burst the bonds. Therefore a lion from the forest shall slay them, A wolf of the deserts shall destroy them; A leopard will watch over their cities. Everyone who goes out from there shall be torn in pieces, Because their transgressions are many; Their backslidings have increased” (Jer. 5:3-6).

- e. “Hear this now, O foolish people, **Without understanding**, Who have eyes and see not, And who have ears and hear not...But this people has a defiant and rebellious heart; They have revolted and departed” (Jer. 5:21, 23).
  - f. “Hear the word of the LORD, You children of Israel, For the LORD brings a charge against the inhabitants of the land: **‘There is no truth or mercy Or knowledge of God in the land.** By swearing and lying, Killing and stealing and committing adultery, They break all restraint, With bloodshed upon bloodshed’ ” (Hos. 4:1-2).
  - g. The Jews that sinned in ignorance:
    - 1) They could have and should have known God’s will.
    - 2) They refused, rejected and forgot knowledge.
    - 3) They were without excuse in ignorance and blameworthy.
2. The Jews who crucified Christ sinned in ignorance. “But you denied the Holy One and the Just, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, and killed the Prince of life...Yet now, brethren, I know that **you did it in ignorance**, as did also your rulers.... **Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out**, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord” (Acts 3:14-15, 17, 19).
    - a. They could have and should have known. “For those who dwell in Jerusalem, and their rulers, because they did not know Him, nor even the voices of the Prophets which are read every Sabbath, have fulfilled them in condemning Him” (Acts 13:27).
    - b. They refused and rejected knowledge.
    - c. They were without excuse for their ignorance. Jesus explained, “If I had not come and spoken to them, they would have no sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin” (Jn. 15:22).
    - d. They were blameworthy in their ignorance and God condemned them in their ignorance.
  3. Paul sinned in ignorance by blaspheming God and persecuting Christians. “...although I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man; but I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief” (1 Tim. 1:13).
    - a. Paul could have and should have known the Messiah, the Christ.
    - b. Paul refused and rejected knowledge.
    - c. Paul was without excuse for his ignorance.
    - d. Paul was blameworthy in his ignorance and God condemned Paul in his ignorance.

#### IV. Sin Is Not: Not Being All Knowing

- A. Some Christians seem to get the idea that if they do not know everything there is to know that they are sinning.
- B. The Lord never asked nor expected us to know everything there is to know. All he asks us to know is the truth, to obey him and keep from sin.
  1. God has revealed to us what we need to know. “The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but those things which are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law” (Deut. 29:29).

- a. The things God has not revealed, we do not need to know.
- b. The things God has revealed we can know and obey.
2. We can know the truth. “And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (Jn. 8:32).
  - a. “Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments” (1 Jn. 2:3).
  - b. “But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him” (1 Jn. 2:5).

#### V. Sin Is Not: Trying And Failing At A Task

- A. Some Christians seem to believe that not succeeding at some task.
  1. Because set a task before me and I try and fail does not necessarily make me a sinner.
  2. I am not speaking of the task of keeping from sin, nor doing what God commands. Failing and falling short of God’s commands is sin.
  3. But there are tasks, work or jobs I might be given or take on that I might fail at and still not sin.
  4. I may feel bad, I may feel like a failure, but this does not make me a sinner.
- B. Example—Jeremiah may appear to be a failure.
  1. He preached all his life to Israel and from all appearances he failed.
  2. Most refused to listen to him and the nation went further into apostasy and then captivity.

#### VI. Sin Is Not: Simply Making A Mistake

- A. Every sin is a mistake, but not every mistake is a sin.
  1. Some seem to throw around the notion, “If I am not perfect, that is, if I make any kind of mistake, then I must be sinning.”
  2. Many things we do are matters of judgment. We all will make mistakes of judgment, this does not necessarily mean we have sinned.
- B. Examples
  1. Eli mistakenly believing Hannah was drunk.
    - a. “Now Hannah spoke in her heart; only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard. Therefore Eli thought she was drunk. So Eli said to her, ‘How long will you be drunk? Put your wine away from you!’ And Hannah answered and said, ‘No, my lord, I am a woman of sorrowful spirit. I have drunk neither wine nor intoxicating drink, but have poured out my soul before the LORD’ ” (1 Sam. 1:13-15).
    - b. I do not know how many times I have heard Christians try to make a sin of ignorance out of one saying something that another took offense at and didn’t tell them? Pray tell where in the scriptures is this a sin? It may be a mistake, but it is not a sin.
  2. A man mistakenly putting poison in pottage. “So one went out into the field to gather herbs, and found a wild vine, and gathered from it a lapful of wild gourds, and came and sliced them into the pot of stew, though they did not know what they were. Then they served it to the men to eat. Now it happened, as they were eating the stew, that they cried out and said, ‘Man of God, there is death in the pot!’ And they could not eat it. So he said, ‘Then bring some flour.’ And he put it into the pot, and said, ‘Serve it to the people, that they may eat.’ And there was nothing harmful in the pot” (2 Ki. 4:39-41). He made a serious mistake that could have killed people, but he did not sin.

## **VII. Sin Is Not: Simply Feeling Depressed**

- A. Feeling depressed does not necessary mean you have sinned.
  - 1. Depression is a very serious problem.
  - 2. Depression might come from guilt for sin, it might move one to sin, it might make one feel guilty though sin is not present, but depression alone is not sin.
- B. Examples
  - 1. Elijah appears to have suffered from depression. But his depression was not sinful. “And there he went into a cave, and spent the night in that place; and behold, the word of the LORD came to him, and He said to him, ‘What are you doing here, Elijah? So he said, ‘I have been very zealous for the LORD God of hosts; for the children of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, torn down Your altars, and killed Your prophets with the sword. I alone am left; and they seek to take my life’ ” (1 Ki. 19:9-10).
  - 2. Jesus became “exceedingly sorrowful” but did not sin.
    - a. “Then He said to them, ‘My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death. Stay here and watch with Me’ ” (Mt. 26:38; Mk. 14:34).
    - b. “Therefore, when Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her weeping, He groaned in the spirit and was troubled” (Jn. 11:33).

## **VIII. Sin Is Not: Simply Feeling Weak**

- A. Being a “weak” Christian does not mean that you are sinning. Some have the impression that those who are “weak” means they sin a lot.
- B. The New Testament uses the term “weak” and “strong” to refer to the strength of one’s faith.
  - 1. These terms are not in reference to sin, i.e., those weak are sinning and those strong are not.
  - 2. Those who are “weak” are “weak in faith,” those who are “strong” are “strong in faith.” (Rom 4:19; 14:1; 15:1; 1 Cor. 8:11-12; 9:22; 2 Cor. 13:9).
    - a. God expects all Christians whether they are “weak” or “strong” to keep from sin.
    - b. Example—When Paul said he became “as weak” that he might win some (1 Cor. 9:22), he did not mean he started giving into temptation more.

## **IX. Sin Is Not: Simply Feeling Guilty**

- A. Sin should make us feel guilty, but just feeling guilty does not necessarily mean you have sinned.
- B. I object to calling Christians “weak and sinful.”
  - 1. There are several reasons, one of which is, the term makes Christians feel guilty without specifying or convicting them of sin in their lives.
  - 2. For example, on the day of Pentecost, Peter preached and taught the Jews gathered together that they had committed sin by crucifying Jesus (Acts 2:36). Some responded by feeling guilty of the sin they had committed and asked what to do about it (Acts 2:37). Peter told them how to remove their sin (Acts 3:38). Notice, he did not give them a general feeling of guilt, he told them wherein they had sinned and this brought guilt.
  - 3. There are Christians who are doing the best they can with the ability and opportunity that God has given them, yet they still have a vague feeling guilt that they are not doing enough.
  - 4. Brothers and sisters in Christ, do the best you can with what God has given you and

rejoice, don't feel guilty.

C. Examples

1. Job's friends tried their best to make Job feel guilty about something he had done in his life (e.g. Job. 11:4-6).
  - a. Job insisted he was not guilty of anything (Job 19:1-4).
  - b. Instead of trying to make him feel guilty, Job asked his friends to show him where he had sinned that he might repent (Job 6:24-30).
  - c. Bildad told Job that no man can be righteous before God and man is a maggot and a worm (Job 25:4-6). Bildad's language is very similar to the language some use to describe how sinful Christians are. His language has even been incorporated into popular hymns. But Bildad was not an inspired man. His doctrine and language was error.
  - d. Job refuted Bildad (Job 27:3-6).
  - e. The Lord vindicated Job's righteousness and condemned Job's friends for speaking against Job (Job 42:7-8).
2. David felt bad about cutting off part of Saul's robe, but he did not sin in doing so (1 Sam. 24:4-6, 9-12, 17-19).

**X. Sin Is Not: Enjoying Life**

A. Some feel guilty for enjoying life.

1. They feel as if they do something enjoyable, take a vacation, relax, recreation that some how they are not using their time right for the Lord.

B. The Lord never commanded or expected his people to work 24 hours a day.

1. Under the Law of Moses, the Sabbath rest was given in part to teach men the need for rest.
2. "Rejoice, O young man, in your youth, And let your heart cheer you in the days of your youth; Walk in the ways of your heart, And in the sight of your eyes; But know that for all these God will bring you into judgment. Therefore remove sorrow from your heart, And put away evil from your flesh, For childhood and youth are vanity" (Eccl. 11:9-10).

C. Example—Jesus enjoyed life. Was he sinning when he went to a wedding ceremony? or to feasts? when he retired from the crowds? No.

**XI. Sin and Christian Growth**

A. When Christians discuss sin, sooner or later someone wants to talk about the "new" Christian and sin.

1. There is the idea that new Christians are ignorant of what is sinful.
2. And we need to figure out some third law of pardon, some new way new way of forgiveness for new Christians because of all the sins of ignorance they are committing.

B. Some sins vary according to the time, growth and ability of the Christian.

1. "For though by this time you ought to be teachers..." (Heb. 5:12).
2. "...as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby" (1 Pet. 2:2).
3. Example: Anger
  - a. Different individuals have different abilities.
  - b. At what point does anger become a sin?

- c. It depends upon time, growth and ability. God will judge that in each one of us.
- C. Some sins are wrong regardless of who commits them or the circumstances, the time, growth or ability of the Christian.
  - 1. Adultery is always wrong—"Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge" (Heb. 13:4).
  - 2. Theft
  - 3. Murder
- D. Examples of a new Christians who sinned and were held accountable for their sin.
  - 1. Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5).
  - 2. Simon the sorcerer (Acts 8).

## **XII. Sin and the "Hypothetical"**

- A. Everyone seems to come up with a "hypothetical case" that "proves" the exception to what God says about sin and its remedy.
- B. The "hypothetical" usually runs like this...
  - 1. There is a man who has been a good Christian all of his life. In a moment of weakness he becomes angry and says or does something he shouldn't. Suddenly, he steps out into the traffic, he is hit by a bus and dies instantly.
  - 2. What about him?
- C. Hypotheticals gone wild.
  - 1. First, we do not preach and act upon the basis of hypotheticals. Sound doctrine is not built upon hypotheticals of "exceptional cases."
  - 2. Second, this example sounds just like the Baptists. Tell a Baptist that baptism is necessary for salvation and they are likely to concoct a hypothetical "exceptional case."
    - a. I am sure you have all heard about the good believing man who was on his way to the baptistery and died.
    - b. Or what about the dying man in the desert?
    - c. Do these mean that God does not require baptism?
    - d. What about a person who just heard the Word, believed and before he had a chance to repent, he fell down dead?
  - 6. Third, these hypotheticals really question the goodness, mercy and longsuffering nature of God.
    - a. Some make up hypotheticals as though God was not in the picture or as though he was sitting waiting for us to sin so he could zap us into hell.
    - b. God is longsuffering with us. "The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance" (2 Pet. 3:9).
- D. God's longsuffering gives us time and opportunity to repent.
  - 1. "Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?" (Rom. 2:4).
  - 2. "The LORD is merciful and gracious, Slow to anger, and abounding in mercy. He will not always strive with us, Nor will He keep His anger forever" (Psa. 103:8-9).
  - 3. Paul—"And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has enabled me, because He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry, although I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man; but I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. And the grace of our Lord was exceedingly abundant, with faith and love which are in Christ Jesus" (1 Tim. 1:12-14).

4. Jezebel—“Nevertheless I have a few things against you, because you allow that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce My servants to commit sexual immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols. And I gave her time to repent of her sexual immorality, and she did not repent. Indeed I will cast her into a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of their deeds” (Rev. 2:20-22).
  - a. Was Jezebel in a lost or saved condition, while she was committing adultery?
  - b. She was lost and needed to repent.

**Conclusion:** Let us recognize what sin is, a transgression of God’s law and keep from it. Let us recognize what sin is not, man’s opinion, and not worry ourselves with guilt over matters that are not sin.

## “If”

### 2 Timothy 2:11-13

**Introduction:** “You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also. You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of *this* life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier. And also if anyone competes in athletics, he is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules. The hard-working farmer must be first to partake of the crops. Consider what I say, and may the Lord give you understanding in all things. Remember that Jesus Christ, of the seed of David, was raised from the dead according to my gospel, for which I suffer trouble as an evildoer, *even* to the point of chains; but the word of God is not chained. Therefore I endure all things for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory” (2 Tim. 2:1-10).

Paul encourages Timothy to be strong in the faith. Timothy had been entrusted with the very Word of God. Timothy was going to have to suffer hardship and endure difficulties. Paul told Timothy to remember the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Paul pointed to himself who endured all things.

Why do we need to be strong? Why should we suffer hardship? Why must we endure? Paul tells us why with a “faithful saying.” This is the reason that you can rely upon, you can trust upon. “This is a faithful saying: ‘For if we died with Him, We shall also live with Him. If we endure, We shall also reign with Him. If we deny Him, He also will deny us. If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself’ (2 Tim. 2:11-13).

Paul’s faithful saying contains four “ifs.” Thayer identifies this word from the Greek as a “conditional particle.” The dictionary defines “if” as “a condition, stipulation.” Yet some make the claim that there are no conditions to salvation? That salvation is unconditional? Yet Paul gives us four “ifs” four conditions or stipulations that precede salvation.

You do not have to be a rocket scientist or a Harvard theology PhD to understand the Bible. You don’t have to understand words that have many syllables and a string of letters. If you can understand little, two letter words.

“If” is such a small word. Only two letters. Yet if presents a vast gulf of eternity that can only be spanned by the condition it presents. In *Fiddler On The Roof* the main character, Tevei, was a poor dairy farmer living in rural Russia. At one point he sings of his hopes and dreams in the song, “If I Were A Rich Man...” “If” presents a condition that separates Tevei from his dreams. If Tevei were a rich man, he wouldn’t have to work hard, his wife would have the finest clothes and he would build a big house right in the middle of town, if, if, if...

#### I. The “If” of Life

##### A. Condition: “Die With Christ”

1. “If we die with Christ” is a condition, a requirement, a stipulation!
2. How can we die with Christ?
  - a. The Bible only tells us of only one way to die with Christ: in baptism.

- b. "Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death?" (Rom. 6:3).
- 3. When we die with Christ, we die to some things.
  - a. We die to self. "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me" (Gal. 2:20).
  - b. We die to the lusts of the flesh. "And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires" (Gal. 5:24).
  - c. We die to the world. "But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world" (Gal. 6:14).

**B. Then: "Live With Christ"**

- 1. If one does not meet the condition of dying with Christ, they cannot, they will not live with Christ.
- 2. Christ made the promise of life. "Jesus said to her, 'I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live' " (Jn. 11:25).
- 3. This new life begins at baptism. "Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection" (Rom. 6:4-5).
- 4. What does this new life mean?
  - a. A new conduct. "For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again. Therefore, from now on, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him thus no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new" (2 Cor. 5:14-17).
  - b. Example: A caterpillar is a slow, awkward, rather ugly creature. Yet one day it climbs up on a branch, spins a cocoon and appears to die to the world. But in that apparent death, the caterpillar, changes, transforms, metamorphoses. It changes its form, its shape, its actions. The day comes when it crawls out of the cocoon, the same creature, but yet completely different. Now it is a butterfly. Now it can fly instead of crawl. Now it is graceful, instead of awkward. Now it is splashed with beautiful colors and wings, instead of an ugly worm. But suppose the butterfly came out of its cocoon and instead of gracefully flying away, it continued to act like the ugly caterpillar it once was. It crawled along the ground. Wouldn't you want to tell the butterfly, "You're a butterfly now, not a caterpillar. Quit acting like a caterpillar." And so it is with Christians. You are a butterfly. Quit acting like a caterpillar.
  - c. "...if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus: that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness" (Eph. 4:21-24).
- 5. Ultimately this new life can lead to the resurrection. "For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus" (1 Thess. 4:14).

## II. The “If” of Glory

### A. *Condition:* Endure

1. Don’t believe those who say we do not have to remain faithful, to endure to be rewarded.
2. Jesus said, “And you will be hated by all for My name’s sake. But he who endures to the end will be saved” (Mt. 10:22).
3. We must endure hardship to gain glory.
  - a. “You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ” (2 Tim. 2:3).
  - b. “But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry” (2 Tim. 4:5).
  - c. They want to win, but they do not want to work. They want to gain the end, without any endurance. Far too many want glory, but they don’t have the guts.
4. We must endure sound doctrine. Some will not. “For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers” (2 Tim. 4:3).

### B. *Then:* Reign With Christ

1. If we endure, we will reign with Christ. But not if we do not meet the condition.
2. “Indeed we count them blessed who endure. You have heard of the perseverance of Job and seen the end intended by the Lord—that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful” (Jas. 5:11).
3. We reign now. “And have made us kings and priests to our God; And we shall reign on the earth” (Rev. 5:10).
4. We reign with Christ. “To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne” (Rev. 3:21).
5. We will reign with Christ forever. “And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him. They shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads. There shall be no night there: They need no lamp nor light of the sun, for the Lord God gives them light. And they shall reign forever and ever” (Rev. 22:3-5).
6. Example: Shirley Stouffer was the wife of LA Stouffer, a gospel preacher. Shirley was a remarkable Christian woman. She had one of the most pleasant and optimistic outlooks of anyone I ever met. Her pleasant attitude did not change when it was discovered that she had cancer and began under going treatment. Eventually Shirley lost her battle with cancer. But the last time I saw her, she was smiling and laughing as she always did. She told about being in the hospital for treatments. Her friends had filled her hospital room with flowers. A new nurse came into Shirley’s room and was shocked by all the flowers. “Who are you?” she asked. Shirley told her, “I’m royalty, I’m the child of a King.”

## III. The “If” of Condemnation

### A. *Condition:* Deny Christ

1. “But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven” (Mt. 10:33).
2. “Then He said to them all, ‘If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it. For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and is himself destroyed or lost? For whoever is

ashamed of Me and My words, of him the Son of Man will be ashamed when He comes in His own glory, and in His Father's, and of the holy angels' ” (Lk. 9:23-26).

3. You do not have to say, “I deny Christ.” You deny him if you do not accept Him. “He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God” (Jn. 3:18).

B. *Then*: Christ Deny

1. “And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’ ” (Mt. 7:23).
2. The saddest words ever to be spoken.
3. Millions will hear them pronounced.

#### IV. The “If” of Faithlessness

A. *Condition*: Faithless

1. Some have the idea that if they don't believe in God, somehow he will cease to exist or maybe he will over look or excuse their unbelief.
2. Example: A young man agreed to play Hide and Seek with a precocious boy. The young man turned to count to ten. He turned around and the boy was standing in front of him with his eyes closed. “I found you,” the young man announced. “No you haven't. I do not see you, therefore, you do not exist,” the boy replied. How many people are playing Existential Hide and Seek with God. They close their eyes to the evidence before them and then they claim, “I don't see God, therefore he does not exist.
3. “He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned” (Mk. 16:16).

B. *Yet*: God is Faithful

1. It does not matter whether or not men are faithless. God will be faithful. God will do just exactly as he has promised in His Word.
2. It would not matter whether every man upon the face of the earth rejected God, God would still keep His Word. “For what if some did not believe? Will their unbelief make the faithfulness of God without effect? Certainly not! Indeed, let God be true but every man a liar. As it is written: ‘That You may be justified in Your words, And may overcome when You are judged’ ” (Rom. 3:3-4).
3. “God is not a man, that He should lie, Nor a son of man, that He should repent. Has He said, and will He not do? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?” (Num. 23:19).
4. “Let us hold fast the confession of *our* hope without wavering, for He who promised *is* faithful” (Heb. 10:23).

**Conclusion:** Have you meet the conditions of life and glory? Or have you meet the “if” of condemnation? Meet God's “ifs,” His conditions, die with Christ in baptism, endure with Christ through hardship and suffering and you will live and reign with Christ forever.

# The God of the Towel

## John 13:4-5

**Introduction:** Have you ever wanted to do something great? Have you ever wanted to be someone great? All of us at one time or another dream of greatness. But what is true greatness? Even the apostles of Jesus desired to be great in the kingdom, but the Lord had to correct their misconceptions about greatness.

### I. The Apostles' Argument—Luke 22:24

A. An argument arose among the 12 during the “Last Supper.”

1. “Now there was also a dispute among them, as to which of them should be considered the greatest” (Luke 22:24).
2. It seems indeed strange that while the Lord agonized over his imminent betrayal, suffering and crucifixion, his apostles were bickering about which one of them should be the greatest.

B. Sadly, this was not the first or only time they had argued over who among their number would be the greatest.

1. On the road to Capernaum—“Then He came to Capernaum. And when He was in the house He asked them, ‘What was it you disputed among yourselves on the road?’ But they kept silent, for on the road they had disputed among themselves who would be the greatest. And He sat down, called the twelve, and said to them, ‘If anyone desires to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all.’ Then He took a little child and set him in the midst of them. And when He had taken him in His arms, He said to them, ‘Whoever receives one of these little children in My name receives Me; and whoever receives Me, receives not Me but Him who sent Me’ ” (Mark 9:33-37; cf. Mt. 18:1-5; Lk. 9:46-48).
2. James and John tried to “move to the front of the line” to be the greatest by asking Jesus for a special place in his kingdom. The other apostles were not pleased.—“Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to Him, saying, ‘Teacher, we want You to do for us whatever we ask.’ And He said to them, ‘What do you want Me to do for you?’ They said to Him, ‘Grant us that we may sit, one on Your right hand and the other on Your left, in Your glory.’ ... And when the ten heard it, they began to be greatly displeased with James and John. But Jesus called them to Himself and said to them, ‘You know that those who are considered rulers over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant. And whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many’ ” (Mark 10:35-37, 41-45).

### II. The Lord's Example—John 13:4-5

A. Jesus and the apostles had walked from Bethany to Jerusalem to eat the Passover meal together.

1. They would have arrived, hot and dusty from the trip.
2. It was customary after such a trip to take off and lay aside sandals and for the feet to be washed.

3. In the households of the well-to-do, the servants were expected to perform this kind service. At least water would be provided for each guest to wash his own feet (See, Gen. 18:4; 19:2; 1 Sam. 25:41; Lk. 7:38, 44; 1 Tim. 5:10).
- B. Not one of the apostles volunteered to at least bring water for washing their tired dirty feet.
  1. They were too busy arguing about who would be the greatest to bother with such a menial task!
  2. Here were men expecting to be Generals in a physical kingdom.
  3. They were looking for crowns, while the Lord was handing out crosses.
- C. While his apostles argued, Jesus silently arose from the supper. He laid aside his clothes and wrapped a towel around himself and began to wash his disciples' feet.
  1. Jesus "rose from supper and laid aside His garments, took a towel and girded Himself. After that, He poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded" (John 13:4-5).
  2. The Greek word for "the towel" indicates a linen cloth used for washing and at baths. It was common for slaves to be dressed in this fashion. (Alfred Edershim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, vol. 2, p. 501-502).
  3. The Lord and Master do the work of a common slave?
    - a. "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a servant, *and* coming in the likeness of men" (Philippians 2:5-7).
    - b. Jesus came to serve, to be used up. He came to give himself.
    - c. The Lord described his love and care for his people. "Then I washed you in water; yes, I thoroughly washed off your blood, and I anointed you with oil" (Ezekiel 16:9).
    - d. The rabbinic comments on Ezekiel. 16:9 say, "Among men, the slave washes his master, but with God it is not so."
    - e. Indeed, Jesus showed himself to be God by becoming a servant!

### III. Peter's Protest—John 13:6-11

- A. (Read John 13:6-11)
- B. As the Lord came to wash Peter's feet, he protested.
  1. The Greek sets the words in the order of their emphasis: "Lord—You—of me wash the feet!"
  2. We can imagine the unseemly sight of Jesus at our feet with a basin of water.
  3. Jesus answered and told Peter he did not understand now, but he would later!
  4. Peter declares with a double negative "You shall not ever wash my feet."
  5. Peter objects because of his characteristic outspoken brashness and similar to his cry on the occasion of a miracle, "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man."
- C. Jesus responded that if Peter would not allow the Lord to wash his feet, Peter would have no part of him.
  1. Peter had not yet understood and accepted what Jesus was going to do.
  2. Peter had tried to stand between Jesus and his going to Jerusalem and the cross and now Peter tried to stop Jesus from serving his disciples.
  3. "And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross" (Philippians 2:8).

4. “If you refuse this manifestation of humble love from me, if you put your own pride between yourself and me, if you disdain this act of self-surrender, claiming to understand me and our mutual relations better than I, you have no part with me. This is a symbol of my love to you, and of what is to be your love to one another (ver. 15); if you will then have no part with me in the manifestation of the spirit of self-sacrificing love which I have come to inaugurate” (*Pulpit Commentary*, “John,” p. 187).
- D. Peter then reversed himself and asked the Lord to wash his hands and head as well as his feet!
  1. “In his deprecation he was vehement, in his yielding more vehement, but both came from his love.” Chrysostom
  2. We should all be so ready to turn at the Master’s bidding.
- E. Jesus explains the symbolic nature of his foot washing was not to clean them but to teach them humility.
  1. They were clean in a spiritual sense—“You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you” (John 15:3).
  2. They needed their feet washed by Jesus to learn and share in his humility and service.
  3. Of course, all but Judas were clean.

#### IV. The Lord’s Lesson—John 13:12-17 (cf. Lk. 22:25-30)

- A. “So when He had washed their feet, taken His garments, and sat down again, He said to them, ‘Do you know what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord, and you say well, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you. Most assuredly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master; nor is he who is sent greater than he who sent him. If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them’ ” (John 13:12-17).
  1. Jesus resumed the position of Master and Teacher and asked them if they understood his actions?
  2. They called him “Lord” and “Teacher”, titles of respect, and Jesus said they were right to do so, for he was such.
  3. If the Master, Lord and Teacher, Jesus, humbled himself to the menial service of washing feet, then his servants should become servants. Why?
    - a. Because of his example. We are not greater than him.
    - b. Because it will bring us happiness.
- B. Application:
  1. Jesus was not establishing a religious ceremony.
    - a. There are denominational churches that will conduct “foot washing” ceremonies.
    - b. Yearly, the Catholic Pope will conduct a “foot washing” ceremony and wash the feet of twelve poor men.
    - c. These ceremonies with all their pomp and show are not following Christ’s example.
    - d. They are the very opposite of Jesus’ example of humility and quiet service.
  2. We need to gird ourselves with the towel of a slave!
    - a. Have you ever wanted to be a slave?
      - 1) We read of the slavery of black men and women in this country and shudder to contemplate the degradation and humility.
      - 2) Jesus said “I am among you as a servant?” (Lk. 22:27).
      - 3) Now what do you think of slavery?

- b. Many Christians believe it is fine to become a “servant” to a Master in heaven, whom they cannot see, but they forget an important element.
  - 1) Our service as a slave is not simply to the Lord but to one another as well.
  - 2) There are too many who are unwilling to become this type of slave.
  - 3) “Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another” (Romans 12:10).
  - 4) “Likewise you younger people, submit yourselves to your elders. Yes, all of you be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for ‘God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble’” (1 Peter 5:5).
3. No work of a Christian is small and unimportant.
  - a. I recently heard a rather sad story related by a preacher about a member of the congregation where he preaches. The member was being considered as a deacon for the congregation. When he was approached, he asked what being a deacon involved. He was told that it was a job of serving the congregation such as taking care of the building and services. He responded that he was not interested in such things as unimportant as that.
  - b. There is no work in the body of Christ that is “unimportant.” Somehow there are those who are impressed with the job of the preacher and believe that is the most important. Or maybe they believe the elders are more important. Brethren, we are all servants of the Lord and of each other.
    - 1) Example of the deacons and their work.
    - 2) Example of the work of members.
    - 3) How do you respond when asked to serve?
  - c. The service of Christians is not confined to the church.
    - 1) Husbands and wives are to serve one another. Do you get upset when your husband or wife asks you to do something for him or her. “Do it yourself” seems to be a common attitude. What about courtesy, humility and the willingness to serve. Before marriage, boys fall all over themselves to do whatever a girl asks. Are you still your spouse’s servant?
    - 2) Fathers, serve your children. Simply bringing home the bacon is not enough. I have to constantly remind myself of how much my boys need me and my time. I need to get down on the floor and wrestle with them, read to them, hold them.
    - 3) Mothers, your years of service to your children come at great sacrifice. Do not let anyone persuade you that there is something more important you could be doing. Changing diapers, wiping runny noses and kissing cuts is not glamorous, but then neither was the Lord’s washing of dirty feet glamorous.
    - 4) Those who are older, whose children are grown need to be servants.
      - a) “...that the older men be sober, reverent, temperate, sound in faith, in love, in patience; the older women likewise, that they be reverent in behavior, not slanderers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things—that they admonish the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, homemakers, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be blasphemed” (Titus 2:2-5).
      - b) “...well reported for good works: if she has brought up children, if she has lodged strangers, if she has washed the saints’ feet, if she has relieved the afflicted, if she has diligently followed every good work” (1 Timothy 5:10).

**Conclusion:** The next time you have the opportunity to serve the congregation or your family or a neighbor, stop and remember Jesus. He is girded in a towel and sitting at your feet, washing them in a basin of water. If he served you and I, then we should serve one another.

# Joseph: Facing Life's Problems

## Proverbs 4:20-27

**Introduction:** In every life there are problems to be faced. How you face those problems, what way you take determines the course, content and consequence of your life. But how do we properly meet those problems that come our way?

As Joshua was preparing to lead God's people, there would be tremendous stress, difficulties and problems. How was he to face these problems? The Lord gave Joshua this advice: "Only be strong and very courageous, that you may observe to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may prosper wherever you go" (Josh. 1:7).

The wise man of Proverbs had this advice: "My son, give attention to my words; Incline your ear to my sayings. Do not let them depart from your eyes; Keep them in the midst of your heart; For they are life to those who find them, And health to all their flesh. Keep your heart with all diligence, For out of it spring the issues of life. Put away from you a deceitful mouth, And put perverse lips far from you. Let your eyes look straight ahead, And your eyelids look right before you. Ponder the path of your feet, And let all your ways be established. Do not turn to the right or the left; Remove your foot from evil" (Prov. 4:20-27).

In this lesson, I want to examine the life of one man who faced great problems throughout his life, Joseph. Despite all the problems Joseph faced, he remained strong and courageous, he stood true to God, he did not turn from the right path. What great lessons we can learn from the all the adversity he met and overcame.

### I. Facing Envy & Hatred

#### A. Joseph's problem

1. His father favored him. "Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age. Also he made him a tunic of many colors" (Gen. 37:3).
2. He reported the misdeeds of his brothers to his father. "This is the history of Jacob. Joseph, being seventeen years old, was feeding the flock with his brothers. And the lad was with the sons of Bilhah and the sons of Zilpah, his father's wives; and Joseph brought a bad report of them to his father" (Gen. 37:2).
3. This caused his own brothers to hate him. "But when his brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers, they hated him..." (Gen. 37:4).
4. "...and could not speak peaceably to him" (Gen. 37:4).
5. Joseph's brothers hatred grew as Joseph did well. "Now Joseph had a dream, and he told it to his brothers; and they hated him even more" (Gen. 37:5).
6. Joseph's brothers envied Joseph "And his brothers envied him..." (Gen. 37:11).

#### B. Joseph's response

1. He diligently obeyed his father's instructions to look after his brothers. "And Israel said to Joseph, 'Are not your brothers feeding the flock in Shechem? Come, I will send you to them.' So he said to him, 'Here I am.' Then he said to him, 'Please go and see if it is well with your brothers and well with the flocks, and bring back word to me.' So he sent him out of the Valley of Hebron, and he went to Shechem. Now a

certain man found him, and there he was, wandering in the field. And the man asked him, saying, 'What are you seeking?' So he said, 'I am seeking my brothers. Please tell me where they are feeding their flocks.' And the man said, 'They have departed from here, for I heard them say, "Let us go to Dothan."' So Joseph went after his brothers and found them in Dothan" (Gen. 37:13-17).

- a. Joseph was ready to obey his father, though he knew of his brothers' hatred.
  - b. Joseph very well knew that his brothers would not be happy to see him, since he had truthfully reported on their misdeeds to his father.
  - c. Joseph searched for his brothers diligently, though he could have returned home and simply told his father he had not found them.
2. He continued to treat his brothers as brothers.
    - a. Notice that Joseph did return hatred for hatred.
    - b. He continued to treat and speak to his brothers peaceably, though they did not treat or speak to him kindly.
- C. The application
1. Certainly we can all identify with Joseph's problem. All of us at one time or another will face hatred and envy in our life.
  2. How do you respond when you are facing hatred and envy?
  3. "Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men" (Rom. 12:17).
  4. "See that no one renders evil for evil to anyone, but always pursue what is good both for yourselves and for all" (1 Thess. 5:15).
  5. "...not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing, knowing that you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing" (1 Pet. 3:9).

## II. Facing Betrayal

### A. Joseph's problem

1. His own brothers conspired to murder him. "Now when they saw him afar off, even before he came near them, they conspired against him to kill him. Then they said to one another, 'Look, this dreamer is coming! Come therefore, let us now kill him and cast him into some pit; and we shall say, "Some wild beast has devoured him." We shall see what will become of his dreams!' " (Gen. 37:18-20).
2. Joseph's brothers cast him into a pit without food or water. "Then they took him and cast him into a pit. And the pit was empty; there was no water in it. And they sat down to eat a meal..." (Gen. 37:24-25).
3. They sold Joseph into slavery. "So Judah said to his brothers, 'What profit *is* there if we kill our brother and conceal his blood? Come and let us sell him to the Ishmaelites, and let not our hand be upon him, for he is our brother and our flesh.' And his brothers listened. Then Midianite traders passed by; so the brothers pulled Joseph up and lifted him out of the pit, and sold him to the Ishmaelites for twenty shekels of silver. And they took Joseph to Egypt" (Gen. 37:26-28).

### B. Joseph's response

1. Joseph pleaded with his brothers not to do this evil. "Then they said to one another, 'We are truly guilty concerning our brother, for we saw the anguish of his soul when he pleaded with us, and we would not hear; therefore this distress has come upon us' " (Gen. 42:21).
2. Joseph was brought to Egypt by the Ishmaelites, where he is bought by Potiphar. Here

is a young man taken from his home, betrayed by his family and sold into slavery. Joseph now had opportunity to fill his life with hate and bitterness for life and those around him.

3. Instead he chose the “higher road” of righteous living. How do we know this?
  - a. “And the patriarchs, becoming envious, sold Joseph into Egypt. But God was with him” (Acts 7:9).
  - b. “The LORD was with Joseph, and he was a successful man; and he was in the house of his master the Egyptian” (Gen. 39:2)
  - c. What did the Egyptian master see in Joseph? “And his master saw that the LORD was with him and that the LORD made all he did to prosper in his hand. So Joseph found favor in his sight, and served him. Then he made him overseer of his house, and all that he had he put under his authority. So it was, from the time that he had made him overseer of his house and all that he had, that the LORD blessed the Egyptian’s house for Joseph’s sake; and the blessing of the LORD was on all that he had in the house and in the field. Thus he left all that he had in Joseph’s hand, and he did not know what he had except for the bread which he ate. Now Joseph was handsome in form and appearance” (Gen. 39:3-6).
  - d. Potiphar learned to trust Joseph. It reached such a point that Potiphar did not know what he owned save for his daily bread. Joseph continued to be a good man and to live for God daily.

C. The application

1. Being betrayed by family or friends is never a pleasant matter.
2. How should Christians respond to those who betray their confidence, their trust, their friendship?
3. (Read and comment on Psalm 37:1-20, 32-37).

### III. Facing Persistent Temptation

A. Joseph’s problem

1. His master’s wife sought tempted Joseph to “And it came to pass after these things that his master’s wife cast longing eyes on Joseph, and she said, ‘Lie with me’ ” (Gen. 39:7).
2. She persisted in her temptation daily. The wife of Potiphar did not give up. Her intent was to get what she wanted, no matter what the cost may have been. “So it was, as she spoke to Joseph day by day, that he did not heed her, to lie with her or to be with her” (Gen. 39:10).
3. She increased the temptation. “But it happened about this time, when Joseph went into the house to do his work, and none of the men of the house was inside, that she caught him by his garment, saying, ‘Lie with me.’ But he left his garment in her hand, and fled and ran outside” (Gen. 39:11-12).

B. Joseph’s response

1. Joseph told this woman “no.” “But he refused and said to his master’s wife, ‘Look, my master does not know what is with me in the house, and he has committed all that he has to my hand. There is no one greater in this house than I, nor has he kept back anything from me but you, because you are his wife. How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?’ ” (Gen. 39:8-9).
2. Joseph refused to listen to her. “So it was, as she spoke to Joseph day by day, that he did not heed her, to lie with her or to be with her” (Gen. 39:10).

3. Joseph even had to flee from her. "...that she caught him by his garment, saying, 'Lie with me.' But he left his garment in her hand, and fled and ran outside." (Gen. 39:12).
  4. Joseph had opportunity to choose a road of pleasure and sin. He chose the higher road of living for God. He used this opportunity to speak about God and the way of God.
- C. The application
1. All of us will face temptation. How do you face the problem of temptation?
  2. Do you face temptation like Joseph?
  3. "No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it" (1 Cor. 10:13).
    - a. Sometimes refusing and saying "No" is enough.
    - b. Sometimes you have to refuse to listen to persist temptation.
    - c. Sometimes you just have to flee.

#### **IV. Facing False Accusations**

##### **A. Joseph's problem**

1. Potipher's wife falsely accused Joseph of attempted rape first to the other men of the house. "...that she caught him by his garment, saying, 'Lie with me.' But he left his garment in her hand, and fled and ran outside. And so it was, when she saw that he had left his garment in her hand and fled outside, that she called to the men of her house and spoke to them, saying, 'See, he has brought in to us a Hebrew to mock us. He came in to me to lie with me, and I cried out with a loud voice. And it happened, when he heard that I lifted my voice and cried out, that he left his garment with me, and fled and went outside' " (Gen. 39:12-15).
2. Then she accused Joseph to Potipher. "So she kept his garment with her until his master came home. Then she spoke to him with words like these, saying, 'The Hebrew servant whom you brought to us came in to me to mock me; so it happened, as I lifted my voice and cried out, that he left his garment with me and fled outside' " (Gen. 39:16-18).
3. Potipher then became angry and threw Joseph in prison. "So it was, when his master heard the words which his wife spoke to him, saying, 'Your servant did to me after this manner' that his anger was aroused. Then Joseph's master took him and put him into the prison, a place where the king's prisoners were confined. And he was there in the prison" (Gen. 39:19-20).

##### **B. Joseph's response**

1. In jail Joseph was away from the temptation of Potipher's wife.
2. Joseph now had an opportunity to allow hate, bitterness and discouragement to take over his life. He chose the "high road" of living for God.
3. Joseph continued to be faithful to the Lord and the Lord caused him to do well. "But the LORD was with Joseph and showed him mercy, and He gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison. And the keeper of the prison committed to Joseph's hand all the prisoners who *were* in the prison; whatever they did there, it was his doing. The keeper of the prison did not look into anything that was under Joseph's authority, because the LORD was with him; and whatever he did, the LORD made it prosper" (Gen. 39:21-23).

##### **C. The application**

1. How can we face false accusations?
2. Enemies will watch to try to find something against us.
  - a. "So the scribes and Pharisees watched Him closely, whether He would heal on the Sabbath, that they might find an accusation against Him" (Lk. 6:7).
  - b. "And as He said these things to them, the scribes and the Pharisees began to assail Him vehemently, and to cross-examine Him about many things, lying in wait for Him, and seeking to catch Him in something He might say, that they might accuse Him" (Lk. 11:53-54).
3. Like Joseph we must keep our lives above reproach.
  - a. "...having a good conscience, that when they defame you as evildoers, those who revile your good conduct in Christ may be ashamed" (1 Pet. 3:16).
  - b. "Blessed are you when men hate you, and when they exclude you, And revile you, and cast out your name as evil, For the Son of Man's sake" (Lk. 6:22).

## V. Facing Ingratitude

### A. Joseph's problem

1. Although Joseph prospered in prison, he did not want to remain there. Yet there he remained for several years.
2. While Joseph was in prison the Pharaoh put his chief butler and chief baker in prison and while they were in prison, Joseph was put in charge of their care.
3. One night both dreamed dreams. Joseph told them the meaning of their dreams. He told the chief butler that in three days the Pharaoh would bring him out of prison and he would be restored to his former position.
4. Joseph asked the butler to remember him and help get him out of prison. "But remember me when it is well with you, and please show kindness to me; make mention of me to Pharaoh, and get me out of this house" (Gen. 40:14).
5. When the Pharaoh restored the butler, he forgot Joseph. "Yet the chief butler did not remember Joseph, but forgot him" (Gen. 40:23).
6. Because of the butler's ingratitude Joseph remained in prison another two years. "Then it came to pass, at the end of two full years, that Pharaoh had a dream; and behold, he stood by the river" (Gen. 41:1).
7. The butler finally remembered Joseph and recognized his mistake. "Then the chief butler spoke to Pharaoh, saying: 'I remember my faults this day' " (Gen. 41:9).

### B. Joseph's response

1. Again, Joseph could have allowed this ungracious and ungrateful forgetfulness to make him sullen, despondent and bitter. But he did not. He continued serving God faithfully even two more years in prison.
2. When the butler finally remembered Joseph, Joseph was ready to stand before Pharaoh. "Then Pharaoh sent and called Joseph, and they brought him quickly out of the dungeon; and he shaved, changed his clothing, and came to Pharaoh. And Pharaoh said to Joseph, 'I have had a dream, and there is no one who can interpret it. But I have heard it said of you that you can understand a dream, to interpret it.' So Joseph answered Pharaoh, saying, 'It is not in me; God will give Pharaoh an answer of peace' " (Gen. 41:14-16).
  - a. Two years of ingratitude did not make Joseph bitter, hostile, ungracious, and ungrateful.
  - b. Joseph gave God all the glory and the gratitude and said, "It is not in me."

C. The application

1. We should not be ungrateful and forgetful of others as the butler was of Joseph.
  - a. "But love your enemies, do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High. For He is kind to the unthankful and evil" Lk. 6:35).
  - b. "But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, **unthankful**, unholy..." (2 Tim. 3:1-2).
2. Nor should we become bitter, hostile, ungracious and ungrateful when others are ungrateful and forgetful of what we have done for them.
  - a. "And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him" (Col. 3:17).
  - b. "Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men" (1 Tim. 2:1).

**VI. Facing Power & Responsibility**

A. Joseph's problem

1. Pharaoh was so impressed with Joseph that he raised him to power (Gen. 41:37-45).
  - a. Joseph was set second in command over Egypt.
  - b. Joseph was entrusted with all the Pharaoh had, his house, his possessions and even his power.
  - c. Joseph was given rich gifts of royalty.
  - d. Joseph was given a position of honor.
  - e. Joseph was given a wife.
2. What was Joseph's problem?
  - a. Why would this be a problem?
  - b. Power does not come without a price. With all the power Joseph was given came responsibility.
  - c. Above all, Joseph was given a weighty responsibility.

B. Joseph's response

1. Remember Joseph's position. He was a slave imprisoned for the accusation of rape.
2. He had to make quite an impression upon the Pharaoh of all Egypt, to be elevated to the top.
3. What did Pharaoh see in an imprisoned slave only 30 years old?
  - a. He saw and heard what all others had seen, God was with Joseph for Joseph was with God.
  - b. He saw that Joseph was a very wise man.
  - c. He saw that Joseph was a good and honest man. A man who could be trusted. Such men are rare finds. Many men might be very intelligent but how few would also be honest.
4. What did Joseph do with his power and responsibility?
  - a. He went to work right away. "Joseph was thirty years old when he stood before Pharaoh king of Egypt. And Joseph went out from the presence of Pharaoh, and went throughout all the land of Egypt" (Gen. 41:46).
  - b. He put his past experience to work. He had trained his whole life for this moment.
    - 1) He had worked as a steward and overseer for his father.
    - 2) He had worked as a steward and overseer for Potipher.

3) He had worked as a steward and overseer even in prison.

C. The application

1. How many dream of power, position, wealth and honor, but they never stop to consider the burden that comes with it.
2. The greater one's power and position, the greater the responsibility. Some cannot take nor bear burden and break under it.
  - a. "When I have brought them to the land flowing with milk and honey, of which I swore to their fathers, and they have eaten and filled themselves and grown fat, then they will turn to other gods and serve them; and they will provoke Me and break My covenant" (Deut. 31:20).
  - b. "So the LORD alone led him, And there was no foreign god with him. He made him ride in the heights of the earth, That he might eat the produce of the fields; He made him draw honey from the rock, And oil from the flinty rock; Curds from the cattle, and milk of the flock, With fat of lambs; And rams of the breed of Bashan, and goats, With the choicest wheat; And you drank wine, the blood of the grapes. But Jeshurun grew fat and kicked; You grew fat, you grew thick, You are obese! Then he forsook God who made him, And scornfully esteemed the Rock of his salvation" (Deut. 32:12-15).
3. You will never be given more power and responsibility until you have proven yourself in smaller things. "He who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in much; and he who is unjust in what is least is unjust also in much. Therefore if you have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? And if you have not been faithful in what is another man's, who will give you what is your own?" (Lk. 16:10-12).
4. We need to work diligently on what we have with what we have been given. "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord" (1 Cor. 15:58).

## VII. Facing Painful Memories

### A. Joseph's problem

1. Joseph had forgotten and put behind him the pain and hurt. "And to Joseph were born two sons before the years of famine came, whom Asenath, the daughter of Poti-Pherah priest of On, bore to him. Joseph called the name of the firstborn Manasseh: 'For God has made me forget all my toil and all my father's house.' And the name of the second he called Ephraim: 'For God has caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction'" (Gen. 41:50-52).
2. Now, over twenty years later, standing before him were his own brothers. They came to buy grain in Egypt. Joseph recognized them, but they did not recognize Joseph.
3. How would or even could Joseph deal with a past he had tried to forget?

### B. Joseph's response

1. Joseph was cautious. He did not immediately reveal himself to his brothers. He did know the condition of their hearts, nor the intent of his father, nor the condition of his younger brother.
2. Joseph tried and tested his brothers. He accused them of being spies. He first told them that all but one of them would be jailed until the younger brother was brought back to Egypt. After He had them placed in jail for three days, he brought them out and only insisted that one brother remain behind as a guarantee that they would return with

Benjamin.

3. They revealed the anguish and regret of what they had done to Joseph and Reuben revealed his plea for his younger brother. "Then they said to one another, 'We are truly guilty concerning our brother, for we saw the anguish of his soul when he pleaded with us, and we would not hear; therefore this distress has come upon us.' And Reuben answered them, saying, 'Did I not speak to you, saying, "Do not sin against the boy"; and you would not listen? Therefore behold, his blood is now required of us.' But they did not know that Joseph understood them, for he spoke to them through an interpreter" (Gen. 42:21-23).
  4. When Joseph heard this his heart began to feel the pain of the past. "And he turned himself away from them and wept. Then he returned to them again, and talked with them. And he took Simeon from them and bound him before their eyes" (Gen. 42:24). But he still was unsure about Benjamin.
  5. When the brothers finally returned with Benjamin. Joseph had them set down to eat with him. "Now his heart yearned for his brother; so Joseph made haste and sought somewhere to weep. And he went into his chamber and wept there" (Gen. 43:30).
  6. Apparently Joseph intended on keeping his younger brother, Benjamin with him. So he had his silver cup placed in Benjamin's sack of grain. And when the brothers had left, he sent out his men after them to uncover the cup in Benjamin's sack. All of them were brought back and Joseph announced his intention to keep Benjamin as a slave.
  7. Here the true intentions of the brothers towards their past evil towards Joseph and their father became evident. Judah eloquently pleads for Benjamin. He even tells Joseph, to take him instead of Benjamin.
  8. Joseph can finally bear no more. "Then Joseph could not restrain himself before all those who stood by him, and he cried out, 'Make everyone go out from me!' So no one stood with him while Joseph made himself known to his brothers. And he wept aloud, and the Egyptians and the house of Pharaoh heard it. Then Joseph said to his brothers, 'I am Joseph; does my father still live?' But his brothers could not answer him, for they were dismayed in his presence. And Joseph said to his brothers, 'Please come near to me.' So they came near. Then he said: 'I am Joseph your brother, whom you sold into Egypt. But now, do not therefore be grieved or angry with yourselves because you sold me here; for God sent me before you to preserve life....And behold, your eyes and the eyes of my brother Benjamin see that it is my mouth that speaks to you. So you shall tell my father of all my glory in Egypt, and of all that you have seen; and you shall hurry and bring my father down here.' Then he fell on his brother Benjamin's neck and wept, and Benjamin wept on his neck. Moreover he kissed all his brothers and wept over them, and after that his brothers talked with him" (Gen. 45:1-5, 12-15).
- C. The application
1. How can we face the painful memories of the past when we are confronted with them?
  2. "Test all things; hold fast what is good" (1 Thess. 5:21).
  3. "Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus." (Phil. 3:13-14).

## VIII. Facing Past Forgiven Trespasses

### A. Joseph's problem

1. After Joseph's father died his brother were worried that Joseph had not really forgiven them.
2. "When Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, 'Perhaps Joseph will hate us, and may actually repay us for all the evil which we did to him.' So they sent messengers to Joseph, saying, 'Before your father died he commanded, saying, "Thus you shall say to Joseph: 'I beg you, please forgive the trespass of your brothers and their sin; for they did evil to you.'" Now, please, forgive the trespass of the servants of the God of your father.' And Joseph wept when they spoke to him. Then his brothers also went and fell down before his face, and they said, 'Behold, we are your servants' " (Gen. 50:15-18).

### B. Joseph's response

1. Joseph could have revived old hurts and trespasses.
2. Joseph let them know that he had forgiven and forgotten their trespass against him. "Joseph said to them, 'Do not be afraid, for *am* I in the place of God? But as for you, you meant evil against me; *but* God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as *it is* this day, to save many people alive. Now therefore, do not be afraid; I will provide for you and your little ones.' And he comforted them and spoke kindly to them" (Gen. 50:19-21).

### C. The application

1. How do you face those who have trespassed against you in the past that you have forgiven?
2. "I might have forgiven you, but I will never forget what you did"?
3. Some cannot face such matters of presumed or actual wrongs others have committed against them. They will nurse hurts and grudges for years.
4. We need to face past trespasses by forgiving them and forgetting them.
5. "Take heed to yourselves. If your brother sins against you, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him. And if he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times in a day returns to you, saying, 'I repent,' you shall forgive him" (Lk. 17:3-4).
6. "For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses" (Mt. 6:14-15).
7. "...bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do" (Col. 3:13).

**Conclusion:** Just remember Joseph had a lot of reasons to be filled with hate and discouragement in his life. In every crisis he used the opportunity to talk about God or to demonstrate living for God. He did not desert his "post" of being a follower of God. He had no control over how others were treating him (his brothers, Potiphar's wife, Potiphar) but he did have control over how he reacted to them. He turned his problems into opportunities for the glory of God.

# God's Laws of Harvest

## Galatians 6:7

**Introduction:** When God created this world and set it in motion, he put in place laws to guide this world and its inhabitants. God put certain laws into place in the physical and moral realm.

1. God's laws are fixed, constant.–(Pick up a book and let it go to drop to the floor.) It always happens that way, every time. It is good that we have God's laws. We can depend upon things being constant. Without these fixed laws everything would be chaos. You could not walk down the street unless the law of gravity was constant.

2. God's laws are for our good.–His laws are not to disappoint you or to spoil your fun. Many people seem to believe God made laws just to keep them from having fun. They view God as a cosmic kill-joy with a lot of "Thou shalt nots." However, "Thou shall not steal" is not only to keep you from taking what you want, but also to protect you to keep what you have.

Let us consider a certain group of God's laws, that are fixed and for our good. We need to realize and appreciate the certainty of these laws. We all depend upon God's laws of harvest. Without the farmer, the seed and God's laws of harvest, we would not have the harvest that keeps food on our tables. But God's laws of harvest apply to each one of us in a more important way. Each one of us are spiritual farmers whether we want to be or not and we all are subject to God's laws of harvest.

### I. You Will Reap What You Sow

#### A. Physical reaping

1. The farmer who sows a field is usually the farmer who reaps the same field
2. But not always. Yet in the spiritual realm everyone of us will reap what we have sown.
3. "Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap" (Gal. 6:7).

#### B. Spiritual reaping

1. Harvest day: "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad" (2 Cor. 5:10).
2. You will be there and you will reap on that day.
3. "But we know that the judgment of God is according to truth against those who practice such things. And do you think this, O man, you who judge those practicing such things, and doing the same, that you will escape the judgment of God?" (Rom. 2:2-3).

### II. You Will Reap In A Different Season From When You Sow

#### A. Physical reaping

1. When a farmer sows in the Spring, he does not expect to reap his crop until Fall. This is one of God's laws of harvest.
2. "To everything there is a season, A time for every purpose under heaven: A time to be born, And a time to die; A time to plant, And a time to pluck what is planted" (Eccl. 3:1-2).
3. Seeds planted in the warm, rich earth take sun, water and time.

4. The farmer knows that when he sows, the day will eventually come in which he will reap his reward.
5. “Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until it receives the early and latter rain” (Jas. 5:7).

#### B. Spiritual reaping

1. “Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life. And let us not grow weary while doing good, for **in due season** we shall reap if we do not lose heart” (Gal. 6:7-9).
2. The things you do in this life and this world are the seeds you sow. Your words, your deeds will grow and mature and **in time**, in due season you will reap.
3. Sometimes your actions and deeds may bring immediate consequences, but not always! Do not think you have escaped the consequences of your actions if they do not occur immediately.
4. Someone might say, “I had an uncle who drank and smoked for years and he lived a long life.” One may never reap the consequences of a sinful life here and now, but “in due season” we all shall reap.

### III. You Will Reap The Same Kind As You Sow

#### A. Physical reaping

1. If you sow wheat, you will reap wheat. If you sow tomatoes, you will reap tomatoes. If you sow weeds and thorns, you will reap the same.
2. “Then God said, ‘Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb that yields seed, and the fruit tree that yields fruit according to its kind, whose seed is in itself, on the earth’; and it was so. And the earth brought forth grass, the herb that yields seed according to its kind, and the tree that yields fruit, whose seed is in itself according to its kind. And God saw that it was good” (Gen. 1:11-12).

#### B. Spiritual reaping

1. Jesus asked the obvious question, “Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles?” (Mt. 7:16). The answer is “NO.”
2. “The wicked man does deceptive work, But he who sows righteousness will have a sure reward” (Prov. 11:18).
3. “...knowing that whatever good anyone does, he will receive the same from the Lord, whether he is a slave or free” (Eph. 6:8).
4. “Even as I have seen, Those who plow iniquity And sow trouble reap the same” (Job 4:8).
5. Jacob is a prime example of one who reaped the same kind of trouble of deception, jealousy and strife as he sowed. He lied and deceived his father. Later, he reaped the same kind of trouble as he had sown. His sons deceived him leading him to believe Joseph was killed by a wild animal. Jacob grieved for years. He reaped the same kind of trouble as he had sown.

### IV. You Will Reap More Than What You Sow

#### A. Physical reaping

1. Sow one kernel of corn. The result will be one stalk with about 4 cobs and approximately 200 kernels of corn on each cob. You will reap 800 kernels by sowing one small kernel.

2. This is God's law of harvest, you will reap much more than what you sow.
- B. Spiritual reaping.
1. This is good news and bad news.
    - a. The bad news is: sow evil and you will reap far more evil than you ever sowed.
    - b. The good news is: sow good and you will reap far more good than you ever sowed.
  2. "They sow the wind, And reap the whirlwind. The stalk has no bud; It shall never produce meal. If it should produce, Aliens would swallow it up" (Hos. 8:7).
  3. "Because you have forgotten the God of your salvation, and have not been mindful of the Rock of your stronghold, therefore you will plant pleasant plants and set out foreign seedlings; in the day you will make your plant to grow, and in the morning you will make your seed to flourish; but **the harvest will be a heap of ruins** in the day of grief and desperate sorrow" (Isa. 17:11).
  4. David sowed the sin of adultery, deception and murder. David reaped far more evil than he sowed. His child died shortly after birth. One of his daughters was raped by one of her step brothers. One son killed another son. His son Absalom led a rebellion that caused David to flee Jerusalem and ended in the death of Absalom.
  5. Some profess not to understand how God will condemn people to Hell who do not understand his law. This is God's law of harvest.
  6. "Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance? But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who "will render to each one according to his deeds": eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor, and immortality; but to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness—indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, on every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek; but glory, honor, and peace to everyone who works what is good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For there is no partiality with God." (Rom. 2:4-11).

## V. You Will Eat The Fruit Of Your Harvest

### A. Physical reaping

1. The reward of the farmer for his sowing and reaping is to eat of the fruit of his labor.

### B. Spiritual reaping

1. Likewise, each one of us will eat the fruit of our deeds.
2. How will your life taste to you? Will it be sweet, sour or bitter?
3. "Say to the righteous that it shall be well with them, For they shall eat the fruit of their doings" (Isa. 3:10).
4. "Then they will call on me, but I will not answer; They will seek me diligently, but they will not find me. Because they hated knowledge And did not choose the fear of the Lord, They would have none of my counsel And despised my every rebuke. Therefore they shall eat the fruit of their own way, And be filled to the full with their own fancies" (Prov. 1:28-31).

**Conclusion:** There was a young man who had trouble with one of the local farmers in his hometown. To get the farmer, the fellow went out one night to his fields and sowed weeds throughout the farm. The farmer fought the weeds for years, but one day the young man married the farmer's daughter and inherited her father's farm. The young man spent the rest of his life fighting the weeds he had sown earlier. If harvest time came today, what would you reap? It is time to sow righteousness by obeying the Lord.

# The Tears of Jesus

John 11:35

**Introduction:** “Jesus wept” (Jn. 11:35). The shortest verse in the Bible. Maybe the most powerful sentence ever written. Jesus shed tears. He shared the same feelings of compassion, anger, frustration, and sorrow as you and me. The scriptures reveal to us at least three occasions on which Jesus shed tears.

## I. At Lazarus’ Tomb

A. (Read John 11:1-44).

B. What do his tears tell us?

1. Of His human nature and feelings.

a. The gospel of Mark reveals to us the Son of man, Jesus of Nazareth. Even more so, Mark portrays Jesus as a servant of action. “For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many” (Mk. 10:45).

b. In Mark’s gospel account, Jesus is full of feeling and emotion:

1) He loved little children (Mk. 10:16).

2) He took a damsel by the hand (Mk. 5:41).

3) He was angry (Mk. 3:5).

4) He felt love (Mk. 10:21).

5) He sighed (Mk. 7:34; 8:12).

6) He had compassion (Mk. 6:34).

7) He was hungry (Mk. 11:12).

8) He became tired (Mk. 6:31).

9) He slept (Mk. 4:38).

2. Of His sympathy.

a. Jesus wept tears of sympathy. Mary, Martha and Lazarus were close and dear friends. Jesus felt their sorrow and shared their tears.

b. “For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin” (Heb. 4:15).

c. “Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted” (Heb. 2:17-18).

3. Of His love.

a. Those around him proclaimed “See how he loved him.” He loved Lazarus as a friend. How great a love that was. It brought tears to his eyes.

b. “Does Jesus Care?” by Frank E. Graeff.

Does Jesus care when my heart is pained Too deeply for mirth or song,  
As the burdens press, And the cares distress, And the way grows weary and long?

O yes, He cares, I know He cares, His heart is touched with my grief;  
When the days are weary, The long night dreary, I know my Savior cares.

Does Jesus care when my way is dark With a nameless dread and fear?  
As the daylight fades Into deep night shades, Does He care enough to be near?

O yes, He cares, I know He cares, His heart is touched with my grief;  
When the days are weary, The long night dreary, I know my Savior cares.

Does Jesus care when I've tried and failed To resist some temptation strong;  
When for my deep grief There is no relief, Tho' my tears flow all the night long?

O yes, He cares, I know He cares, His heart is touched with my grief;  
When the days are weary, The long night dreary, I know my Savior cares.

Does Jesus care when I've said "goodby" To the dearest on earth to me,  
And my sad heart aches Till it nearly breaks, Is it aught to Him? does He see?

O yes, He cares, I know He cares, His heart is touched with my grief;  
When the days are weary, The long night dreary, I know my Savior cares.

- c. Yes! He loves me. He sheds tears for those who are lost in sin. He grieves for those who have strayed away from the truth. He weeps for every soul who is eternally lost.
  - d. "Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends. You are My friends if you do whatever I command you. No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you" (Jn. 15:13-15).
4. Of His anger.
- a. Jesus' tears were also tears of anger.
  - b. Jesus was angry at sin, Satan and death.
  - c. God has no joy in men dying. He is angry at death.
  - d. " 'Cast away from you all the transgressions which you have committed, and get yourselves a new heart and a new spirit. For why should you die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of one who dies,' says the Lord God. 'Therefore turn and live!' " (Ezk. 18:31-32).

## **II. Over Jerusalem**

A. (Read Luke 19:28-46).

B. What do these tears tell us?

- 1. Of His compassion.
  - a. Jesus saw the misery, pain, anguish and suffering that would befall Jerusalem. He knew of the hundreds of thousands who would die horrible deaths and the suffering of thousands more sold into slavery.
  - b. When we are in pain and troubles, Jesus weeps for us.
- 2. Of His righteous wrath.
  - a. He had to rebuke the Pharisees for their envy and rejection. Their ignorance was sin. Their ignorance would be their destruction. Jesus shed tears of righteous indignation.
  - b. God does not accept nor enjoy the ignorance and sin of the wicked.

- 1) "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you from being priest for Me; Because you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children" (Hos. 4:6).
- 2) "The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance" (2 Pet. 3:9).

### III. At Gethsemene

- A. "...who, in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of His godly fear" (Heb. 5:7).
- B. (Read Matthew 26:36-44).
- C. What do these tears tell us?
  1. Of His loneliness.
    - a. Jesus had spoken to vast crowds. Multitudes had followed him.
    - b. But he had to face his suffering and death in the garden alone.
  2. Of His agony.
    - a. Job had said, "Man is born unto trouble" (Job 5:7).
    - b. The poet wrote, "Man is made to mourn."
    - c. Jesus was "a man of sorrows" (Isa. 53:3). "He is despised and rejected by men, A Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him. Surely He has borne our griefs And carried our sorrows; Yet we esteemed Him stricken, Smitten by God, and afflicted" (Isa. 53:3-4).
    - d. Jesus spoke of his great sorrow. "Then He said to them, 'My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death. Stay here and watch with Me' " (Mt. 26:38).
    - e. Jesus prayed in agony. "And being in agony, He prayed more earnestly. Then His sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground" (Lk. 22:44).
  3. Of His betrayal.
    - a. Jesus knew his betrayer, his traitor. The hours, weeks and years he had spent with Judas as a friend and disciple were gone.
    - b. Jesus cried for Judas leading him to the slaughter.
    - c. Jesus weeps for those who betray him today.
  4. Of His obedience.
    - a. "...who, in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of His godly fear, though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him" (Heb. 5:7-9).
    - b. Obedience is expensive! Obedience costs suffering, sorrow and tears.
    - c. "For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls. You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin" (Heb. 12:3-4).

**Conclusion:** Jesus shed tears so he could wipe our tears away. "And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away" (Rev. 21:4).

# Why Was Stephen Stoned?

## Acts 6:5

**Introduction:** In the midst of the rapid growth of the church at Jerusalem came turmoil. The church was threatened by internal strife. The strife was not doctrinal, but was born of a genuine problem, the neglect of the Hellenist widows in the daily distribution of food. This real problem stirred petty passions and politics among the Hellenist Christians and they began to murmur against the Hebrew Christians. This murmuring could have led to two warring factions within the church and split it into open division along party lines.

Into this potential breach step the apostles guided by the wisdom of God. The apostles told the church to select seven men to be appointed to take care of the daily distribution of food. The men to be chosen were not to be just brothers, they were to have a good reputation, be full of the Holy Spirit and full of wisdom (Acts 6:3). Following these guidelines, the “whole multitude” of the church chose seven men whom the apostles appointed. Leading the list of the seven men chosen by the entire Jerusalem church was Stephen. In addition to the qualities set forth by the apostles, Luke particularly notes Stephen as “man full of faith and the Holy Spirit” (Acts 6:5).

The problem was resolved and “the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith” (Acts 6:7).

What a great character, what respect Stephen must have had among the Christians in Jerusalem. His reputation was such that the entire church, Hebrew and Hellenist alike placed their confidence in him. He was “full of” the Holy Spirit, wisdom and faith. Stephen was not a man of half measures, he fully followed after the instructions of the Holy Spirit, his wisdom was complete and his faith was mature. Stephen was a man in whom the entire church could place their confidence. They were assured Stephen would handle himself and the problem fairly and wisely to the satisfaction of all.

Stephen was such a striking, powerful and commanding figure. Considering his great reputation, wisdom and faith, why would anyone desire to stone Stephen to death?

### I. He Went Among The People

- A. Luke records, “And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and signs among the people” (Acts 6:8).
  1. One of the reasons Stephen was stoned was because he went “among the people.”
  2. With his reputation and respected wisdom, Stephen could have stayed at home and waited for the people to come to him. Why should he go out and seek to teach others and stir up trouble?
  3. Stephen did not stay home and play the “sainted sage,” dispensing bits of wisdom and marching orders far from the battlefield.
  4. Stephen went “among the people” boldly speaking God’s message of a crucified Jesus Christ to a hostile Jewish audience and performing great miracles confirming his message. Stephen was stoned because he did not run and hide, he boldly stood up and spoke out.

- B. There is no danger of being stoned by staying away from people, but then neither are there souls to teach and win for Christ.
  - 1. The stones and slings and arrows are painful and certainly not desirable, but they are not found in the safety of the back-line foxhole, they are found where the battle for the souls of men and women is furious and pitched, “among the people.”

## II. They Could Not Resist His Wisdom And Spirit

- A. Stephen’s great work “among the people” surely contributed to the increase of the Word of God and the large numbers of Jews, including priests, who obeyed the faith of Jesus Christ (Acts 6:7).
  - 1. Stephen’s success did not go unnoticed.
  - 2. As more Jews heard Stephen and others boldly proclaim the gospel and as they became disciples of Jesus Christ, some Jews were determined to stop these conversions by stopping the preacher.
- B. The preacher the Jews chose to “go after” was Stephen.
  - 1. Likely they chose Stephen because of his prominence and his success in teaching the truth.
  - 2. These Jews began disputing with Stephen in an attempt to destroy his influence and stop his teaching.
    - a. Apparently these men attempted to directly confront Stephen and refute his teaching by the scriptures.
    - b. They quickly discovered they had “bitten off more than they could chew.”
    - c. Stephen was stoned because those who tried to stand against him and dispute with him “were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spoke” (Acts 6:10).
- C. It is interesting to note that those who tried to dispute with Stephen included Jews from Cyrenia, Alexandria, Cilicia and Asia (Acts 6:9).
  - 1. The Hellenist Jews may have been the greatest affected by Stephen’s preaching of the gospel.
  - 2. Those who rejected Stephen’s preaching were likely well trained in the scriptures and Greek rhetoric and eager to do battle.
    - a. One such young man was Saul.
    - b. Saul was from Tarsus of Cilicia and trained in Jerusalem at the feet of the highly respected Gamaliel (Acts 22:3).
    - c. Saul could have been one of those defeated before Stephen.
- D. Those who opposed Stephen could not stand up before him.
  - 1. Stephen had the truth.
  - 2. But even more important he used the truth. But he also had more.
  - 3. Stephen had wisdom. He had wisdom in the truth, wisdom in teaching the truth and wisdom in using the truth.
  - 4. Stephen had spirit.
    - a. Stephen’s preaching was not a scholarly tome delivered from an ivy tower.
    - b. Stephen spoke with wisdom and spirit. He spoke the truth with power and he reached and converted people.
- E. If indeed we have the truth, then the next question is, do we use the truth?
  - 1. Maybe a better question would be, if you do not use the truth, do you really have the truth?

- a. Truth is not something to be hidden away on a shelf in a back room.
  - b. If one does not use the truth, he loses the truth.
  - c. Paul instructed, “And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also” (2 Tim. 2:2).
2. Some have great wisdom in teaching the truth.
    - a. They have a great knowledge and understanding of the Word of God, yet they lack the spirit to face the false teachers and boldly defend the truth.
    - b. All the scholarship in the world is useless unless it is put to use actively defending the truth.
  3. Others are spirited in teaching God’s Word, but they lack the wisdom to properly use and defend the truth.
  4. We need to manifest both wisdom and spirit in our use of God’s Word, as Stephen.
- F. Those who oppose will not be able to stand long against the truth when delivered with wisdom and spirit.
1. Instead of honestly and openly facing the one who proclaims the truth, they will use whatever means they can find to destroy those who vigorously and actively speak the truth with wisdom and spirit.
  2. There is a proverb, “Stones are not thrown except at the fruit-laden tree.” If no stones are being thrown your way, could the reason be there is no fruit?

### III. They Suborned False Witnesses And False Accusations

- A. Truth that is wisely and boldly taught cannot be met head on by false teachers.
1. Those who opposed Stephen could not defeat him in the scriptures in open debate.
  2. They determined to avoid open and honest discussion with Stephen and attack him with lies.
    - a. So they “suborned” false witnesses and made up false accusations to destroy Stephen.
    - b. “Suborn” means to put under, to bring under control, possibly by influence and/or money. In other words, these false witnesses were “bought” liars.
- B. How could a man with the reputation and ability of Stephen be stopped by his enemies? Only with the most malicious of lies.
1. They falsely accused Stephen of blasphemy. Blasphemy against Moses, against God, against the temple and against the Law (Acts 6:11-14).
  2. Of course nothing could be farther from the truth, but these men were not interested in the truth.
  3. It is likely that Stephen had indeed taught that “this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and change the customs which Moses delivered to us” (Acts 6:14).
  4. But this simple truth in the mouths of wicked accusers was twisted into a vicious charge of blasphemy.
  5. Those who stoned Stephen were unwilling and unable to answer the truth Stephen taught with scripture, but they were willing to attack Stephen with lies and vicious accusations.
- C. Those false teachers who attempt to withstand the truth have not changed.
1. A. C. Grider observed that any false teacher who attempted to defend false doctrine against the truth of God’s Word would ultimately resort to dishonesty.
  2. Since these dishonest men cannot resist the wisdom and spirit of those who proclaim

the truth, they avoid at all costs a direct open and honest confrontation on the scriptures.

3. Their method is *ad hominem*, they attack the man with false accusations, name calling and appeals to party politics and prejudices rather than answering his arguments.

D. Do not be caught in these carnal tactics and avoid those who use them.

1. "For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds" (2 Cor. 10:4).
2. Our speech should not be "not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling" (1 Pet. 3:9), so that "having a good conscience, that when they defame you as evildoers, those who revile your good conduct in Christ may be ashamed" (1 Pet. 3:16).
3. Those who opposed Stephen used as weapons lies, liars and ultimately stones to destroy Stephen.
  - a. Stephen's only weapons were the vigorous proclamation of the truth and ultimately prayer.
  - b. We should use no less than these same "mighty weapons" in our warfare (Eph. 6:17-18).
  - c. The lies and stones may have appeared to win the battle, but in reality they have lost the war.

#### IV. They Stirred Up The People

A. The enemies of Stephen were not content to lie about him, they sought to spread the lie.

1. They "stirred up the people" (Acts 6:12) likely by means of the false charges and false witnesses.
  - a. The rumors against Stephen were quickly disseminated throughout Jerusalem, "Stephen is a blasphemer."
  - b. It has been said that a lie travels round the world while Truth is putting on her boots, and so the lies against Stephen raged like a fire (Jas. 3:5-18).

B. Those "stirred up" likely had never heard of Stephen nor heard him speak.

1. Given the opportunity, many of these people may have carefully and thoughtfully considered the Scriptures and the truth, but this is exactly what Stephen's enemies did not want.
2. They sought to inflame the passions and prejudices of the people by calling Stephen a blasphemer.
3. The people were enraged into a righteous fervor. Those who came together were likely similar to the mob that gather in Ephesus, "the assembly was confused, and most of them did not know why they had come together" (Acts 19:32).
4. If those who gathered together knew anything, this one thing they were sure of "Stephen was a blasphemer."

C. Enemies of the truth will always appeal to the people by false accusations against those who preach the truth.

1. Slander and rumor will agitate the crowd.
2. Many may not have neither the opportunity to find out the truth and those who oppose will do all they can to keep the truth hidden.
3. Attack the man, avoid the argument; obfuscate rather than elucidate; agitate rather than mitigate.
  - a. One hundred years ago the people were stirred by the false charges that some preachers were "anti-missionary" because they opposed missionary societies.

- b. Thirty years ago the people were stirred by the false charges that some were “anti-orphans” and “orphan haters.”
- c. History continues to repeat this baleful pattern even to the present.
4. Those who are children of God will avoid this behavior and those who incite it (Prov. 16:27-28; 17:4; 6:16-19; Eph. 4:29-31; Tit. 3:2).

## V. They Were Cut To The Heart

- A. Stephen was seized by the stirred multitude and drug before the Sanhedrian council and charged with blasphemy.
  1. “Are these things so?” the high priest asked Stephen (Acts 7:1).
  2. Stephen made his defense by means of an eloquent sermon. Truly the wisdom and spirit of Stephen shone brightly as he deftly retold the highlights of the history of Israel highlighting the foreshadowing of Christ and his rejection by his own brethren.
  3. Stephen brought his sermon to a pointed conclusion, “You stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! You always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers did, so do you. Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who foretold the coming of the Just One, of whom you now have become the betrayers and murderers, who have received the law by the direction of angels and have not kept it” (Acts 7:51-53).
- B. Luke records that those who heard Stephen were “cut to the heart, and they gnashed at him with their teeth” (Acts 7:54).
  1. Stephen’s words of truth hit hard and cut deep.
  2. How easily Stephen could have avoided “offending” his audience. Stephen could have walked away alive by compromising the truth and himself.
  3. Stephen taught the truth, the truth his audience needed most and he applied it plainly and boldly.
  4. Stephen was stoned because his message cut his audience directly to the heart.
- C. Are we reaching our audience?
  1. Some preach the Word, but shun “to declare...the whole counsel of God” (Acts 20:27).
  2. Others are willing to preach and teach only what “offends” no one, steps on no one’s toes and deals with no one’s false doctrine. The result is “no one” is getting a good working over from many pulpits.
  3. The sword of the Spirit is “living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart ” (Heb. 4:12). But in the hands of one who is unwilling to unsheathe the sword of the Spirit in the face of false teachers and false doctrine, few are ever “cut to the heart” (Acts 7:54) and fewer are “pricked in their hearts” (Acts 2:37).
  4. Whenever a preacher is so bold as to teach the truth and apply it to his audience as Stephen, watch out, the stones will begin to fly.

## VI. They Stopped Their Ears

- A. It is hard to imagine those who would be so affected by the words spoken by Stephen that they would literally clap their hands over their ears (Acts 7:57).
  1. What good did this do?
    - a. They had already heard and knew the truth Steven spoke. Their actions appear to be an act of desperation.

- b. They were so blinded, so prejudiced in their hatred that they could no longer even bear to listen to Stephen.
    - c. Each word he spoke was like adding another lead weight, pressing down upon their guilty consciences.
  2. Enraged they determined not only to stop their ears, but to stop Stephen's mouth. They ran at Stephen, threw him out of the city and stoned him to death (Acts 7:57-58).
- B. One of the saddest parts of this account is that those who stoned Stephen were his own Jewish brethren.
  1. But as Stephen had pointed out the prophets were persecuted and slain, not by the Gentiles, but by their own Jewish brethren (Acts 7:52).
  2. This tragic pattern did not begin nor end with Stephen.
    - a. Too often the worse trouble and persecution arises from within rather than without.
    - b. Brethren this ought not to be. "But if you bite and devour one another, beware lest you be consumed by one another!" (Gal. 5:15).
- C. Christians are to be "swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath" (Jas. 1:19).
  1. Watch for those who are stopping their ears from hearing, swift to speak accusations and swift to wrath.
  2. When men will no longer discuss the scriptures, they will refuse even to listen.
  3. Instead they will be too busy stopping their ears and rushing to look for stones to throw.

## VII. Some Stood And Watched

- A. Some stood and watched Stephen being stoned to death.
  1. One who did so is named, a young man known as Saul (Acts 7:58).
  2. Many of those who stood by and watched may not have been involved in the false witnesses, false accusations and stirring up the people against Stephen.
  3. But those who stood and watched Stephen stoned were just as guilty as those who picked up and threw the stones.
- B. When the truth is preached, there will be those resist it and there will those who will merely sit silently on the sidelines.
  1. When false witnesses and false accusations are raised against one who preaches the truth, there will be those who stand and watch.
  2. When the people are stirred, ears are stopped and the stones begin to fly there will be the impassive "spectators" watching safely from the distance.
- C. Jehovah condemned the Edomites for being spectators of the destruction of their brothers, "In the day that you stood on the other side — in the day that strangers carried captive his forces, when foreigners entered his gates and cast lots for Jerusalem — even **you were as one of them**" (Obad. 1:11) (NKJV).

**Conclusion:** Stephen was stoned because he preached the truth and stood his ground. We would do well to follow his example and take our stand regardless of the persecutions, the false accusations and stones that will come. Jesus promised "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you" (Mt. 5:10-12).

# The Tongue

## James 3:1-12

**Introduction**-How often have you been to the doctor and he has said, “Open your mouth and let me see your tongue.” The tongue is used by doctors as one of the indicators of the condition of the body. Doctors can see the symptoms of disease and an unhealthy body on the tongue. The tongue is a muscle covered with mucous membrane and is used for tasting, masticating, swallowing and speaking. All of us know about that last use of the tongue, speaking.

James has much to say about how Christians should speak. In the third chapter James discusses the Christian and their tongue at length and mentions this subject five other times in, 1:19, 26; 2:12; 4:11; 5:12. One writer said concerning the third chapter of James: “Oh that entire congregations of God’s people would read this third chapter and tremble. Countless are the broken hearts and broken lives that are left in the wake of a poisonous tongue. How many ministers have ceased to preach, driven to despair by the loose tongues of those who should be on the Lord’s side? How many thousands have been driven from the assembly of God’s people in shame and disgust over slander and tale-bearing? How many churches have been split asunder by the everlasting venom of poisonous tongues?” (Donald Fream, *A Chain of Jewels From James and Jude*, (Joplin, MO: College Press, 1981), p. 127).

“(1) My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment. (2) For we all stumble in many things. If anyone does not stumble in word, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle the whole body. (3) Indeed, we put bits in horses’ mouths that they may obey us, and we turn their whole body. (4) Look also at ships: although they are so large and are driven by fierce winds, they are turned by a very small rudder wherever the pilot desires. (5) Even so the tongue is a little member and boasts great things. See how great a forest a little fire kindles! (6) And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity. The tongue is so set among our members that it defiles the whole body, and sets on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire by hell. (7) For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and creature of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by mankind. (8) But no man can tame the tongue. It is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. (9) With it we bless our God and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the similitude of God. (10) Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be so. (11) Does a spring send forth fresh water and bitter from the same opening? (12) Can a fig tree, my brethren, bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Thus no spring yields both salt water and fresh” (Jas. 3:1-12).

### I. A Controlled Tongue (James 3:2-4)

#### A. Control the tongue, control the whole body (vs. 2)

##### 1. How to be a perfect (mature) man?

a. “does not stumble in word”

b. Perfect man and able to bridle whole body

1) “Whoever guards his mouth and tongue Keeps his soul from troubles.” (Prov. 21:23).

2) “I said, ‘I will guard my ways, Lest I sin with my tongue; I will restrain my mouth with a muzzle...’ ” (Psa. 39:1).

2. “The boneless tongue, so small and weak,  
Can crush and kill,” declares the Greek.  
“The tongue destroys a greater horde,”  
The Turk asserts, “than does the sword.”  
The Persian proverb wisely saith,  
“A lengthy tongue—an early death”;  
Or sometimes takes this form instead,  
“Don’t let your tongue cut off your head.”  
While Arab sages this import,  
“The tongue’s great warehouse is the heart.”  
From Hebrew with the maxim sprung,  
“Though feet would slip, ne’er let the tongue.”  
The sacred writer crowns the whole,  
“Who keeps his tongue, doth keep his soul.”

Author Unknown

B. A Controlled Tongue is Like A...

1. A Bit (Controls)

- a. Bits control horses (vs. 3)
- b. A young strong horse, muscles rippling under the sheen of skin and hair. He chomps and snorts, restless, longing to go.
- c. Yet with a small bit, a person weighing much less can control the strength of a horse.
- d. Christians must control their tongue to control themselves.

2. A Rudder (Directs)

- a. Rudders control large ships (vs. 4)
- b. A ship crossing the ocean is often “driven by fierce winds,” storms and tempests. The waves will wash over its bow again and again.
- c. Yet, with a rudder, a large ship can be directed by a single hand against the wind and waves.
- d. Christians must direct their tongue to direct their lives.

C. The controlled tongue can

1. praise God (Jas. 5:13)
2. pray (Jas. 1:5-6; 5:16)
3. preach the Word (Jas. 3:1)
4. praise and encourage others (Jas. 1:19, 22; 2:15-16)

**II. An Uncontrolled Tongue (Jas. 3:5-8)**

A. The little tongue boasts great things (vs. 5)

1. The sins of the tongue:

- a. slander, talebearing (Lev. 19:16; Psa. 101:5).
- b. lying (Col. 3:9; Prov. 12:22; Rev. 21:8; 22:15).
- c. backbiting, evil speaking (Prov. 25:23; Rom. 1:30; Jam. 4:11).
- d. boasting
- e. gossip, whispering (Prov. 26:20-21; Rom. 1:29-30).
- f. sarcasm (Prov. 26:18-19)

B. An Uncontrolled Tongue is Like A...

1. A fire (Destructive)

a. A little fire kindles a great forest (vs. 5)

- 1) One small spark, one small match can start a blazing inferno that can destroy hundreds of thousands of acres.
- 2) In London there is a street, Charing Cross Road, that used to be filled with used book stores. During one night in WW II incendiary bombs hit that area and a million books were lost in the fires.
- 3) On October 8, 1871, a fire started in the O'Leary barn in Chicago. That small fire spread and became the "great Chicago fire." Three hundred people died, 17,500 buildings were destroyed and 100,000 people were left homeless. The cost was over \$400 million dollars.

4) The fiery tongue is

a) **Lawless**-A world of iniquity (lawlessness).

b) **Defiling**-Set among members and defiles the whole body.

i) "...looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled" (Heb. 12:15).

ii) "The words of a wise man's mouth are gracious, But the lips of a fool shall swallow him up" (Eccl. 10:12).

c) **Troubling**-Sets on fire the course of nature. It will bring trouble to your whole life and the life of others

i) "Do you see a man hasty in his words? There is more hope for a fool than for him" (Prov. 29:20).

ii) "The hypocrite with his mouth destroys his neighbor, But through knowledge the righteous will be delivered" (Prov. 11:9).

d) **Evil**-Set on fire by Hell. The evil tongue is fired by the fires of Hell and will send its bearer there.

i) "A worthless person, a wicked man, Walks with a perverse mouth" (Prov. 6:12).

ii) "Where there is no wood, the fire goes out; And where there is no tale-bearer, strife ceases. As charcoal is to burning coals, and wood to fire, So is a contentious man to kindle strife." (Prov. 26:20-21).

2. An untamed animal (Dangerous)

a. Every animal tamed by man

- 1) bird-falcons, hawks and eagles trained for hunting.
- 2) creeping thing-snakes trained.
- 3) sea creature-whales, porpoises, fish trained.

b. The tongue, no man can tame

c. Wild animals can be dangerous. Just go to a safari park and notice the signs, "Do not leave your car," "Do not open your windows"

d. During WW II, there were posters reading, "Loose lips, sink ships."

e. "I lost a very little word, only the other day; It was a wicked word I had not meant to say. But, then it was not really lost-when from my lips it flew, my little child picked it up, and now he says it too!"

3. An unruly evil, a deadly poison (Deadly)
  - a. A deadly drug does not have to be taken in large doses, a few drops can and will kill.
  - b. The tongue does not need long speeches to be deadly, only the drop of one word can harm and destroy. One word can destroy peace, ruin reputation, break friendships, poison minds and send souls to hell.
    - 1) “They sharpen their tongues like a serpent; The poison of asps is under their lips.” (Psa. 140:3).
    - 2) “Their throat is an open tomb; With their tongues they have practiced deceit; The poison of asps is under their lips” (Rom. 3:13).
  - c. “Death and life are in the power of the tongue” (Prov. 18:21).
    - 1) It has been said that for every word in Hilter’s *Mein Kampf*, 125 lives were lost.
    - 2) “The tongue is but three inches long, yet it can kill a man six feet high” (Japanese proverb)
    - 3) “A perverse man sows strife, And a whisperer separates the best of friends” (Prov. 16:28).

## II. Impossible To Have Both (Jas. 3:9-12)

- A. One cannot have an uncontrolled and controlled tongue at the same time.
  1. Cannot have blessings and cursings out of same mouth
    - a. Bless God and curse men?
    - b. This ought not to be so!
  2. If your tongue is inconsistent there is something very wrong with your heart.
  3. There was a Christian who got angry on the job and let loose some cuss words. He got embarrassed and turned to his buddy and said, “I don’t know why I said that, it really isn’t in me.” His friend replied, “It had to be in you or it wouldn’t have come out of you.”
  4. “A tart temper never mellows with age; and a sharp tongue is the only edged tool that grows keener and sharper with constant use” (Washington Irving).
- B. To have Both is Like A...
  1. A Fountain (Refreshing)
    - a. Spring cannot have fresh water and salt water.
    - b. “The words of a man’s mouth are deep waters; The wellspring of wisdom is a flowing brook” (Prov. 18:4).
    - c. “The mouth of the righteous is a well of life, But violence covers the mouth of the wicked” (Prov. 10:11).
    - d. “The law of the wise is a fountain of life, To turn one away from the snares of death” (Prov. 13:14).
    - e. Paul sought to “refresh” the saints at Rome (Rom. 15:32).
  2. A Fig tree (Prosperous)
    - a. A fig tree cannot bear olives (See, Gen. 1:11-12).
    - b. “There is one who speaks like the piercings of a sword, But the tongue of the wise promotes health” (Prov. 12:18).
  3. Grape vine (Fruitful)
    - a. A grape vine cannot bear figs.
    - b. “The lips of the righteous feed many, But fools die for lack of wisdom” (Prov. 10:21).

### III. How To Control Your Tongue

#### A. Pray To God

1. "Set a guard, O Lord, over my mouth; Keep watch over the door of my lips" (Psa. 141:3).
2. "The Lord God has given Me The tongue of the learned, That I should know how to speak A word in season to him who is weary. He awakens Me morning by morning, He awakens My ear To hear as the learned" (Isa. 50:4).

#### B. Control Your Thoughts

1. Controlling the tongue does not mean taping up your mouth or wiring your jaw shut.
2. Controlling the tongue requires controlling the heart. "But those things which proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and they defile a man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. These are the things which defile a man, but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile a man" (Mt. 15:18-20).
3. "Keep your heart with all diligence, For out of it spring the issues of life" (Prov. 4:23).
4. "...casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ" (2 Cor. 10:5).
5. "Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things" (Phil. 4:8).

#### C. Keep Your Mouth Shut

1. "I said, 'I will guard my ways, Lest I sin with my tongue; I will restrain my mouth with a muzzle, While the wicked are before me.' I was mute with silence, I held my peace even from good; And my sorrow was stirred up. My heart was hot within me; While I was musing, the fire burned. Then I spoke with my tongue" (Psa. 39:1-3).
2. "He who has knowledge spares his words, And a man of understanding is of a calm spirit" (Prov. 17:27).
3. "Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers" (Eph. 4:29).
4. It doesn't pay to say too much  
When your'e mad enough to choke:  
For the word that stings the deepest  
Is the word that's never spoke.

Let the other fellow wrangle  
Till the storm has blown away,  
Then he'll do a heap o' thinking  
'Bout the things you didn't say!

#### D. Think Before You Speak

1. "In the multitude of words sin is not lacking, But he who restrains his lips is wise" (Prov. 10:19).
2. "He who is slow to wrath has great understanding, But he who is impulsive exalts folly" (Prov. 14:29).

**E. Try These Words:**

1. "Please."
2. "Thank you."
3. "I'm sorry."
4. "I love you."
5. "I'm praying for you."

**Conclusion-**Your tongue is tied to eternity. "But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment. For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned" (Mt. 12:36-37). "May the Lord cut off all flattering lips, And the tongue that speaks proud things, Who have said, 'With our tongue we will prevail; Our lips are our own; Who is lord over us?' " (Psa. 12:3-4). "For 'He who would love life And see good days, Let him refrain his tongue from evil, And his lips from speaking deceit' " (1 Pet. 3:10).

# “Where Are You?”

## Genesis 3:9

**Introduction:** The Lord God had planted a beautiful garden in Eden and there he had placed the first man and woman. Adam and Eve were given only one law of restraint, “but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die” (Gen. 2:17). Satan came and deceived Eve by twisting God’s Word. Eve broke God’s law and sinned by eating the fruit of the forbidden tree. Then she gave the fruit to Adam and he also sinned and ate of the tree. Upon eating the fruit, they realized their nakedness and covered themselves, then they heard the Lord walking in the garden and in their shame and sin they tried to hide themselves from God. “Then the Lord God called to Adam and said to him, ‘Where are you?’ ” (Gen. 3:9).

God’s question to Adam is the first recorded question in the Bible. It was a relevant question of tremendous importance. The question was asked by the God who had walked and talked with Adam and Eve before and from whom they now shamefully hid. He was their Creator, the all-knowing and all-seeing Jehovah (Ps. 139:1-10). Try as they might, they could not hide from God, he knew where they were.

If the Lord knew where Adam and Eve were, why did he ask? God did not ask the question for his sake, but for Adam and Eve’s sake. He wanted *them* to realize where they were and why they were there. They were separated and hiding from the fellowship of God in shame because of their sin!

The first question recorded in the Bible is still a relevant and important question today. God is still asking “Where are you?” He asks the question of you and me. He knows the answer. How will you respond?

### I. With Respect To Salvation?

- A. If you are of the age to know right from wrong then you have transgressed the law of God and sinned.
  - 1. “Where are you?” God asks.
  - 2. Are you trying to hide from God behind your sin and shame? Try as you might you will never hide from God, just as Adam and Eve could not hide from God in Eden.
  - 3. Do you really understand just where you are as a sinner? You are not really hiding, you are lost and headed for eternal destruction.
- B. Jesus declared, “for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost” (Lk. 19:10).
  - 1. He gave up everything to look for you.
    - a. He “who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross” (Phil. 2:6-8).
    - b. If you understand where you are as a sinner, it is time to come out from hiding, be found by Jesus Christ and become obedient to him in faith and baptism.

## II. When The Saints Assemble?

- A. When the saints assemble together on Sunday morning, Sunday evening, Wednesday evening and during Gospel meetings to worship God and study his word, “Where are you?”
  - 1. God knows where you are when you are not meeting with other saints.
  - 2. He sees each and every person who professes to be a Christian who is sitting home watching T.V. or out bowling or playing golf when the saints are assembled to worship God.
  - 3. As David asks, “Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence?” (Psa. 139:7).
- B. In John 20:19-20, the disciples were assembled together on Sunday evening, except for Thomas.
  - 1. We do not know where Thomas was, but we know where he was not.
  - 2. In his absence, he missed
    - a. the fellowship of the other disciples,
    - b. the encouragement and shared faith and
    - c. above all he missed having fellowship with the Lord.
  - 3. Fortunately the next Sunday, Thomas came out from hiding from the assembly of the disciples and was present with the disciples when Jesus appeared again.
  - 4. Will you come out of your hiding place this next Sunday and Wednesday evening?

## III. When There Is Work To Be Done?

- A. The Lord told the prophet Jonah that he had some work for him to do. The work was to go and preach to the city of Ninevah.
  - 1. “But Jonah arose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord. He went down to Joppa, and found a ship going to Tarshish; so he paid the fare, and went down into it, to go with them to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord” (Jonah 1:3).
  - 2. Jonah tried to pull the old Adam and Eve disappearing act on the Lord and he was just as unsuccessful as Adam and Eve.
  - 3. Jonah learned a hard lesson that he could not run away from the Lord and the work the Lord had for him to do?
- B. “Where are you?” when there is work to be done for the Lord?
  - 1. Are you running and hiding as Jonah and Adam and Eve had done before him?
  - 2. When the building needs to be cleaned or repair needs to be done, where are you?
  - 3. When it comes time to make a contribution for the work of the Lord, where are you?
  - 4. When visiting and teaching needs to be done, where are you?
- C. It is truly amazing how quickly people disappear when the Lord’s work needs to be done. You may hide from the elders, the preacher and even yourself, but you will never be able to run away from God when his work needs to be done.

## IV. On The Day Of Judgment?

- A. “Where are you” when the day of judgment comes?
  - 1. Will you be on the left hand of the Lord ready to go into everlasting fire or on the right hand of the Lord ready to go into heaven?
  - 2. Where you were with respect to salvation, when the saints assembled and when there was work to be done, will determine where you will be on the day of judgment.

B. Sadly, many will be in the same place they have always been—hidden from God.

1. Those who spent this life hiding from God in sin and darkness will spend an eternity hidden away from God in shame in the farthest reaches of darkness.

**Conclusion:** It is time to stop hiding from God. It cannot be done. All one ends up doing is hiding from himself and reality. Come out into the light of God's salvation, be present when the saints assemble, be present when the Lord's work needs to be done and you will be on the Lord's right hand ready to inherit heaven on the day of judgment.

# “Have I Become Your Enemy?”

## Galatians 4:16

**Introduction:** The letter to the Galatians was written by Paul to the churches in Galatia to root out the erroneous doctrines that were being taught to the Galatians. Paul warned these Christians that false doctrines were not the true Gospel but dangerous perversions. “I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ” (Gal. 1:6-7).

False doctrines threatened their very salvation. “You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace” (Gal. 5:4). Paul was greatly concerned that these Christians would be led away by false teachers and false doctrines. I am afraid for you, lest I have labored for you in vain” (Gal. 4:11).

How would you respond to a letter of rebuke and warning? Would you repent? Would you be upset? Would you get mad? Apparently, some of the Christians did not like Paul’s attempts to correct their errors. Instead of changing their lives and returning to God they got mad at Paul! As Paul wrote them he asked them to consider, “Have I therefore become your enemy because I tell you the truth?” (Gal. 4:16).

### I. Preaching The Truth Makes Enemies

A. Consider the enemies created by those who spoke the truth.

1. Ahab hated the prophet Micaiah for always telling the truth about him. “So the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, ‘There is still one man, Micaiah the son of Imlah, by whom we may inquire of the Lord; but I hate him, because he does not prophesy good concerning me, but evil’ ” (1 Ki. 22:8).
2. Pharaoh threw Moses out of his court for speaking truth. “Then Pharaoh said to him, ‘Get away from me! Take heed to yourself and see my face no more! For in the day you see my face you shall die!’ And Moses said, ‘You have spoken well. I will never see your face again’ ” (Ex. 10:28-29).
3. Jezebel threatened Elijah for preaching the truth. “And Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, also how he had executed all the prophets with the sword. Then Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah, saying, ‘So let the gods do to me, and more also, if I do not make your life as the life of one of them by tomorrow about this time’ ” (1 Ki. 19:1-2).
4. Herod and Herodias took John’s head because he rebuked their sin. “For Herod had laid hold of John and bound him, and put him in prison for the sake of Herodias, his brother Philip’s wife. Because John had said to him, ‘It is not lawful for you to have her.’ And although he wanted to put him to death, he feared the multitude, because they counted him as a prophet. But when Herod’s birthday was celebrated, the daughter of Herodias danced before them and pleased Herod. Therefore he promised with an oath to give her whatever she might ask. So she, having been prompted by her mother, said, ‘Give me John the Baptist’s head here on a platter’ ” (Mt. 14:3-8).

B. Jesus warned his followers they would be hated.

1. “And you will be hated by all for My name’s sake. But he who endures to the end will be saved...A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master” (Mt. 10:22, 24).

2. Why? Because their error and evil is exposed.
  - a. “And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed” (Jn. 3:19-20).
  - b. Did you ever roll over a rotting log in the forest? You expose all sorts of creatures of the darkness that scurry to hide themselves as quickly as they can.
  - c. Those who are in sin and error are like the creatures under a rotten log, they despise the light and truth. And they will despise those who speak the truth and reveal their error.
3. Because of the weight of their own guilty conscience. “The wicked flee when no one pursues, But the righteous are bold as a lion” (Prov. 28:1).
4. They would rather hear lies.
  - a. “Who say to the seers, ‘Do not see,’ And to the prophets, ‘Do not prophesy to us right things; Speak to us smooth things, prophesy deceits’ ” (Isa. 30:10).
  - b. Many men would rather try to change the Bible and truth to fit themselves rather than change themselves to fit the truth.

## **II. Only A True Friend Will Tell You The Truth**

- A. Those who do not care for you will not tell you the truth, what you need to hear, but only tell you what you want to hear.
  1. “A man who flatters his neighbor Spreads a net for his feet” (Prov. 29:5).
  2. “Woe to you when all men speak well of you” (Lk. 6:26).
- B. When someone is truly concerned about you and is your friend, they will tell you the truth, even if you don’t want to hear the truth and even if it hurts.
  1. “Faithful are the wounds of a friend; but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful” (Prov. 27:6).
  2. The benefits of the truth:
    - a. Sanctifies: “And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth” (Jn.17:19).
    - b. Makes Free: “And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (Jn. 8:32).
    - c. Saves: “...who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Tim. 2:4).
  3. The Lord will destroy those who “did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved’ (2 Thess. 2:10).

## **III. Truth Must Be Preached Even At The Price of Making Enemies**

- A. God demands truth be taught.
  1. “Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching” (2 Tim. 4:2).
  2. “For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ” (Gal. 1:10).
- B. Christians in error need to be rebuked.
  1. “Those who are sinning rebuke in the presence of all, that the rest also may fear” (1 Tim. 5:20).
  2. Paul rebuked the apostle Peter. “Now when Peter had come to Antioch, I withstood

him to his face, because he was to be blamed; for before certain men came from James, he would eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing those who were of the circumcision. And the rest of the Jews also played the hypocrite with him, so that even Barnabas was carried away with their hypocrisy. But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, I said to Peter before them all, 'If you, being a Jew, live in the manner of Gentiles and not as the Jews, why do you compel Gentiles to live as Jews?' " (Gal. 2:11-14).

3. John rebuked a troublesome Christian. "I wrote to the church, but Diotrephes, who loves to have the preeminence among them, does not receive us. Therefore, if I come, I will call to mind his deeds which he does, prating against us with malicious words. And not content with that, he himself does not receive the brethren, and forbids those who wish to, putting them out of the church" (3 Jn. 9-10).
4. Peter rebuked a new Christian in sin. "And when Simon saw that through the laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Spirit was given, he offered them money, saying, 'Give me this power also, that anyone on whom I lay hands may receive the Holy Spirit.' But Peter said to him, 'Your money perish with you, because you thought that the gift of God could be purchased with money! You have neither part nor portion in this matter, for your heart is not right in the sight of God. Repent therefore of this your wickedness, and pray God if perhaps the thought of your heart may be forgiven you. For I see that you are poisoned by bitterness and bound by iniquity' " (Acts 8:18-23).

C. A compromising attitude towards the truth leads to apostasy.

1. "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers" (2 Tim. 4:3).
2. "...to whom (false brethren) we did not yield submission even for an hour, that the truth of the gospel might continue with you" (Gal. 2:5).

D. Some attitudes that weaken the truth and destroy the church.

1. "Preach the Bible but leave everyone else alone."
  - a. This is impossible. You cannot truly preach the Bible without condemning those in error.
  - b. You would have to leave out Genesis 1:1 since it condemns the atheist.
  - c. You couldn't read, "You shall have no other gods before Me" (Ex. 20:3), because it refutes those who believe in many gods.
  - d. Forget preaching Christ for he plainly declared, "Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for if you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins" (Jn. 8:24). This would bother the follower of Islam and the Jews who believe in one God but refuse Christ.
  - e. Throw out, "He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned" (Mk. 16:16), because this condemns the teaching of most of the religious world.
  - f. And forget preaching, "There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all" (Eph. 4:4-6). This is too narrow for most.
  - g. By the time you took out all the passages that offend somebody, you would not have a Bible left!

- h. Suppose the captain told his soldiers, “Boys, shoot, but be sure you don’t hit anybody.” Such tactics would bring defeat.
  - i. Some preachers are professional ballplayers rather than preachers. They wind up on Sunday morning and throw curves around everyone in the building. It is a mighty poor preacher who cannot hit those in sin once in awhile.
2. “Don’t preach the negative.”
- a. The person who lays down this rule violates his own rule by using a negative.
  - b. It also indicts God. Eight of the ten commandments are negative (Ex. 20).
  - c. Paul list 17 works of the flesh and only 9 positive fruits of the Spirit (Gal. 5:19-23).
  - d. It is said that many preachers won’t preach on Hell because they have too many friends there.
  - e. The only way to be positive is to preach the truth whether it commends or condemns!

**Conclusion:** How do you respond when you hear the Bible preached? What do you do when the time for the invitation comes? When I preach that you need to believe on Christ, repent of your sins, confess Jesus as the Son of God and be baptized, do you get angry at me? “Have I therefore become your enemy because I tell you the truth?” (Gal. 4:16). No, I tell you the truth because I am concerned about where you will spend eternity. If I was your enemy I would lie to you and tell you are safe and that you don’t have to do a thing to be right with God. Won’t you hear and obey the truth now!

# The Character Of Love

## 1 Corinthians 13

**Introduction:** For three years Jesus Christ led and taught his twelve apostles. They lived together, traveled together and sat had his feet. Together they traveled together to Jerusalem for what Jesus knew would the last Passover he would partake of with his chosen (Jn. 13:1). Only a few short hours lay between Jesus' last meal and the cross at Calvary. He had many things to say to his apostles to prepare them for the next few hours and for the rest of their lives.

“So, when he had gone out, Jesus said, ‘Now the Son of Man is glorified, and God is glorified in Him. If God is glorified in Him, God will also glorify Him in Himself, and glorify Him immediately. Little children, I shall be with you a little while longer. You will seek Me; and as I said to the Jews, “Where I am going, you cannot come,” so now I say to you. A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another’ ” (Jn. 13:31-35).

“As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love. If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love. These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full. This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you” (Jn. 15:9-12).

The concept of love in our day and age is often confused and deceptive. The modern idea of love is usually expressed in one of two extremes, erotic love or romantic love. The Greeks had four different words for our one English word “love.” When Jesus commanded his disciples “to love one another,” he used the Greek word “*agapao*.” The Greeks considered this the highest and purest love. Obviously so does God as this is the kind of love Christians are commanded to have toward one another. *Agapao* “speaks of love which is awakened by a sense of value in an object which causes one to prize it. It springs from an apprehension of the preciousness of an object. It is a love of esteem and approbation” (Wuest). As one writer expressed: “All true love is grounded on esteem.” When Jesus commanded us to love one another, he was saying “value, esteem, hold precious one another.”

“Let brotherly love continue” (Heb. 13:1). “Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart” (1 Pet. 1:22).

True followers of Christ will have a deep and abiding love for each other. “They are true disciples of Christ, not who know the most, but who love the most.” But oft we don't know or lose sight of how the character of love towards others is shown or displayed. God has not left us in the dark. Through the apostle Paul, God has given us one of the most beautiful passages on love ever written.

“(1) Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. (2) And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. (3) And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing. (4) Love suffers long and is kind; love

does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; (5) does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; (6) does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; (7) bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. (8) Love never fails. But whether there are prophecies, they will fail; whether there are tongues, they will cease; whether there is knowledge, it will vanish away. (9) For we know in part and we prophesy in part. (10) But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away. (11) When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things. (12) For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known. 13 And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love” (1 Cor. 13).

Let’s examine the character of the love we are to have toward each other.

### **I. Longsuffering (vs. 4)**

A. The King James uses the word “longsuffering.” The newer versions use the word “patient.”

1. Longsuffering is closer to the original Greek.
2. “...to suffer long under, the quality of self-restraint in the face of provocation, which does not hastily retaliate or promptly punish. It is the opposite of anger, and is associated with mercy...” (Wuest).
3. The opposite of impatience and irritability.
4. “Endures evils, confers blessings.”

B. One fulfills the command to love one another when he shows patience and is longsuffering.

1. Not harsh, not rash, not bitter, not irritable.
2. How many excuses do we create to avoid showing love in patience?
  - a. “I got up on the wrong side of the bed?”
  - b. “I didn’t get enough sleep or enough to eat, etc.
  - c. “Well, excuse their behavior because they are old” or “they are young.”
3. “I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, 3 endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Eph. 4:1-3).
4. “Patience strengthens the spirit, sweetens the temper, stifles anger, extinguishes envy, subdues pride, bridles the tongue, restrains the hand and tramples upon the temptations” (George Horne).

C. We need to understand

1. “There is much difference between genuine patience and sullen endurance, as between the smile of love, and the malicious gnashing of teeth” (WS Plummer).
2. “Do not grumble against one another, brethren, lest you be condemned. Behold, the Judge is standing at the door! My brethren, take the prophets, who spoke in the name of the Lord, as an example of suffering and patience. Indeed we count them blessed who endure. You have heard of the perseverance of Job and seen the end intended by the Lord—that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful” (Jas. 5:9-11).
3. True love means not only to endure the wicked but to be patient with brethren. We often can handle those who are not close to us, but are quick to abuse our own brothers and sisters in Christ.

4. “We never know how much one loves till we know how much he is willing to endure and suffer for us; and it is the suffering element that measures love.—The characters that are great, must, of necessity, be characters, that shall be willing, patient, and strong to endure for others.—To hold our nature in the willing service of another, is the divine idea of manhood, of the human character” (H.W. Beecher).
5. During the reign of Queen Elizabeth, Dr. Thomas Cooper edited a dictionary adding 33,000 words. After spending eight years collecting materials, his wife burnt every note he had prepared under the pretense of fearing that he would kill himself with study. When the doctor came in and saw the destruction and heard his wife had performed the deed, he heaved a deep sigh and said, “Oh, Dinah, Dinah, thou hast given me a world of trouble.” Then he quietly sat down to another eight years of hard labor to replace the notes she had destroyed.

## II. Kind (vs. 4)

- A. “kind” “useful, good, pleasant, obliging, gracious, polite and courteous, willing to perform good for others.”
  1. A kind person is one who is pleasant and helpful in words and deeds.
  2. Not harsh, sour, ill-natured.
  3. “Kindness is a language the dumb can speak and the deaf can hear and understand” (Bovee).
- B. We need to speak words of kindness.
  1. The “worthy woman” of Proverbs 31 “whose price is far above rubies” “in her tongue is the law of kindness.”
  2. “Kind words are the music of the world. They have a power which seems to be beyond natural causes, as if they were some angel’s song which had lost its way and come on earth. It seems as if they could almost do what in reality God alone can do—soften the hard and angry hearts of men. No one was ever corrected by sarcasm—crushed, perhaps, if the sarcasm was clever enough, but drawn nearer to God, never” (Fredrick William Faber).
  3. “A ‘bit of love’ is the only bit that will bridle the tongue” (Fred Beck).
- C. To love one another we must show kindness to one another.
  1. “And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ forgave you” (Eph. 4:32).
  2. We need tender hearts. Have we become like the world with hearts of icy stone?
  3. “Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering” (Col. 3:12). We need to feel for one another, to have compassion for one another.
  4. “The greatest thing a man can do for his heavenly Father is to be kind to some of His other children” (Henry Drummond).
- D. Too many Christians miss kindness.
  1. There are Christians busy looking for some big act they are looking for a grand sacrifice that never comes.
  2. And if it does come, they can’t handle the big deed because they are not in the habit of the little acts of kindness.
  3. “Life is made up, not of great sacrifices or duties, but of little things, in which smiles, and kindnesses, and small obligations, given habitually, are what win and preserve the heart and secure comfort” (Sir H. Davy).

4. "Better to do a kindness near at home than walk a thousand miles to burn incense"  
(*The Defender*).
- E. If you truly desire the character of love, show it in little ways of kindness.
  1. Kindness is in the quiet and friendly smile; kindness is the gentle word of encouragement; kindness is the small deed that helps another; kindness is the inclined ear that patiently listens; the sympathetic shoulder that is wet with tears and loaded down with the burdens of others; kindness is the light touch of assurance on the back of one who needs help; the reassuring word of prayer for those in pain; the feet shod ready to bring the gospel of peace; the strength and of help for those whose hands hang down, support for the feeble knees, straightened paths for wayward feet; it is the pursuit of peace and holiness in the face of provocation to war; it is the diligent search for any deadly root of bitterness that causes trouble and defilement; it is reproof, rebuke and exhortation of the sinful, wayward and lost; it is all this and much more.
  2. Love is not in saying "I love my brethren" but love is in actions that show love.
  3. Stop and remember the time someone made your day with a small act of kindness. "Go thou and do likewise" Jesus said.

### III. Not Envious (vs. 4)

- A. Not only is love expressed in a positive manner in what you do, true love refrains from certain attitudes and actions.
  1. Envy is a feeling of displeasure produced by witnessing or hearing of the advantage or prosperity of others.
  2. Envy not only wants my grass to be greener, it wants your grass to be brown.
  3. Love rather delights and rejoices when others have happiness, rank, reputation, wealth, health, education.
- B. "But envy is rottenness to the bones" (Prov. 14:30).
  1. It is a terrible and destructive.
  2. Jealousy and envy is the cancer of love.
  3. "Wrath is cruel and anger a torrent, But who is able to stand before envy?" (Prov. 27:4).
  4. Jesus was killed out of envy. "For he knew that they had handed Him over because of envy" (Mt. 27:18).
- C. Envy brings strife.
  1. "...for you are still carnal. For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men?" (1 Cor. 3:3).
  2. Do you love other brothers and sisters in Christ or are you envious of them?
    - a. How do you react if you see a brother or a sister in a new car? Are you happy for them and compliment them? Or do you sneer and ask how did they get the money to buy a new car?
    - b. Women. If you see another woman dressed in a nice dress do you say "How nice" or whisper under your breath, "Too fancy"?
    - c. What is your reaction when your fellow Christians have something you don't have? Are you glad for them or will you try to tear them down by a smart remark or a disparaging look?
  3. It is amazing how bitter someone who is envious can be. I have seen and heard people cry over remarks made by envious and jealous brethren.
  4. "Therefore if there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellow-

ship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself” (Phil. 2:1-3).

5. “There is only one thing in this world that’s worth having. Love. L-o-v-e. You love somebody, somebody loves you. That’s all there is to it. But if you don’t get that you’ve got nothing. So you take the next best thing. You take power or money or fame or whatever little morsel you can pick up for yourself as second best” (Charles Mergendahl, *The Next Best Thing*).

#### IV. Not Boastful Or Arrogant (vs. 4)

- A. To love each other means we empty ourselves of our pride and self-importance.
  1. To love is to dethrone one’s self and place others first.
  2. The haughty speech of a braggart has no place in a Christian with love.
    - a. A braggart is one who is always telling others of his accomplishments and his plans and his ideas.
    - b. One does not have a conversation with a braggart. He talks at you not to you.
  3. Arrogance is closely associated with with the braggart.
    - a. In the Greek this word literally means, “to puff up, to blow up.”
    - b. One who is full of pride has an inflated opinion of their self-importance.
    - c. I think of a Puff Fish or a Blow Fish when I read of this. I would fish with my Grandmother in the canals off the Inland Waterway in Ft. Lauderdale. I’ll never forget catching a Blow Fish. I pulled in a little fish no bigger than your hand, but when I it got it in it swelled up to the size of a large grapefruit.
    - d. That fish is very much like the braggart usually all talk and no action. Their speech is full of “I’s” and “me’s.”
- B. Christians are to be humble and to regard others as more important than themselves.
  1. “If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another” (Gal. 5:25-26).
  2. “Do not boast about tomorrow, For you do not know what a day may bring forth” (Prov. 27:1).
  3. “But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth. This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic. For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there” (Jas. 3:14-16).

#### V. Not Unbecoming (vs. 4)

- A. When you truly love another person, you will treat them with respect.
  1. One does not act unbecoming, unmannered, discourteous and disrespectful.
  2. Someone has said, “The only lasting foundation for love between two people is mutual respect.”
- B. How sad it is to see brethren treating one another with disrespect.
  1. I have heard of congregations in which there were members who got mad and never spoke to other members for years!
  2. That is unbecoming and certainly not loving the brethren.
  3. “Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of

good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things. The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you” (Phil. 4:8-9).

4. “He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, And he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city” (Prov. 16:32).
- C. Do you treat others with respect or with conduct that is unbecoming?
  1. The Golden Rule says, “Treat others as you would want others to treat you.”
  2. Do you make sarcastic remarks about and cut down your brethren?
  3. Do you try to avoid your brethren?
  4. Do you try to ignore your brethren?
  5. “Finally, all of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another; love as brothers, be tenderhearted, be courteous” (1 Pet. 3:8).

## VI. Not Selfish (vs. 5)

- A. Love is the opposite of selfishness.
  1. Roland Diller, one of Lincoln’s neighbors in Springfield, told the story: “I was called to the door one day by the cries of children in the street, and there was Mr. Lincoln, striding by with two of his boys, both of whom were wailing aloud. ‘Why, Mr. Lincoln, what’s the matter with the boys?’ I asked. ‘Just what’s the matter with the whole world,’ Lincoln replied. ‘I’ve got three walnuts, and each wants two.’”
  2. “‘ME’ is always at the bottom of all sin. One little word M-E. It may spell drink, lust, pride, covetousness, self-will; but it is some form of ‘me.’”
  3. “The very heart and root of sin is an independent spirit.—We erect the idol of self, and not only wish others to worship, but worship it ourselves” (Richard Cecil).
  4. “Usually he is most empty who is most full of himself” (A.G. Lawson).
- B. “Selfishness takes, love gives.”
  1. Throughout the Bible the concept of love is never a passive feeling, but an active service or giving.
    2. In John 3:16 we are told that God loved, so God gave.
    3. “For God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love which you have shown toward His name, in that you have ministered to the saints, and do minister. And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope until the end” (Heb. 6:10-11).
    4. “For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another” (Gal. 5:13).
- C. I said earlier that we have a distorted view of love in our culture.
  1. This has caused many marriages to fail and brethren to be torn apart.
  2. *Erotic love*-Some believe all love is sexual desire. How many marriages come about for this reason and fail when the desire lessens or turns elsewhere?
  3. *Romantic love*-This is the opposite extreme. Someone once wrote that “romantic love and gunpowder were the two worse things to come out of the Middle Ages.”
    - a. Romantic love is a selfish and unrealistic love. It seeks to create a selfish image of the object of its affections. It desires to mold the person into some ideal beyond the reality of the person.
    - b. Many people enter marriage, not with the idea of unselfishness, service and respect but with the false idea of romantic love.
    - c. They have idealistic and unrealistic concepts that getting married will make them a

happy person and all their problems will be solved. How soon they are awakened from their dream world, surprised and angry.

4. Brethren's idea of loving other brethren is often idealistic and unreal.
  - a. They expect no problems or conflicts with brethren.
  - b. Watch out when the honeymoon is over for the sparks to fly.
- D. How can we love one another in an unselfish and realistic fashion?
  1. Be devoted to one another. Prefer one another. "Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another" (Rom. 12:10).
  2. Look out for one another. "Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others" (Phil. 2:3-4).
  3. Seek one another's good. "Let no one seek his own, but each one the other's well-being" (1 Cor. 10:24).
  4. Serve one another. "For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another" (Gal. 5:13).

## VII. Not Easily Provoked (vs. 5)

- A. The word "provoked" means "sharp contention."
  1. It has the idea of exasperation and wrathfulness.
  2. It is a shame that there are some people you have to "walk on eggs" around them, because they are ready to explode.
  3. Such people do not have the love they should.
  4. "Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good. Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another" (Rom. 12:9-10).
- B. Are you easily provoked?
  1. Where is your love?
  2. "Finally, all of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another; love as brothers, be tenderhearted, be courteous; not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing, knowing that you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing" (1 Pet. 3:8-9).
  3. President Lincoln once dropped a few kind words about the Confederates. A woman flashed forth a question of how he could speak kindly of his enemies when he should rather destroy them. "What, Madam, do I not destroy them when I make them my friends?"
  4. "Love makes all hard hearts gentle" (George Herbert, *Outlandish Proverbs*).
  5. "Love is the thing that enables a woman to sing while she mops the floor after her husband has walked across it in his barn boots" (*Hooiser Farmer*).

## VIII. Not Account A Wrong (vs. 5)

- A. This phrase is literally "does not reckon evil."
  1. There are some people who will keep a scorecard.
  2. They mark down everything they feel someone has done wrong to them.
  3. It was big news when we heard about Nixon's so called "Enemy List."
  4. Years ago a man and woman had just gotten married and he was driving his bride home in their horse and buggy. As they came to a turn in the road, the man told the horse, "Gee" (turn right) and the horse hawed (turned left). The man stopped the

buggy got out and grabbed the horse's bridle looked him square in the eye and said, "That's one." The couple drove on down the road and as they came to a turn the man yelled out, "Haw" (turn left) and the horse geed (turned right). Again the man stopped the carriage grabbed the horse and said, "That's two." Shortly down the road the horse again made the wrong turn. The man abruptly stopped the carriage, he got in the horse's face and said, "That's three" Whereupon he pulled out his gun and shot the horse dead on the spot. His bride sitting in the buggy spoke up, "Now honey, I don't think you should have done that." He looked her in the eye and said, "That's one."

- B. To bear a grudge is to account a wrong and not in the character of love.
1. "Hatred stirs up strife, But love covers all sins" (Prov. 10:12).
  2. "He who loves transgression loves strife, And he who exalts his gate seeks destruction" (Prov. 17:19).
  3. Thousands of appeals for pardon came to Lincoln from soldiers involved in military discipline. Each appeal was as a rule supported by letters from influential people. One day a single sheet came before him, an appeal from a soldier without any supporting documents. "What!" exclaimed the President, "has this man no friends?" "No sir, not one," his assistant replied. "Then," said Lincoln, "I will be his friend."

#### IX. Rejoices In The Truth (vs. 6)

- A. There are those who are glad to be unrighteous and enjoy the wickedness of others.
1. "...that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness" (2 Thess. 2:12).
  2. "Truth is incontrovertible. Panic may resent it; ignorance may deride it; malice may distort it; but there it is" (Sir Winston Churchill, quoted in *Information*).
  3. "Truth makes the Devil blush" (Thomas Fuller, *Gnomologia*).
- B. Those who have the love that Christians should have rejoice in the truth and are glad to be with and enjoy those who are righteous.
1. "I rejoiced greatly that I have found some of your children walking in truth, as we received commandment from the Father" (2 Jn. 4).
  2. "For I rejoiced greatly when brethren came and testified of the truth that is in you, just as you walk in the truth. I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth" (3 Jn. 3-4).
  3. "Truth without charity is often intolerant and even persecuting, as charity without truth is weak in concession and untrustworthy in judgment.—But charity, loyal to the truth and rejoicing in it, has the wisdom of the serpent with the harmlessness of the dove" (Joshua Swartz).

#### X. Optimistic

- A. Love is optimistic: "bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things."
1. It bears up under wrongs and keeps on going.
  2. It believes in the good.
  3. It hopes for the best.
  4. It endures the darkest night knowing that the morning sun will soon dawn a new day.
- B. Think about your wedding day.
1. Love made all things seem possible.
  2. Have you ever seen a young couple deeply in love who were pessimistic?

3. "Love makes people look at the bright side of things. They do see the bad things, but they make a great effort to see the good, so they do see the good" (Anonymous).
4. "Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart" (1 Pet. 1:22).

**Conclusion:** Do you have the love the Bible speaks of? If not, why not? Paul said, without love you "become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal." You might be filled with knowledge, strong in faith, enough to move mountains, but without love "(you are) nothing."

John wrote: "(10) In this the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest: Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is he who does not love his brother. (11) For this is the message that you heard from the beginning, that we should love one another, (12) not as Cain who was of the wicked one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his works were evil and his brother's righteous. (13) Do not marvel, my brethren, if the world hates you. (14) We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love his brother abides in death. (15) Whoever hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him. (16) By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. (17) But whoever has this world's goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him? (18) My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth" (1 Jn. 3:10-18). "If someone says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? And this commandment we have from Him: that he who loves God must love his brother also" (1 Jn. 4:20-21).

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