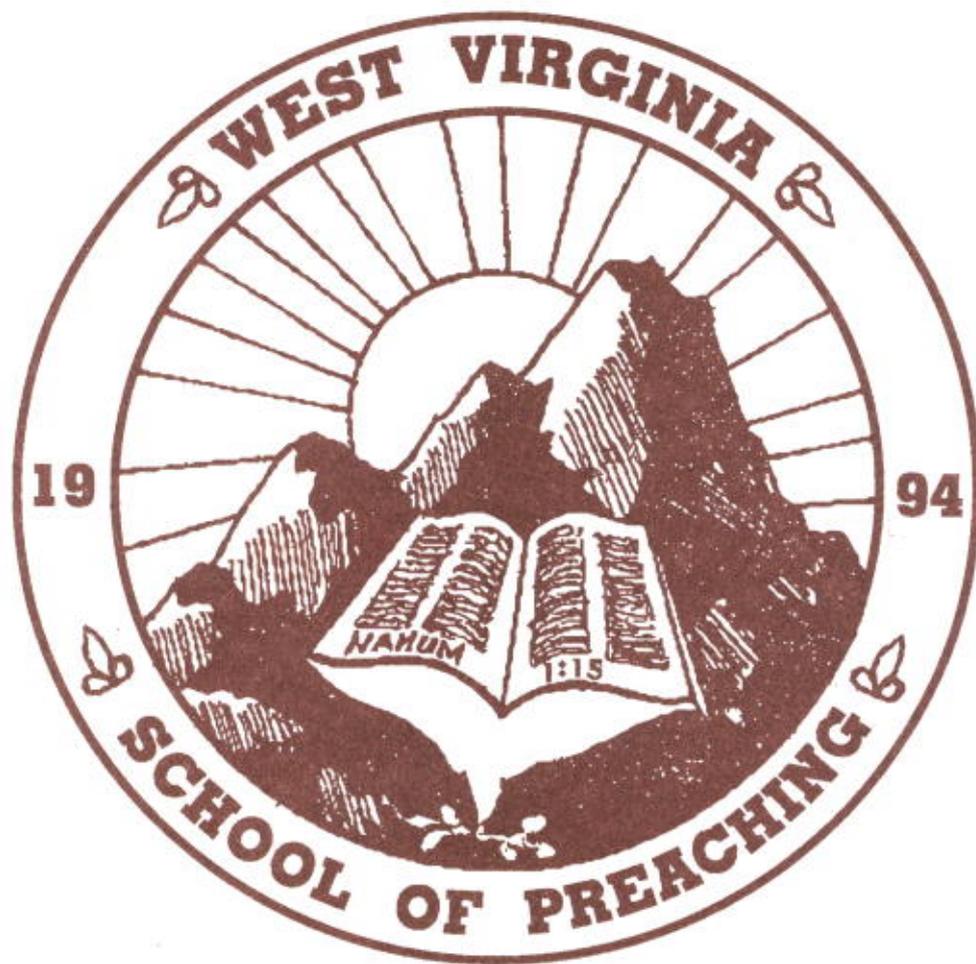


West Virginia School Of Preaching
VICTORY LECTURES

October 27 - 31, 1997

Theme: "In Times Like These..."



CHURCH OF CHRIST
Fourth Street and Willard Avenue
Moundsville, West Virginia 26041

WEST VIRGINIA SCHOOL OF PREACHING LECTURESHIP 1997

October 27 - 31

Church of Christ Hillview Terrace
Moundsville, WV 26041 Phone (304) 845-8001

From the Library of
D. GENE WEST

Theme: "In Times Like These..."

Monday Evening: PREACH THE WORD

Mon 7:00pm With Power
7:45pm Like Paul

Brian Jones
Hardeman Nichols

Tuesday Morning: GROUND THE CHURCH

Tue 9am In Faith
10am In Evangelism
11am In Jesus

Russell King
Matt Amos
Gene Carrell

Afternoon: SOLIDIFY THE HOME

Tue 1pm By Godly Fathers
2pm Against Ungodly Media
3pm By Godly Mothers

Louis Rushmore
Steve Stevens
Will Montgomery

Evening: PREACH THE WORD

Tue 7pm With Preparation
7:45 Like Jeremiah

Frank Higginbotham
Hardeman Nichols

Wednesday Morning: GROUND THE CHURCH

Wed 9am In Hope
10am In Worship
11am In Discipline

J.D. Conley
Dan Kessinger
Don Cooper

Afternoon: SOLIDIFY THE HOME

Wed 1pm By Godly Worship
2pm Against Materialism
3pm By Godly Discipline

Steve Snider
Bill Covan
Jim Farley

Evening: PREACH THE WORD

Wed 7pm With Perseverance
7:45pm Like Peter

John Brown
Hardeman Nichols

Thursday Morning: GROUND THE CHURCH

Thu 9am In Love
10am In Logic
11am In Truth

Hardeman Nichols
Jody Apple
W. Terry Varner

Afternoon: SOLIDIFY THE HOME

Thu 1pm By Godly Husbands
2pm Against Ungodly Education
3pm By Godly Wives

Eddie Cooper
D. Gene West
Andy Robison

Evening: PREACH THE WORD

Thu 7pm With Purpose
7:45pm Like Ezekiel

Charles Pugh III
David Miller

Friday Morning: GROUND THE CHURCH

Fri 9am In Grace
10am In the Word
11am In Benevolence

Robert Johnson
David Miller
Bob Kessinger

Afternoon: SOLIDIFY THE HOME

Fri 1pm By Godly Children
2pm Against Immorality
3pm By Godly Grandparents

Emanuel Daugherty
Burt Jones
Denver Cooper

Evening: PREACH THE WORD

Fri 7pm With Persuasion
7:45pm Like Jesus

John Shannon
David Miller

PREACH THE WORD WITH POWER

Brian W. Jones

The overall theme of the 1997 **West Virginia School of Preaching** Lectures is "In Times Like These..." My specific topic for this hour is "In Times Like These...Preach the Word...With Power." Such a topic leads one to ask, "What kind of times are we currently living in?" We are living in a morally and doctrinally perverse time. A time in which television comically reveals the homosexuality of a sitcom star. A time in which prayer, creationism, and the biblical teachings on the home are being attacked by the public school system. A time in which the Los Angeles Unified School District, the second largest in the nation, sponsored the nation's first "gay" prom. About 100 couples participated in the prom held at the L.A. Hilton and Towers (*American family Association Journal*, August 1994). A time in which every day 135,000 children bring their guns to school (*The Exhorter*, March 6, 1994). A time in which every day 2,989 children see their parents divorce (*The Exhorter*). A time in which preachers in the church are advocating fellowship with denominations. A time in which extremism poses a real threat to unity in the body of Christ. A time in which sound brethren have sat silently as congregations have been taken over by liberalism. A time in which false doctrine is running rampant throughout our great brotherhood in periodicals, lectureships, universities, and congregations.

The Foolishness of Preaching

In times like these we must preach the pure, plain unadulterated word of God. Truly, only God's word can bring about needed changes in our culture, in society, in the family, and in the church of our Lord. Paul wrote in I Corinthians 1:21, "For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not come to know God, God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe" (NASB). The King James Version translates the last phrase of the same verse as "the foolishness of preaching." However, Paul was not necessarily saying that the world viewed preaching as a foolish means of proclamation. Yet, perhaps to some the means of proclamation is foolish. Some would rather dramatize the gospel message instead of preaching it. Yet, repeatedly we read in God's word of the need to preach the message of salvation (2 Timothy 4:2; Mark 16:16; Galatians 1:8,9). Paul, in I Corinthians 1:21, addresses the fact that many regard the gospel message itself foolish. To a carnal man, the message that God saves us through a crucified Savior is foolishness. Paul tries to stress that human wisdom does not redeem from sin, but preaching the "divine folly," as the world views it, does redeem from sin.

The message of salvation is a powerful message indeed. God has chosen His Son's church to proclaim the message (I Timothy 3:15). All are ministers of salvation. Specifically, though, God has chosen men to be preachers of this message. The preacher is a vessel. The power lies not within his own abilities, but within the message that he preaches. Paul said it best in I Corinthians 2:4-5, "And my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith should not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God." He remarked further in Romans 16:2, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation..."

Defining Bible Preaching

What does Bible preaching involve? Jesse P. Sewell, a Restoration leader of the 1800's, once said, "Preaching is the activity of a redeemed man, standing in Christ's stead, by his authority and in obedience to his command, proclaiming, explaining, illustrating, and strongly urging the word of God, the gospel of Christ, in such a manner as to make it possible for responsible people to understand it and accept it unto life or reject it unto death." Phillips Brooks, during the famous Yale Lectures on Preaching said, "Preaching is the communication of truth by man to men. It has in it two essential elements, truth and personality. Neither of those can it spare and still be preaching." The preacher, as a man of God, has an awesome responsibility in communicating God's message to man. Indeed, his work has eternal consequences to himself and to his audience.

In all, there are about forty Greek words that center around preaching. There are four key Greek words on preaching found within the New Testament. The first word is *kerusso*. It is found in Matthew 4:17 and Matthew 3:1. It means to publicly preach, publish, and proclaim. The second word is *evangelizo*. It is found in Luke 4:18 and means to "preach good tidings." The designation, evangelist, is derived from this same word. The third word is *didasko*. It is located in the Great Commission and involves teaching. The final word is *apologia*. It means "to defend one's case." Stephen gave an *apologia* to the Jewish Council in Acts 7. The apostle Paul gave an *apologia* to the Greeks on Mars Hill in Acts 17. Summing up these four Greek words, we see the preacher as a proclaimer of good news, a teacher, and a defender of revealed truth.

True gospel preaching is not views and opinions of men (I Thessalonians 2:13). It is not using Scripture improperly (2 Peter 3:16). It is not secular sermonettes (2 Timothy 4:9). It is not merely fancy words and tear wrenching sermons (I Corinthians 2:1). It is not the preacher himself (2 Corinthians 4:5). And it is not soft preaching (John 12:43). These methods dilute the power of gospel preaching.

Preaching must be the gospel of the kingdom (Matthew 9:35). It must be the word of God (Luke 8:11). It must preach Jesus (Acts 8:35). It includes Christ, and Him crucified (I Corinthians 2:2). Preaching must be the will of God (I Thessalonians 4:3). It must be the deposit (KJV) (I Timothy 6:20). It must be the first principles (Hebrews 6:1). It must contain all things that pertain to life and godliness (2 Peter 1:3). It must be the faith that is preached (Jude 3). Such exhibits the true power of gospel preaching.

A key Passage

A key passage which shows specific imperatives for powerful preaching is found in 2 Timothy 4:2, "Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season ; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with great patience and instruction." The phrase "preach the word" is aorist in the original Greek, meaning past tense. The word is here. We have it. It is inspired, infallible, and complete. It must be preached as it is. The preacher is not to preach opinions, ideas, or speculations. He must preach the word and the word only.

He is always to be ready to preach. The KJV has "instant," the ASV has "urgent" in 2 Timothy 4:2. The Greek word means, "be at hand, always on duty." The man of God should always be ready to

give a defense of his faith. The preacher is to be instant "in season and out of season." The circumstances for preaching may be favorable or unfavorable. It may be a period of persecution or a period of peace. Whether in peace or times of war, God's word must be preached.

The preacher must reprove. To reprove means to express disapproval. John the Immerser reprovved Herod the tetrarch for taking his brother's wife, Herodias (Luke 3:19). If sin is involved, preaching is not to be a respecer of persons.

Next, Paul says the preacher must rebuke. Rebuking involves censuring, warning, or punishing. If our brother sins, we are to rebuke him (Luke 17:3). Gospel preaching involves warning of others the consequences of sin. Finally, exhortation must take place. Exhortation involves appealing to one's reason and will to do one's duty to God.

Reproving, rebuking, and exhorting must all take place with longsuffering and doctrine. Longsuffering deals with the manner, where doctrine deals with the methodology. As the preacher admonishes men to repent, he must not always expect instant results. The man of God must be patient. Correcting weak and erring brethren takes a patient attitude. Not only must there be admonitions, there must also be doctrine and instruction. All warnings must be based upon passages found within the Bible. And individuals should be taught that their actions are wrong before they are censured for them.

The Message of Preaching

We've discussed the need for preaching, the definition of preaching, and a key passage in regard to preaching. A fitting summation is to examine the message of gospel preaching. Gospel preaching can be edifying, uplifting, didactic, and evangelistic in nature. Specifically, let's examine the message of evangelistic gospel preaching. Gospel preaching consists of facts, commands, and promises. (*Spiritual Sword*, October 1995, Billy Smith).

1. Facts. Paul outlines the facts of the gospel in I Corinthians 15:3-5, "For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He appeared ..." Notice the facts found within Paul's statement: 1. We have sins. 2. Christ died for them. 3. This is according to inspired prophecy. 4. Jesus overcame death. 5. Since He did, so can we. 6. These facts are supported by a sufficient number of witnesses that Jesus appeared to. Combined, these facts comprise the message of salvation.

2. Commands. In Acts 2:37-38, 41 we see a command given and a command followed, "Now when they heard this, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, 'Brethren, what shall we do?' And Peter said unto them, 'Repent, and let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit...' So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and there were added that day about three thousand souls."

Notice the facts found within these brief verses: 1. Gospel preaching is designed to illicit a response from the hearer. 2. God's word, as spoken by Peter, penetrated the hearts of those present. 3. It was

their sin that condemned them. 4. They realized their guilt. 5. They asked what they had to do. 6. They were told to both repent of their sins and be baptized. 7. In so doing they were given remission of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit. 8. Seeing their need, they complied immediately.

3. Promises. Several promises are given to the new child of God. 1. He receives remission of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38). 2. He is justified and made right with God. (Romans 5:9). He is reconciled or "made friends again" with God through Christ (Colossians 1:20). 4. He receives redemption of sins by the blood of Christ (Ephesians 1:7). 5. Eternal life in heaven is also promised (John 3:16).

Conclusion

Gospel preaching is needed today, especially in times like these. The lost world and the saved within the church need to hear plain Bible preaching. We need preaching that is balanced, sound, expository, loving, humble, understandable, compassionate, and courageous. The message of salvation, with its facts, commands, and promises is indeed powerful. As Paul said in I Corinthians 9:16, "For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for I am under compulsion; for woe is me if I do not preach the gospel."

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GROUND THE CHURCH IN FAITH

Colossians 2:1-9 (cf. 1:21-23)

E. Russell King

Thesis: to show why the church must be grounded in faith and how this grounding must be done.

INTRODUCTION

- A. The ominous implication of the theme of this lectureship, "In Times Like These" certainly justifies all the effort and expense required to deal with this matter.
1. Most certainly, every person acquainted with Old Testament history, upon hearing this theme, would immediately think of Esther 4:14, the words to Esther from her cousin, Mordecai: "...*who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this.*"
 - a. Esther understood well the ominous implication (i.e., the death of all Jews) if she failed at least to attempt an intercession through her husband, king Ahasuerus.
 - b. The wisdom of Mordecai's words resulted in the preservation of the Jews.
 2. Today, all who are not "asleep at the wheel" or do not "have their heads buried in the sand" are well aware of the ominous implication of the theme of this lectureship.
 - a. Every learned, grounded Christian ought to ponder the thought, "who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this."
 - b. Will the faithful arise to thwart the encroachments of error that would sound the death knell for many Christians?
 3. We owe a debt of gratitude to this church, the elders, West Virginia School of Preaching and her faculty under the leadership of Emanuel Daugherty for the substance of this lectureship.
- B. I am humbled by the responsibility of my assignment to deal with the subject, "**In Times Like These. . . Ground the church in faith.**"
1. My spirit burns within me to address this subject with the urgency and force that it deserves, both to set forth the truth of God's word and to expose the words of modern men who think they have a wisdom that exceeds God's revealed wisdom — a contest that man has never won (1 Corinthians 1:17-20; cf. Isaiah 29:14; 19:12; 33:18).
 - a. It shall be our purpose to appeal exclusively to the wisdom of God as the only means for grounding the church in faith.
 - b. God has a plan, a pattern, for making the church strong and we dare not abandon it nor modify it with the wisdom and ways of our current culture.
 2. Two big problems are stifling the Lord's church as God designed and created her to be:
 - a. Firstly, there is a growing ignorance of and a diminishing respect for God's word, and this is accompanied with a pernicious apathy in respect to real, genuine Christian living, worship, and service to God. The church is being troubled with the common and accepted sins of the community in which she exists.
 - b. Secondly, there is a surge of modern "prophets" arising in a concerted effort to destroy the integrity and authority of God's revealed word and to speak "smooth things" to a society enamored with the pleasure and the wisdom of this world (cf. Isaiah 30:10-11).
 - c. How few are the "Christians" today who, like the Christians of the first few centuries, are sufficiently grounded in faith that they would courageously and confidently face the ravages of wild beasts in the public arena or the burning stake!
 - d. In the August, 1997 issue of Reader's Digest, Ralph Kinney Bennett, in an article entitled, *The Global War on Christians*, wrote, "Never before have so many Christians been persecuted for their beliefs. An estimated 200 million to 250 million Christians are at risk in countries where such incidents occur."
 3. Faith grounded in the distinctive "truth of the gospel" preached and defended by Paul (cf. Galatians 2:5, 14) is now being rendered anemic in localities where there is a determination

- to compromise doctrine and have fellowship with denominations.
4. How I wish for the ability and eloquence to motivate the spirit of every Christian to burn with zeal for the defense of the “truth of the gospel” and arise immediately and courageously to the urgent task of **grounding the church in faith!**
 5. Who knows whether we are come to the kingdom for a time such as this!
- C. Paul’s words to the Colossians (2:1-9) express the essence of this subject (**Grounding The Church In Faith**), and the strong feelings that should associate with this effort.
1. In this text are found both the words (or terms) of this subject and words (or terms) that give the basis of and imperative for this subject.
 - a. The basis and imperative of this subject is:
 - (1) The urgency: “conflict,” i.e., Paul’s anxiety and effort (vs 1), which we should share.
 - (2) The reason: prevent their being “beguiled” and “spoiled” (vss. 4, 8).
 - (3) The protective power: “be stablished {established} in the faith” (vs. 7).
 - b. The words or ideas of the subject under consideration found in this text are:
 - (1) **Ground:** “*Rooted and built up in him...*” (vs. 7; cf. 1:23).
 - (2) **The church:** “*you,*” “*...the saints and faithful brethren in Christ which are at Colosse...*” (vs. 6; cf. 1:2).
 - (3) **In Faith:** “*...unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding...*” (vs. 2).
 2. The church today stands in eminent danger of being led away from the faith into the captivity of “philosophy and vain deceit” just as the church in Colosse stood in the same danger.
 3. Are we prepared and willing to inter into the “conflict” and anxiety which characterized that faithful and courageous apostle in a struggle to “**ground the church in faith**”?
 4. This action is urgently needed to withstand the encroachment of 20th century humanism, pluralism, pragmatism — all of which are contaminating the gospel of Christ, the message of the cross, and weakening faith in the power of God through the gospel (cf. 1 Cor. 2:5).
 - a. MacArthur has rightly observed: “*Nevertheless, an overpowering surge of ardent pragmatism is sweeping through evangelicalism. Traditional methodology—most notably preaching—is being discarded or downplayed in favor of newer means, such as drama, dance, comedy, variety, side-show histrionics, pop-psychology, and other entertainment forms...when pragmatism is used to make judgments about right and wrong, or when it becomes a guiding philosophy of life, theology, and ministry, inevitably it clashes with Scripture. Spiritual and biblical truth is not determined by testing what ‘works’ and what doesn’t...Majority reaction is no test of validity...and prosperity is no measure of truthfulness*”
 5. The result of this is a grounding in the wisdom of man and acceptance of denominationalism.
- D. In view of this urgency, let’s give emphasis to the three parts of this subject title.

GROUND THE CHURCH IN FAITH

- A. What must we understand by “the church?”
1. First, by definition, “the church” denotes “the called out people” of Christ.
 - a. We are not to understand “the church” to mean an organization,
 - b. We are not to understand “the church” to be composed of the sum total of denominations.
 2. We are to understand it to mean “people” — Christians, who have been called out of darkness and into the kingdom of God’s dear Son (Col. 1:13-14).
 3. Accordingly, Luke recorded in Acts 2 that the baptized believers on Pentecost were “*...added {to them}..(vs. 41) ...to the church...*” (vs. 47).
- B. What is the scope of the word “church?”
1. Though the word “church” can have a universal application (Matt. 16:18), this study confines it in specific application to a local congregation, as used by Paul in 1 Corinthians 1:2; et al.

- a. However, what pertains to one congregation also pertains to all others (cf. Gal. 1:2).
 - b. It applies to the church in general by effect through congregations (cf. 1 Thes. 1:7-9).
 2. This application is demanded when observing the responsibility assigned to elders to "...*feed the flock of God which is among you...*" (1 Pet. 5:2; cf. Acts 20:28).
- C. What might be the impact of "the church?"
1. Two distinct examples are found in the New Testament:
 - a. The church in Corinth, who were "puffed up" (arrogant), i.e., with an attitude of "we don't care what you want or think" (1 Cor. 5:2, 6), an "old leaven" affecting the whole congregation and possibly congregations in other locations who knew about them.²
 - b. The church in Thessalonica, being faithful followers of the Lord, were "...*ensamples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia*" (1 Thes. 1:7).
 2. This is the possible impact of "the church" — an impact that is of increasing concern to us in "times like this."
- D. "The church" is the focal point of the action: **ground**.

GROUND THE CHURCH IN FAITH

- A. What are we to understand by "ground?"
1. The verb transitive form means to "fix or set, to fix firmly." (Webster)
 2. We note three passages of scripture containing this idea:
 - a. Colossians 1:27, "*If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled...*"
 - b. Ephesians 3:17, "...*that ye, being rooted and grounded...*"
 - c. Our text (Col. 2:7), "*Rooted and built up in him and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught...*"
 3. The sum of these ideas is: "rooted" (become stable); "settled" (immovable); "grounded" (lay a basis for, found).
- B. The action involved is to lay a foundation that will make the church stable and immovable.
1. A foundation that will withstand the "winds," "rains," and "floods" (cf. Matt. 7:24-27).
 2. A stability by which our labor will "...*not be in vain in the Lord*" (1 Cor. 15:58).
 3. A fixity that will prevent the church from being "...*tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness by which they lie in wait to deceive*" (Ephesians 4:14).
- C. Grounding the church in faith is the solemn obligation of teachers, preachers, and especially the elders unto whom God has "entrusted" His "flock" (1 Pet. 5:3), "...*holding fast the faithful word...*" (Titus 1:9).

GROUND THE CHURCH IN FAITH

- A. What must we understand by "in faith?"
1. First we must make a clear distinction between "in faith" and "in the faith." The first is subjective, the second is objective (cf. Rom. 1:17).
 - a. "In faith" means "in conviction" or, as Luke wrote, "...*things which are most surely believed among us.*" (Luke 1:1). Again, "...*your faith in Christ Jesus...*" (Col. 1:4).
 - b. "In the faith" means "...*the word of the truth of the gospel*" (Col. 1:5), "the faith" or system that replaced the law of Moses (Gal. 3:23-25) which "...*was once delivered unto the saints*" (Jude 3). Foy E. Wallace, Jr. spoke of "the faith" of Jude 3 as "the truth in organized form" and I might add, revealed, documented and certified.
 2. It is "the faith" (objective) that produces "faith" (subjective), i.e., "the faith" producing conviction or the "full assurance" of Col. 2:2 in the heart of every honest hearer.
 3. For clarity and distinction, we shall speak of this as biblical faith.

- B. The “faith” of the church, the children of God, must be produced by “the faith” exclusively.
1. Biblical faith (conviction, assurance) is not produced by opinions, feelings, premonitions or by an inner working of the Holy Spirit apart from the word.
 - a. Faith, Paul said, “...comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” (Rom. 10:17)
 - b. We can rightly say, Where there is no word of God, there can be no biblical faith!
 2. Therefore, biblical faith is in direct proportion to knowledge.
 - a. Jesus made it clear that only by knowing the truth can one be made free (Jno. 8:32).
 - b. “Faith” and “knowledge” are not mutually exclusive as the proponents of the “new hermeneutic” evidence in their view that truth is relative, subjective and unattainable.³
 3. The church can not be grounded in faith until brought fully to the understanding that knowledge must precede faith and that truth is objective and knowable.
- C. Biblical faith is a conviction or an assurance based upon valid evidence found in “the faith.”
1. People can (and sometimes do) hold firm convictions upon matters for which there is no valid biblical evidence.
 - a. This is sometimes spoken of as “a leap in the dark” out of a “conscience toward God.”
 - b. This kind of faith has given credence to the current “marketing approach” for expanding the church, and a resorting to gimmicks, drama, musicals, etc. as the means by which the “unchurched?” can be converted and the “church” firmly settled.
 - c. Added to this is the popular belief that “truth” is not absolute, that truth is a current “opinion” which has behind it the greater strength.
 - d. Then this is further compounded by the popular belief that the Bible is culturally based, i.e., it must be interpreted in application to the current culture, and, as F. LeGard Smith noted concerning this view, “...faith need not be rational in any sense, at any point”⁴
 2. Biblical faith based upon valid evidence is described in the Word of God (cf. Hebrews 11).
 - a. Consider, for example, Abraham, “...the father of all them that believe...” (Romans 4:11), to see what it means to be grounded in faith (see verses 19-21).
 - (1) His faith moved him to the point of raising the knife to take the life of his son because God had instructed him to offer his son as a sacrifice.
 - (2) In addition, he believed that God would raise Isaac from the dead (Heb. 11:17-18). This was not blind faith, a leap in the dark, but a “necessary inference” by Abraham because God had said previously, “...in Isaac shall thy seed be called” (Gen. 21:12).
 - (3) His faith (conviction) that God would raise Isaac from the dead was based upon valid, rational evidence — not on opinion or emotional feelings.
 - b. Abraham is known as a man of faith because he took God at His word (Rom.4:3), and as Paul said, “Who contrary to hope, in hope believed...” (Rom. 4:18).
 3. This is biblical faith, the “faith” in which the church must be grounded.
- D. How may (must) this be done?
1. The integrity of “the faith” must be defended and taught clearly and without compromise.
 - a. The Bible must be held up as the inspired, inerrant, all-sufficient and authoritative word of God — the Word of God forever “...settled in heaven” (Psalms 119:89).
 - b. It must be received as did the Thessalonians: “...when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe” (1 Thes. 2:13).
 - c. This will result in a “...work of faith, labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ...” (1 Thes. 1:3), a faith that “groweth exceedingly” (cf. 2 Thes.1:3).
 2. Keep the class-rooms and pulpits free of liberal views which see the Bible as the work of redactors who collected bits and pieces from here and yon (including myth) and compiling the whole matter to reflect their personal understanding.
 3. Stand firm and faithful in the conviction that the gospel of Christ is God’s power to salvation (Rom. 1:16), and that we are not at liberty to turn to gimmicks that appeal to the carnal mind.

4. Develop elders who will hold "...fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers" (Titus 1:9) — men who know and hold fast their God-given assignment.
 - a. The apostles were stewards of God's word (1 Cor. 4:1).
 - b. Christians at large are stewards of "the manifold grace of God" to minister to one another (2 Peter 4:10).
 - c. Elders are stewards of those "entrusted" to them of God (1 Pet. 5:3, NKJ; cf. Titus 1:7).
 - d. Grounding the church in faith is an on-going need which falls heavily into the hands of a faithful eldership who lead the "flock" in pastures of truth and who guard the flock against any encroachment of error (cf. Acts 20:28-32).
5. Rely upon God to give the fruit after we have courageously and faithfully planted and watered (cf. 1 Corinthians 2:6-7).

CONCLUSION

- A. In times like these, when we are facing the subtle tactics of Satan to shipwreck the Lord's church, it is imperative to ground the church in faith.
- B. The church, the Lord's called out people, must be settled upon the immovable foundation of the truth of the gospel, the only power of God unto salvation.
- C. The faith of the church must stand exclusively in the knowledge of valid evidence from the word of God and totally divorced from the wisdom and influence of the current culture.
- D. Satan and his angels are working overtime to undermine the rock foundation of valid evidence to cause the church to stand on the sands of the wisdom of men.
- E. This calls for mighty men clothed in the armor of God **in times like these** to enter into the "conflict" and to **ground the church in faith!**

Endnotes

1. *Ashamed of The Gospel*, John F. MacArthur [Crossway Books, Nottingham, England, 1993] Preface xiii
2. However, to their credit, the church in Corinth through genuine repentance returned their zeal to Paul (hence the faith) upon receiving the letter carried by Titus. Grounding the church in faith requires the removal of an arrogant attitude and the teacher/preachers who stand in support of such arrogance (cf. 2 Corinthians 11:12-15)!
3. For reference to these views, see "*Piloting The Strait*, Dave Miller [Sain Publications, Pulaski, TN, 1996] p. 150ff
4. *The Cultural Church*, F. LeGard Smith [20th Century Christian, Nashville, TN, 1992] p. 93

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GROUNDING THE CHURCH IN EVANGELISM

Matt Amos

As disciples of Christ, we have been called by the God of heaven for one fundamental purpose. That purpose is to evangelize! This is the great commission (Mt. 28:18-20). Everything that you and I do as Christians, at least implicitly, should have at its roots the idea or main goal of converting a soul to Christ. No matter what that event or circumstance might be, our minds need to be convinced of, and our hearts need to be motivated toward, the condition of the soul's of people. When Jesus saw the hungry multitude of the five thousand, the record says that He "was moved with compassion for them because they were like sheep not having a shepherd. So He began to teach them many things (Mk. 6:34). His compassion was not stirred first and foremost because of their physical hunger. The text says the Lord was stirred because they needed guidance. They needed converted, so He taught them! Yes, Jesus met the physical need of food, but that miracle was merely a means to the greater significant end! When Jesus saw people He did not see mortal bodies, but rather He saw immortal souls! What do we see first and foremost when we notice the people of our world? Are we more concerned about physical needs or spiritual conditions? "But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things shall be added to you"(Mt. 6:33).

Grounding the church in evangelism therefore is a most important consideration. Since evangelism is the most fundamental reason why we've been called by God, unless we are grounded in it, the other attitudes and actions of our lives will not be carried out in the context which would be pleasing to God. As we consider this "grounding," the question with which we begin is why should I evangelize? What would motivate me to make the necessary sacrifices in order to teach others the gospel?

SIGNIFICANCE OF SIN

Inherent in the concept of evangelism is sin. Evangelism may be defined as the endeavor to communicate or announce glad tidings. In a general sense the glad tidings; the gospel is the complete word of God. In a more specific and fundamental sense the gospel is the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ (1 Cor. 15:1-4). The gospel is needed in the lives of mankind because he has sinned (Rom. 3:23). So in order to reconcile man to God, God has given him glad tidings or good news in dealing with his sin. That is the perfect law of liberty or the New Testament in which we must walk to assure the blood of Christ continues to cleanse us (1 Jno. 1:7-10). We evangelize and have been evangelized because we have seen the significance of sin and how it can destroy our relationship with God. This needs to motivate us to evangelize. It motivated Christ to leave the glories of heaven and to die on the cruel cross. Do you remember what the first sin did to the relationship between God and Adam and Eve? It destroyed it! Did that mean God was unloving? Did that mean that God was not a God of mercy and grace? No! God's love, mercy, and grace were seen in His willingness to evangelize, that is, to give them the good news that would ultimately restore the relationship that was enjoyed in the cool of the garden. That evangelistic message was, "And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel" (Gen. 3:15). The evangelizing of Adam and Eve as well as our own evangelization has its roots at the cross. The reason for the cross was to satisfy the justice of our loving God. When we realize that God would allow His Son to leave heaven to die on

the cross for sin—all sin, we see how significant evangelism really is. Therefore, in evangelizing, we must have a negative appreciation for the importance of sin. When we can actualize the enormous eternal effect of sin both in the heart of God and in the lives of people, then we can and should possess a degree of motivation to evangelize. We have now started the process of being grounded to evangelize.

There are many amazing contrasts that exist between God and mankind. The most amazing of these is the intense interest on God's part concerning man's sin and the lack of interest demonstrated by man relative to his own sin. We know that God is extremely concerned about man's sin. For Adam's benefit, we see God's concern for the sinful condition of man. In the New Testament Jesus says, "Come to me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Mt. 11:28). "But God demonstrates His own love toward us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8). God wants His people to be concerned about sin, particularly as sin relates to the saving of souls, both ours and others. What is our degree of concern for sin? Many times as human beings we attribute our mind or thinking to God. It is our perception sometimes that God thinks like we think or He loves like we love or He forgives like we forgive. And so we, being imperfect in these areas, attribute to God a less than perfect mind or a love and forgiveness that are less than perfect. Our view of sin is not necessarily God's view. Often we excuse, down play, or even ignore our sin and then assume God has as well. Religious teachers have promulgated this doctrine under the guise of God's grace. However the Bible teaches that every sin must be accounted for. Each of our sins is condemning us or has been covered by the blood of Christ (1 Jno. 1:7; Jas. 2:10). It is imperative then that we condition our minds by the Word of God to think of sin the way that God does, and when we do we are gaining the motivation and laying the foundation to being grounded in evangelism.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE SAVIOR

If we are going to be grounded in evangelism, let us, also, always be aware of the significance of the Savior. When we begin to actualize what Jesus Christ has truly done for us and appreciate the fact that we will be resurrected one day to stand before Him (Jno. 5:28, 29), we should be properly motivated to gladly and openly speak to people about His significance in their lives. As Moses was told to "go" into Egypt by God and deliver the people, you and I, too, are commanded to "go" into the antitypical Egypt, the world of sin and deliver people. Unlike Moses, our main concerns should not be focused on our own physical inadequacies, but rather we should focus on the significance of what our Savior has done and said!

When men and women lose their consciousness or appreciation of God, they then lose their sensitivity to sin. The moral degradation of the Gentile world is clearly seen in the verbal picture that Paul paints for us in Romans chapter one. The people failed to keep God in their thinking, consequently they gave themselves over to all manner of evil. Once a generation of people is educated to believe that they are the products of naturalistic forces through a long evolutionary process rather than the result of a divine creative act by God almighty, do not be surprised if the people who have been led to believe that they are nothing but a type of hybrid animal commence to act like those animals. This, to a different degree can apply to us. If we lose our profound appreciation for the significance of the Savior, could we possibly be properly motivated to, or be

grounded in, evangelism? If we lose our day to day awareness of the presence of God in our lives, then we will lose our evangelistic fervor. If God the Savior has not become personal to us, we become unfaithful. It goes unnoticed many times because it's a gradual process. Remember, there is a direct correlation in the depth of our awareness of God in our lives and our degree of zeal to evangelize. If one is not as evangelistic as he or she should be, it comes from a lack of genuine appeal for the presence of God in his or her life and for what he has done for that individual. Anytime we minimize the nature or work of Jesus Christ we are setting ourselves up for a fall.

Loving Jesus necessitates familiarity with His words. Those who give excuse for not evangelizing say "I don't know enough," which may be true. Being a Christian, a follower of Christ, identifying with Jesus, demands knowing His word. Identifying with, and loving my wife demands knowing her wishes and how she acts and thinks. If I do not have a zeal to understand her mind and her words, then that is minimizing her value to me. Unless we recognize and appreciate the significance of Jesus as Savior and constantly have in our minds profound appreciation for the forgiveness and salvation He has given us by His grace, effective evangelism will be an impossibility.

We can retain the significance of the Savior in our lives by: 1) understanding what the will of the Lord is (Eph. 5:17); 2) praying without ceasing (1 Thess. 5:17); 3) not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together (Heb. 10:25); and 4) letting the word of Christ dwell in us richly (Col. 3:16).

One of the beautiful things about knowing and applying the will of the Savior is that there can be blotting out of all sins. John 3:16 was written in the background of human sinfulness and therefore helplessness. God then sent His son to save us, not to cut us off. Many times we think when we sin God does not love us. When we were children sometimes, we thought when we did something wrong, we thought mom and dad did not love us as much. "Do you still love me," we asked? Parents, as well as God, chasten whom they love (Heb. 12:6). How can God love me as "rotten" as I am? Because He is God the Savior, loving me with a perfect love. When we see the significance of the Savior, our hearts sing aloud, "Man of sorrows what a name, for the Son of God who came. Ruined sinners to reclaim, hallelujah, what a Savior!" If I truly believe this, I could not help but to tell this story! By genuinely understanding the significance of the Savior, I am gradually being grounded in evangelism.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE SOUL

If I see the significance of the Savior, then I see the significance of what He says about the value of souls. In the context of denying oneself the Savior said, "For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? For the Son of man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works" (Mt. 16:25-27).

The enormous significance of the soul is seen in the Lord's parabolic teaching in Luke chapter 15 verses 4 - 24:

"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. 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." Then He said: "A certain man had two sons. And the younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the portion of goods that falls to me.' So he divided to them his livelihood. And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, journeyed to a far country, and there wasted his possessions with prodigal living. But when he had spent all, there arose a severe famine in that land, and he began to be in want. Then he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would gladly have filled his stomach with the pods that the swine ate, and no one gave him anything. But when he came to himself, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you, and I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired servants.''" "And he arose and came to his father. But when he was still a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him. And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight, and am no longer worthy to be called your son.' But the father said to his servants, 'Bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet. And bring the fatted calf here and kill it, and let us eat and be merry; for this my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' And they began to be merry."

As with the forgiving father, souls of the lost must be paramount in our thinking and in our lives. It must be paramount in every goal, aim, and action of the church. In order for that to come about, we must be willing to make everything else in our lives of lesser importance, and then employ those lesser things including our time, material possessions, and our bank accounts, or whatever to the satisfaction of that which is most important; the salvation of lost souls, by which God is glorified.

All of us need to fully realize the eternal nature and the eternal effect of the results of our primary task, and the temporary nature of all other things that are subordinate to that task. The soul of man is eternal. All physical things are to pass with the using and those things that remain till the Master returns are going to be utterly destroyed. Peter records, "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat, both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up" (2 Pet. 3:10). All of these physical, secondary things will one day be gone and have no value at all! Think of the physical things we valued twenty, thirty, forty years ago. What has happened to most of those things by now? We need to use the present value of temporal things to gain those things which are of eternal value. We need to pull down our bigger barns and build smaller barns, if any barns at all, seeking God first and His righteousness and trusting in Him to provide for our own sustenance in this life while narrowing our focus to the precious souls who await our coming.

To realize the need for evangelism, we must first comprehend fully the significance of sin, the significance of the Savior, and the significance of the souls of mankind, following which, in obedience to the great commission, we will, in love for God and man, act upon that realization! The psalmist E. L. Ashford said it well, "To love someone more dearly every day, to help a wandering child to find

his way . . . This is my task!" And considering what God has done for me, not only is evangelism my task, but should be my profound privilege!

Matt Amos was born in 1962 in Steubenville, Ohio. Baptized in 1975 by his father, David Amos. He and his wife Chris have two sons and one daughter, David 7; Bronwen 4; and Reagan 8 months. Graduated from David Lipscomb University (B.S.), 1984; and Middle Tennessee State University (M.A.), 1987. Received a diploma from Memphis School of Preaching in 1989. Began preaching in 1989. Works include gospel meetings, lectureships, counseling, writing and editing, radio and TV evangelism, youth camps, and foreign missionary work in Africa and Australia. Currently serves as chaplain for the Collierville, TN Police Department and minister for the Collierville, TN Church of Christ where he has preached for eight years.

GROUND THE CHURCH IN JESUS

Gene Carrell

If there was ever a time in the history of the Lord's church when it was necessary to reexamine the scriptural ground upon which we stand, that time is now. Our battles of the past, within the church, have been waged over methodology -- how we partake of the Lord's supper, how we do mission work, how we proclaim the gospel over the airwaves. In those skirmishes we took it for granted that our opponents accepted the Bible as the inspired, infallible, inerrant, word of the living God. We believed then, and still believe, that the truth can be uncovered on any scriptural subject by a careful analysis of the word of God, accepting (as we all must) the direct commandments of scripture, the examples that give light to those commandments, and the inferences which any right thinking person must necessarily draw from the words of inspiration.

Times have changed! No longer can we take it for granted that all within the church will accept the scriptures as inerrant, and our task had changed. We now face a monumental twofold work of (1) trying to reestablish confidence in that "faith which was once delivered unto the saints," and (2) trying to ground our people (those who still believe in the inerrancy of the word of God) in the truths which relate to our Lord and His people. Our task in this paper will be the latter of those goals.

One dictionary definition of the word "ground" is "to instruct in fundamentals." Still another definition is "to provide a reason or justification for" what we believe. This is our aim, our purpose, today. We want to "ground the church in Jesus," along with all that is implied in those words. Where do we begin?

The apostle Paul, a man who once persecuted and blasphemed our Lord, said to the Philippians, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (Philippians 2:5-8). His instructions were that we have the mind of Christ. This would mean that we *think* as our Lord thought, that we teach as He taught, that we live as He lived.

JESUS' MIND CONCERNING THE WORD OF GOD

To be grounded in Jesus is to have His mind, His attitude, toward the word of God. If any man ever revered the word of God, that man was Jesus. Can you imagine an eternal existence with the Father, and then to contemplate the conversations of that eternity? Now, Jesus is here upon the earth, trying to convey to men the words of that Father, which, in reality, were His own words. Indeed, John speaks of Jesus as the Word (John 1:1, 14). Think for a moment of how God the Father has progressively revealed Himself unto the sons of men. In the beginning there was the *creative* word. God spoke a world into existence by His very word. However, that creative word did not reveal the Fatherhood in full. It helped us to realize that this indeed was a powerful God, but was He a good God or a bad God? The *creative* word did not reveal that! It simply gave us an insight into a part of the nature of this God.

Following that bit of revelation, God gave men His *written* word. This written word told us so much *more* about this God who had created all things. Through the written word we were made to realize that it was indeed a good God who was confronting men, telling them how to live, what

to say, what to do. The psalmist summed it up well when he said, "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path" (Psalm 119:105). The entire 119th Psalm is a marvelous testimony to the power of the word of God, with almost every verse of its 176 verses saying something about the testimonies, the precepts, the laws, the commandments, the statutes of God. Indeed, God's continuing revelation of Himself to man necessitated a written word, a sure word, whereby men could know more of the mind of God.

Then came the *incarnate* word, the last of these revelations of the Father. This incarnate Word--this Word that became flesh and "dwelt among us" (John 1:14)--was indeed the culminating act of God's complete revelation of Himself to man. When the world could look upon Jesus, a human being, and see the very essence of goodness, and perfection, and obedience, that world could then say, "We have seen the Father!" It was our Lord Himself who said, "he that hath seen me hath seen the Father" (John 14:9).

It would seem the most natural thing in the world for Jesus to have a deep respect for the word of God. He indeed *was* and *is* the Word of God! It was our Lord who said, just prior to the beginning of His public ministry, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4). In a day when men are belittling the word of God, suggesting that there is no sure way that it can be understood, Jesus is crying out that "every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" is the very means by which we can have life. Again, when Jesus was trying to teach His disciples something of the nature of the kingdom of God, He said that "the seed (of the kingdom) is the word of God" (Luke 8:11). He had hardly finished saying these things when His mother and brothers came too see Him. They could not reach Him because of the press of the crowd, and His disciples told Him of their presence. Jesus, almost bluntly, and perhaps to press the point, said, "My mother and my brethren are these which hear the word of God and do it" (Luke 8:21).

If God's people are ever to be grounded in Jesus, there will be no escaping His attitude toward the word of God. He said one time, "If ye love me, keep my commandments" (John 14:15). Commandments consist of words--the words of God--and those words must be heard and obeyed. If I could cry out in a voice strong enough to be heard by those within the church who are seeking to lead us away from the word of God, it would be a voice which would echo the words of Paul when he said, "Preach the word!" (II Timothy 4:2).

JESUS' MIND CONCERNING THE CHURCH

If the church is to be grounded in Jesus, then she must have His attitude, His mind, concerning the church. When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, "Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?" (Matthew 16:13). After their answers to this question, Jesus asked, "But whom say ye that I am?" When Peter answered for all of them "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," Jesus said, "upon this rock I will build my church" (Matthew 16:18). Though He used the word "rock" (as one might expect a building to be constructed upon), He was not talking about the lay of the ground, nor the construction of a building. Rather, He was talking about the bedrock foundation of that confession that He is the Christ, the Son of the living God. When He used the word "church" (*ekklesia*) He used a word which means "an assembly of people," or "an assembly of Christians gathered for worship." In the broader sense, the word suggests the "called out" people of God throughout the world. This is the *church* which Jesus promised to build.

As the pages of history unfold in the New Testament, we see the beginning of that church which Christ promised to build. It was the day of Pentecost when it had its beginning. Peter

preached to the gathered crowd, and when he finished, they asked Peter and the other apostles, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" (Acts 2:37). Peter answered, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost" (Acts 2:38). That very day some three thousand people responded in obedience to that invitation, and the Lord added them to the church. This was the beginning, and what a beginning it was! From that day on, wherever the gospel was preached and people believed, they were baptized into Christ and became members of His church.

Looking back over the past two thousand years, and examining the pages of inspiration, we can learn much about that church. It was singular in nature, and we know this from the words of the Apostle Paul when he said, "There is one body" (Ephesians 4:4) and defined that *body* as "the church" (Ephesians 1:22-23). The concept of multiple churches with differing doctrines was not known in New Testament days. It was simply "the church of Christ," and the inspired writers told us all things which our Lord intended for us to know about the organization, the worship, and the terms of admission into that church. It would be difficult to count the times that I have been asked about the church, usually with questions such as this: "With what denomination are you connected?" or "What is your faith?" It is extremely difficult for people to think in terms of the Lord having established His church, with His desire being that we should all be members of that singular body. Perhaps if we should go back to a time when the first automobile ever was driven, someone might well ask, "Have you seen the horseless carriage?" It would not have been necessary to identify it by brand--Chevy, Ford, Chrysler, what have you. There was only one! For our purposes today, we want people to think in terms of a single church, Christ's church, the church He had in mind when He said, "I will build my church."

In our confusion, created because of denominational beliefs, could we, perhaps, consider this illustration. Let us suppose that the game of football were to fade from popular interest, and with the passing of years it was no longer played on any level. Other games would become the craze of the day, and football just ceased to exist. A few hundred years pass, and no one has even heard of the game. A couple of thousand years pass, and someone digging in the archives of the past, stumbles across a rule book which describes the game in detail. Interest is created, and following the rule book the game is re-created for a new generation of people, played exactly as it was played two thousand years before. What would they call it? Football! How would it be played? According to the rules! Is it out of the realm of reason to think of the church in the same way? While the church of our Lord was never "lost," still, in the minds of many people, there is no knowledge of that first century church. Suppose we open the "rule book" and see how people of that century looked upon the church, how they worshiped, how they were governed, and how they became members of the church in the first place.

When people of the first century heard of Jesus, and were truly persuaded that He, was the promised Messiah, the Son of the living God, they repented of their sins (Acts 2:38), confessed their belief in His Sonship (Acts 8:37), and were immersed in water for the remission of their sins (Galatians 3:27; Acts 2:28; Acts 8:38). What a simple process! And yet what a profound experience! By this simple process they were reenacting the death, burial, and resurrection of our Lord (Romans 6:3-5), and this was truly the whole essence of the gospel of Christ (I Corinthians 15:1-4).

As new Christians they were added to the church by our Lord (Acts 2:47), and they worshiped God in keeping with the simple plan which He designed. They sang with their voices alone (Colossians 3:16), remembered the Lord's death by their participation in the Supper (I Corinthians 11:23-26), offered their prayers unto God (I Corinthians 14:15), gave freely of that

with which they had been blessed by the Lord (I Corinthians 16:2), and shared with one another the inspired truths of God's will for man (Acts 20:7). What could have been more simple, and yet more precious? Man simply poured out his heart to the God who created him.

The government of the church knew nothing of hierarchy, nor clergy, nor creeds. Elders were appointed in each congregation (Acts 14:23) to govern the affairs of that congregation. These were men who were qualified to serve in that capacity, and the Lord gave qualifications which had to be met (I Timothy 3:1-7). Deacons (servants) were appointed to assist the elders in carrying out the tasks of congregation (Philippians 1:1), and these were also men who met qualifications given by God (I Timothy 3:8-13). No church was ever perfect, composed as it was of imperfect people (Romans 3:23), but it was a perfect plan, a perfect design, a perfect organization. Our people must truly be grounded in our Lord's attitude toward the church.

JESUS' MIND CONCERNING OBEDIENCE

If indeed the church is to be grounded in Jesus, then she must somehow capture His attitude toward obedience. The Hebrew writer said, "Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him" (Hebrews 5:8,9). Our Lord's words are of great significance when He said, "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work" (John 4:34).

There is a beautiful thought in Hebrews 10:5-10. If I may take the liberty to paraphrase just here, Jesus is saying, "God, you gave me a body so that I could do your will. You had no real pleasure in sacrifices and burnt offerings; rather, you just wanted men to do your will." Here it is! Our Lord was given a *body* so that He could do the will of God. Without a body he could not have known the "lust of the flesh," the "lust of the eyes," nor the "pride of life." However, with a body He was able to experience all of our temptations, overcome them, and then offer that very body as a sacrifice for our sins (Hebrews 10:10).

CONCLUSION

It is little wonder that Paul could say, "For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified" (I Corinthians 2:2). No other message is needed more than this great gospel message. Our people must be grounded in Jesus Christ, grounded in His word, grounded in His church, grounded in the mind set of obedience. It is only then that we can truly claim to be the people of God, and it is only then that we will have a message worthy of being heard from sea to shining sea, even to the uttermost parts of the earth.

Solidifying the Home by Godly Fathers

Louis Rushmore

Times Like These:

To what does the phrase, "In Times Like These," refer? What negative impact does our society have on our children that godly fathers must counteract it? Further, are "Times Like These" significantly different from earlier times?

We live in an age where human life has been cheapened. The most prominent disregard for the sanctity of human life is abortion on demand. About a million and a half babies are murdered in America each year since the legalization of abortion on January 22, 1973; around the world, about 50 million babies are aborted annually. Doctor assisted suicide has proved newsworthy in recent years. (Be wary of any gift certificates redeemable by Dr. Kevorkian!) Teenage suicide continues to increase; many American youths believe they have no reason to live. Gang violence, ghastly crimes committed by children, television and movie violence all are indicative of a devaluation of human life in our nation. To what lengths is euthanasia (mercy killing) likely to go? In view of earth's several billion population (which increases about 270,000 per day), some people advocate taking the life of this world's less productive and less educated people. Their concept is not much unlike thinning the deer population "for its own good," and frighteningly similar to Hitler's campaign of extermination against people he viewed as inferior to his so-called "super-race."

Increasingly America is becoming amoral (unaware of any authoritative code of ethics or moral conduct of which one is in violation). There was a time generations ago that even immoral people realized that they were immoral for violating what they knew to be morally right.

Homosexuality is openly advocated and practiced. Single-parent homes (largely due to illegitimate births and rampant divorce) are rapidly replacing two-parent homes as the national norm. Widespread corruption in politics is generally conceded. Religious leaders are routinely embroiled in scandals. The religious community is confused and often apathetic. The heinous doctrine of humanism has infiltrated virtually every public and private institution throughout our nation and much of the world. Hedonism, our nation's interpretation of the constitutional right to "the pursuit of happiness," is the primary and all encompassing goal of nearly every man, woman and child — including Christians. Treason is commonplace. Taxes are burdensome. Even many of our poor people enjoy an affluence superior to the majority of this world's population; our prosperity has corrupted us. Americans often have too much idle-time, during which they play with new toys to commit old sins; essentially man sins through "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life (1 John 2:15-17). Pornography is everywhere (books, videos, computer, live sex shows [i.e., in West Virginia total nudity is legal — and proponents of such say that it cannot be stopped]). Our nation has practiced democracy to a fault; everyone has so many rights that essentially no one can be assured of any rights. We are approaching a new milestone in legalized chaos and debauchery. Our democratic way of life has even affected our concept of the Gospel (i.e., we would rather refer an item to a popular vote, if it is a matter of expediency, instead of allowing elders to determine the course of action, or if it is a matter of doctrine instead of turning to God's Word). In all these things, the typical citizen of our nation consents to follow a multitude to do evil (Exodus 23:2).

Have "times" ever been as bad or worse than "Times Like These"? Yes! Both biblical and secular histories acknowledge the atrocities enacted upon mankind by his fellow man. Repeatedly man has demonstrated a moral bankruptcy. None of our contemporary sins are *new*. Have "times" been better

than “Times Like These”? Yes, again. What we notice is that “Times Like These” today differ from past generations, such as those portrayed on “The Waltons” or “Little House on the Prairie.” The “times,” then, are worse than we or our parents or our grandparents recall. Godly fathers must solidify the home in times like these.

Godly Fathers Solidify the Home

“In Times Like These,” fathers need to accept the responsibility (for which God holds them accountable) to guide the home. How wonderful it would be if what God said about Abraham could justly be said about Christian fathers today. “For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him” (Genesis 18:19). Commenting on Genesis 18:19, Joseph D. Meador wrote:

... God chose Abraham to become the father of the nation of Israel because he took seriously his own role as a father to his own children. ... The answer to Abraham’s effectiveness as a role model and family leader lay in the fact that he practiced what he taught others to observe. ... Abraham provided leadership through his own consistent behavior. ... Abraham provided spiritual instruction to his children and household, he also provided them with clear spiritual goals.¹

Too many fathers have abdicated their leadership roles in the family. However, the para-church, denominational to-the-core, false doctrine propagating organization called *Promise Keepers* is not the resource to which Christian men should appeal to refresh themselves on responsible fatherhood. All fathers, instead, need to turn to the Bible to learn how to be better fathers, “In Times Like These.” “Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged” (Colossians 3:21).

Godly fathers must thoroughly and continuously instruct their children in spiritual matters. “And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up” (Deuteronomy 6:7). A marginal reading indicates that fathers are to “sharpen” their children. Fathers may not reveal something new each time they teach their children. However, each spiritual lesson can increase a child’s proficiency in biblical matters of which he was previously informed.

Fathers make a grave mistake if they permit their children’s biblical education to be limited, at best, to four one-hour segments of Bible class and worship per week. An unsigned bulletin tidbit reads: “No man ever really finds out what he believes in until he begins to instruct his children.” Some fathers, then, must not believe much, for the little to nothing they teach their children about God’s ways.

The home has sometimes been called “The Laboratory of Life.” What children experience in the home will make them respectively fit or unfit for their later physical, psychological, social, spiritual, intellectual and economical lives. Children, among other lessons, must be taught that learning how to live is more important than learning how to make a living. Our children, of course, need to learn both, but they must be taught about priorities. **Christianity is a way of life!**

It is in the home that fathers must teach children law and order. Learning how to abide by rules and regulations in the home prepares children to abide in the rules and regulations of both God and man (government). Responsible discipline is essential to successful parenting (Hebrews 12:5-11;

Proverbs 13:24; 23:13-14).

This, though, is an area in which society and the legal system challenge Christian homes. Children may be taken by the State if parents administer corporal punishment (spank). It has happened and it will doubtless happen again. Further, promoters of children's advocacy or children's rights would have children evaluate their parents, their home environment and religious training to which they are subjected. Children may then inform on their parents or sue to divorce their parents. Even godly parents are at legal risk for the whims of an unruly child.

It is in the home that fathers must ensure that their children learn to practice reverential public worship. Our children need to know what worship is (incidentally, although some self-styled "scholarly" brethren apparently know little about New Testament worship). Further, our children must come to know God — He who is worshipped. They must know how to worship. Again, Christianity is very much supposed to be a way of life — of which reverential, public worship is a necessary part. The home and public worship complement each other and contribute to fortifying our children in the face of many perils to their faith.

Perils to Our Children's Faith

In an excellent tract, "What's Happening To Our Christian Homes?," Robert L. Waggoner wrote:
... Christian parents ... must be more knowledgeable of the problems their children will face in this world, and they must be more purposeful to achieve their desired goals of child raising.²

Obviously, unless we recognize and are alert to the problems that buffet them, we are ill-prepared to help our children keep the faith. The sources of these perils to faith surround us. The primary vehicles through which the Christian faith is confronted in our society are public schools and the media.

The father of American education, John Dewey, instilled atheistic humanism in our schools, beginning with teacher training colleges through and thereby every grade of school life. Christian principles on which this nation was established were pushed out of our educational system long ago. As Waggoner observed:

... subtle and deceptive ... techniques as role-playing, survival games, encounter group sessions, daily journals, sensitivity training, etc. the public schools are turning our children away from God, and destroying our Christian homes.³

(Employers sponsor classes in which their employees who may have escaped the indoctrination to which the schools subject children, are fed humanism on the job. Role playing, survival games, encounter group sessions and sensitivity training are the fad of corporate America.)

Further, "... sex education is taught without moral values."⁴ Teaching "safe-sex," irrespective of and sometimes promoting experimenting with either heterosexual or homosexual intercourse, may include dispensing condoms — at school. For "unfortunate" pregnant girls, a school counselor may be their first stop to an abortion clinic. Often, parents are **not welcome** to participate in any area of our children's education, unless it is explicitly manipulated by the public schools.

Several years ago, my family served a congregation where in that school district the required physical education class was co-ed swimming. We refused, for religious conscience, based on biblical principles, to allow our teenage daughter to participate or be present for that activity. The local

school board overruled our religious convictions, and added that, "Members of the church for which you preach, including past ministers, sent their children to school here, and not one of them ever had a problem with mixed swimming." Our appeal to the State School Board was unsuccessful; we were ordered to submit our daughter to the prescribed physical education class. Bonnie and I refused and told the superintendent that we would meet him in court — after which to my surprise the educational system relented.

My wife and I have not abdicated our parental responsibility to the public schools. Thousands of parents today homeschool because they, too, refuse to surrender their parental responsibilities to the public schools, especially considering the humanistic, anti-Christian dogma so apparent in education, "In Times Like These."

Please do not misunderstand. We do not despise education. Further, surely there are many good teachers who do not push humanism, etc., some of whom are Christians. Our daughter (who is 23 years old **and single** — she's not looking, but I am) is a school teacher.

God and prayer are banned from school, but the religions of humanism, atheism, mythology and New Age are invited to school. Moral purity and chastity are old world hindrances to popular, personal expression, while "safe-sex" and experimenting with homosexuality is exciting.

Ungodly media is the subject of brother Steven Stevens in the following lecture this afternoon. Therefore, suffice it for me to simply say that television, movies and music present no less a peril to the faith of our children than the schools. The detrimental affect of television and movies as they glorify illicit sex and senseless violence is barely veiled at all. The danger of rock music may be suspected by some parents to be harmful, but country music is no better. The lyrics of either type of music often are ungodly and hardly supportive of Christian values. On whatever our mind feasts it will thrive. Paul by inspiration directed: "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things" (Philippians 4:8).

"Christian parents cannot build strong Christian character in their children unless these influences are greatly minimized." Though we may not fully appreciate the Amish and Jehovah's Witnesses for their religious error, among some admirable traits is their respective minimization of society's affect on their children. We cannot fully embrace all that society offers and expect to minimize its affect on our children — and ourselves.

Some Biblical Portraits of Fathers

Fathers who made obvious mistakes (sinned): Noah (Genesis 9:21), Lot (Genesis 19:33-38).

A prime example of a good father and an obedient son: Abraham and Isaac (Genesis 22:7-19).

A spiritual father and son team: Paul and Timothy (1 Timothy 1:2; 2 Corinthians 1:1).

A father who was blameworthy for the sinful lives of his children: Eli (1 Samuel 2:13, "For I have told him that I will judge his house for ever for the iniquity which he knoweth; because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not.").

A father who was **not** responsible for the sinfulness of his children: Samuel (1 Samuel 8:1-5, "And it came to pass, when Samuel was old, that he made his sons judges over Israel. Now the

name of his firstborn was Joel, and the name of his second, Abiah: they were judges in Beersheba. And his sons walked not in his ways, but turned aside after lucre, and took bribes, and perverted judgment. Then all the elders of Israel gathered themselves together, and came to Samuel unto Ramah, And said unto him, Behold, thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways: now make us a king to judge us like all the nations.”)

Fathers who love their sons in spite of their sons' wickedness: David and Absalom (2 Samuel 18:31-33), the prodigal son and his father (Luke 15:11-24).

A rash father: Jephthah (Judges 11:30-39).

A father who chastises his son because he loves him: God the Father (Hebrews 12:5-12).

Conclusion

“... [T]he Christian home is deteriorating today, because, among other reasons, it is being less effective in establishing a strong Christian faith in its children.”⁶ When should we start, in the home and in the church, to teach children? From the cradle! “There was not a word of all that Moses commanded, which Joshua read not before all the congregation of Israel, with the women, and the little ones, and the strangers that were conversant among them” (Joshua 8:35). With whom did Israel leave the babies if everyone else assembled?

We have our Sodom and Gomorrahs. We have idolatry (idols fashioned from the imaginations of men — denominational gods). Yet, there is hope. Sinners can be washed, sanctified and justified (1 Corinthians 6:9-11). Though all have sinned (Romans 1:18-32; 3:23), sinners can obey from the heart and be made free from sin (Romans 6:17-18).

What Is A Home?

A roof to keep out the rain. Four walls to keep out the wind. Floors to keep out the cold. Yes, but home is more than that. It is a laugh of a baby, the song of a mother, the strength of a father. Warmth of loving hearts, light from happy eyes, kindness, loyalty, comradeship. Home is the first school of young ones, where they learn what is good, what is right and what is kind. That is a home, May God Bless It! (Anonymous)

The Parents' Faith

- Ø **We** believe our children are a gift of God — the hope of tomorrow.
- Ø **We** believe that immeasurable possibilities lie slumbering in each son and daughter.
- Ø **We** believe that God has planned for their future, and that His love shall always surround them; and so . . .
- Ø **We** believe that they shall grow up! — first crawling, then toddling, then standing, stretching skyward for a decade and a half — until they reach full stature — a man and a woman!
- Ø **We** believe that they can and will be molded and shaped between infancy and adulthood — as a tree is shaped by the gardener, and the clay vessel in the potter's hands, or the shoreline of the sea under the watery hand of the might waves; by home and church; by school and street, through sights and sounds and the touch of our hands on their hands and Christ's Spirit, through

His Word, on their hearts!

Ø **We** believe that they shall mature as only people can — through laughter and tears, through trial and error, by reward and punishment, through affection and discipline, until they stretch their wings and leave their nests to fly!

O, God — **We** believe in our children. Help us so to live that they may always believe in us — and so in Thee. (Anonymous)

1 Joseph D. Meador, "Q&A," *Firm Foundation*, Vol. 112, No. 6, June, 1997, pp. 26-27.

2 Robert L. Waggoner, *What's Happening To Our Christian Homes?*, Haun Publishing Co., p. 17.

3 *Ibid.*, p. 9.

4 *Ibid.*

5 *Ibid.*, p. 12.

6 *Ibid.*, p. 4.

Louis Rushmore was born and reared as a Catholic and between then and his conversion he also became acquainted with Pentecostalism. Louis was baptized 1972 while in the Air Force and in 1973 married the former Bonnie Reed and began preaching by appointment. In 1974 he accepted his first full-time ministry but left to receive further training in 1975 at Memphis School of Preaching. Since graduation in 1977, Louis has served churches in various states either through full-time work, lectureships, Gospel meetings and appointments. Brother Rushmore has supported himself in secular work for the past eight years while serving congregations in the Upper Ohio Valley. He is also an instructor at West Virginia School of Preaching, teaching Bible Geography, First and Second Corinthians, Acts and James. His articles appear on the Internet and have been published in several Gospel magazines, including: Gospel Advocate, Firm Foundation, Unity in Truth, Therefore Stand, Christian Bible Teacher, First Century Christian, West Virginia Christian and Power. Louis has limited experience in radio and television evangelism and is the author of five reproducible Bible class books. Presently, brother Rushmore is the moderator for two Bible discussion lists on the Internet's Bible-InfoNet, hosted by Firm Foundation. Bonnie and Louis have three grown children who also are faithful Christians.

“SOLIDIFY THE HOME AGAINST UNGODLY MEDIA”

STEVE STEVENS

I am grateful for the opportunity to speak on this lectureship program. The theme is relevant to our time and the issues involved concern matters with eternal consequences for all men's souls. The afternoon sessions of this lectureship by design deal with very practical matters in our lives and the application of God's Word to building up and solidifying our homes against the onslaught of worldliness, materialism, and human philosophies.

I. DEFINITION OF TERMS.

- A. Media = “alternative plural of medium; any means, agency, or instrumentality; specifically, a means of communication that reaches the general public and carries advertising.”¹
1. Most of us would think of television as the media in our homes.
 2. Yet the influence of media comes through many other avenues.
 - a. Printed materials including but not limited to books, magazines, newspapers, handbills, mail (letters and advertisements), and billboards.
 - b. Broadcasting including television, radio, movies, videos, cassette tapes, compact discs, and video games.
 - c. Telephone including Dial-A-Porn, Psychic Hotlines, and Love Lines.
 - d. Internet, the newest means of media that makes possible access to the whole world through means of a personal computer or Web Television.
 3. Without a doubt we are a society bombarded with media whether wanted or unwanted. If all media were truthful, honest, and godly our level of concern would need be only minimal. Sadly, such is not the case and as Christians we must ensure that we “have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.” Ephesians 5:11
- B. Ungodly. The word “ungodly” occurs 27 times in 24 verses in the KJV of the Bible. There are four Hebrew words and one family of Greek words behind our English word. Let us briefly notice each of these and their respective meanings.
1. *Beliya-al* (Strong's # 1100) “Belial; worthless, good for nothing, without profit, base; by extension destruction or wickedness.
 2. *Rasha* (Strong's # 7563) “one guilty of crime; hostile to God; morally wrong; concretely and (actively) bad person; condemned, guilty, ungodly, wicked (man) that did wrong.” “to act wickedly; wrong and to be condemned for it; actions and intentions of a type person in contrast to the attitude and character of God.”²
 3. *Aviyl* (Strong's # 5760) “perverse one, unjust one.” “To deviate; behavior contrary to God's character and against which he must respond; the character of God enemies.”³
 4. *Lo + Chaciyd* (Strong's # 3808 + 2623) “*Lo* = factual negation” not holy; not godly; not a saint. No “fidelity to covenantal obligations real or implied. Involves attitude and action of man who is not in harmony with the will of God.”⁴
 5. *Asebeia* (noun), *asebeo* (verb), *asebes* (adjective) (Strong's # 763,764,765) In the classical sense “used exclusively for a man of no religion and no morals”⁵ In the LXX (the Greek version of the Old Testament) it “refers to a general attitude and individual action in departing from God; expresses contempt for God and His Will; refers to a life that is contrary to God and His Will.”⁶

- C. In conclusion, it is not hard to understand from the material presented above that “ungodly media” refers to any means of communication (verbal, written, electronic, or graphic) that can reach the general public and that contains material portrayed in attitudes, intentions, words, or actions that are hostile to God, in contrast with the character of God, that deviate from the obligations enjoined by God, that are not in harmony with the will of God, and that express contempt for God.

II. DESCRIPTION OF ‘UNGODLY’ IN BIBLICAL TERMS.

- A. Most anything can be or become ungodly--words, actions, men, money, or media. God’s Word describes some of the qualities of ungodly people who use their power and influence to corrupt and pervert things that could and should be used to promote godliness and righteous living. We need to be aware of these scriptural truths that we might beware of those who are ungodly and who promote ungodliness wherever it is found.
- B. Study the following verses carefully.
1. Psalms 1:1...ungodly men have counsel to give!
 2. Psalms 1:4...ungodly are like chaff which the wind driveth in comparison to a tree firmly planted by a river.
 3. Psalms 73:12...ungodly who prosper in the world; increase in riches.
 4. Proverbs 16:27...ungodly diggeth up evil
 5. Proverbs 19:28...ungodly witness scourneth judgment
 6. Jude 4...turn grace of God into lasciviousness...denying the Lord
 7. Jude 15,16...ungodly deeds...hard speeches...walking after their own lusts...having men’s persons in admiration because of advantage.
- C. It should not be difficult to detect the ungodly in our world today if we apply the above standard to them.
1. They have an agenda that opposes righteousness and godly living, and always have had!
 2. They stand for only their relative and evolving ideas mined from ungodly sources.
 3. Their motive is money and power.
 4. They specialize in evil and oppose that which is good.
 5. They despise the judgment of anyone (including God) who would dare to differ or oppose their way of acting or thinking.
 6. Take great pride in the evil companions and corrupt company they keep.
 7. Profess a lifestyle of ‘tolerance for all’, ‘do as you please’, and ‘anything goes’ (except for those who oppose them).
 8. Uphold and honor those who constantly push the cutting edge to new heights in regards to indecency and immorality in our society.

III. DEFLORATION OF THE MEDIA.

- A. The media is a powerful tool in our society. It **could** be used to teach and influence its audiences for good. In the **past** (1950's and 1960's) it did portray family values and strive to entertain while upholding what is now referred to as Biblical and traditional values.
- B. Long gone are the days of *Ozzie and Harriet*, *I Love Lucy*, *Father Knows Best*, *Leave It To Beaver*, *The Donna Reed Show*, *Car 54 Where Are You*, and *Dobbie Gillis*, and here to replace them are *NYPD Blue*, *The Jerry Springer Show*, *Brooklyn South*, *The Simpsons*,

Cybil, Ellen, Friends, ER, and EZ Streets. Lest one is left with the impression that television is the only media that affects us in our homes let us take a look at the number of avenues of media that constantly influence our lives and the power that they exert upon us.

C. Television

1. An estimated 90.4 million homes (98%) in the United States have at least one television set which is turned on for nearly seven hours each day.⁷
2. The average child will have watched nearly 5,000 hours of TV by the time [s]he enters the first grade, and 19,000 hours by the end of high school--more time than [s]he will spend in class.⁸
3. The average American child by the age of 16 will have seen over 200,000 acts of violence on TV including 33,000 murders.⁹
4. Sexual innuendo and activity on television may be even more pervasive. In the late 1980's, Louis Harris and Associates found that there were 65,000 sexual references a year broadcast in the afternoon and evenings on three major networks--an average of 27 per hour. The average American viewer will take in about 14,000 of those references annually.¹⁰
5. Television depicts sexual activity as an exploitive, recreation-oriented, casual activity that occurs outside of marriage in over 90% of alleged incidents.¹¹
6. The TV ratings system is a farce. The networks assign their ratings to each show by a very subjective criteria. This writer has heard '4-letter words' on children's programming with TV7 ratings. There are no guarantees with TV, with the exception of the OFF button on the remote and the set itself.

D. Music

1. Thirty years ago not one popular song encouraged rape, robbery, murder, assaults, or using weapons to solve disputes. Try to name a popular song from that era that encouraged cop killing or rioting. Yet in today's popular music all of these themes can be found and worse!¹²
2. The average teenager between the 7th and 12th grades listens to 10,500 hours of rock music. Music actually surpasses television as an influence in teenager's lives.¹³
3. No one is immune. Christian families are just as likely to watch TV, listen to the radio, watch MTV, or surf the Internet as non-Christian families.¹⁴
4. On two occasions over the Summer months I walked into two competing music retailers at the local malls. I randomly picked up Rap and Heavy Metal music CD's. Each one contained a parental advisory on the packaging about the nature of the songs inside (however, I saw no parents advising anyone in either store). I then read the titles of the songs listed, many of which can not be printed out because of the vile language in the lyrics. Yet, these words are not bleeped out in the songs themselves. Curious isn't it? We will not print the words so they can be easily read, but we will buy the recordings so they can be blatantly sang and heard.
5. One can not even listen to the popular songs on the radio without hearing profanity, themes of sexual references, drinking, broken homes, and violence.
6. Again I want to caution the reader that I am not saying all music or songs on the radio or in the top 40 are ungodly, but trying to get the good without listening to a whole lot of bad is a tremendous challenge!

E. Video Games

1. In the early 1970's Atari released one of its first video games--a tennis-like game called Pong. The rage began and the games poured forth endlessly--Alien Invaders, Baseball, Soccer, Pac-Man, and Ms. Pac-Man. Today we have Nintendo, Super Nintendo, Nintendo 64, Sega, and the Personal Computer. The technical advances have revolutionized the industry. Realism is the ultimate goal and just around the corner is Virtual Reality.
2. The primary market target of the video game manufacturers is boys 8 to 13 years old.¹⁵ The most popular games today like Mortal Kombat (sold \$65 million in first two weeks of release worldwide) gives vocal encouragement to the player as he rips off the head of his enemy as blood spues everywhere. If forceful enough, the player will get to "Finish" his competitor off by ripping out a pulsating heart or a twitching spinal cord while the body crumples to the ground (among other options). Then there is Night Trap where hooded men brutally murder lingerie clad school girls, or maybe it is Phantasmagoria--a fantasy horror featuring a sex scene, also with real actors. The list goes on: Doom, Doom II, Hell on Earth, and Rise of Triad. Rise of Triad was marketed as the most violent 3-D action game ever created. The packaging labels read, "with ten incredibly vicious weapons you can shred enemies into barely recognizable meat."¹⁶ One of the newest planned CD-ROM games is Urban Decay which is set in the alleys of a U.S. ghetto at night and allows the player to gun down members of both rival gangs and the police force with realistic depictions of their deaths.¹⁷
3. The effects of video games is still hotly contested among authorities. Again, I caution the reader that I am not contending that all video games are ungodly. Concerns should center on the amount of time a person plays (ever hear of "Nintendo thumb?") as well as the content in the game itself. Video games are not passive viewing as is television--these players actively control the violence in this game. One conclusion most authorities were willing to agree on in the research by this lecturer is that these influences do lower the level of the sense of horror at physical violence. How many times have you heard a young person remark that some grotesque act was "cool" while you stood there thinking 'gross.'

F. Internet

1. In 1969 the Advanced Research Projects Agency or ARPA developed a network of four computers that would enable the exchange of pertinent information among scientists, researchers, and the military in various geographical regions. In the early 1980's the number of users was so great that two separate networks were created. One was for the military research component (MILNET), and the other was the National Science Foundation component (NSFNET). The NSFNET linked together five supercomputers with a wealth of information on countless topics. Eventually, the NSFNET was opened to educational facilities, researchers, and government agencies. Today the system is known as the Internet or simply the NET.
2. In 1995 the Net included an estimated 5 million hosts and 30 million users worldwide. It grows at an estimated 1 million users per month.
3. Anyone who has ever entered this world of cyberspace can not help but be awed by its enormous size and wealth of information. Presently, however there are not

regulations governing how this tremendous resource can and should be used. It is possible for anyone to see or read anything on the Net without restriction or supervision.

4. Two immediate problems on the Internet facing users today involve the "chat rooms and Bulletin Board Services" (BBS), and the pornographic materials readily accessible to anyone, even children, with the stroke of a key. The chat rooms are special places where people can talk about anything by typing their remarks and sending them to a server where other people can read them and type a response. They are a favorite site for "sex perverts" who are looking for innocent victims. Already these sites have been used to lure innocent children into the clutches of people who unleash ungodly horrors upon them. The pornographic materials include every kind imaginable and even new ones most of us could never imagine.

G. Books, Magazines, Newspapers, Comics

1. Enter any secular bookstore and you will find sleazy novels, hot romances, dirty joke books, and books to promote every deviate view of life. Even the student book clubs like Scholastic and Troll promote books that deal with political correctness, and the macabre side of life (R.L. Stine's *Goosebumps*).
2. A study done by Focus on the Family revealed that *Seventeen*, *Young + Modern*, and *Glamour* continue to be the most popular magazines with teenage girls--including Christian girls. All of these magazines have strong feminist angles. *Glamour* has pro-lesbian and pro-homosexual articles almost every month. What kind of advise do they give teen-age girls? In January of 1996 *Seventeen* ran the article: "Sex: How Do You Know If You Are Ready?" *Young + Modern* went one step further in February with an eight-page "love and sex" section complete with a quiz entitled: "Are you a sexpert?"¹⁸
3. "Most modern comics have been transformed from a light form of literature for children into horrific, sexually-explicit mind candy for teen boys and adults. Now the emphasis is almost entirely on violence, sensual portrayals of both men and women, and a lot of psycho-babble."¹⁹

H. Telephone

1. Call it dial-a-porn, or whatever, the phone lines put accessing ungodly things of all kinds right at our finger tips. Adult sex lines, psychic connections, and expensive rates for all this garbage are available from any phone.
2. It is estimated that Americans spent \$750 million to \$1billion on phone sex in 1996.²⁰
3. You can place a block on 700 and 900 numbers through you local telephone company. However, many of the suppliers of this type of media use the 800 and 888 prefixes and charge for the time.

I. Movies and Videos

1. Family films are very rare in this present age. The language, the violence, the explicit sexual content in the majority of films goes well beyond the limits of decency and into the realm of ungodliness. Even the theme of many movies is not fit for public presentation.
2. One movie released on TV this year carried the networks first TVM rating and showed full frontal nudity. Another movie aired on March 11, 1997 set a new record for profanity on TV with 87 occurrences. Now that these horizons have been seen, to

where will the new ones push us. (No! I did not watch either movie. My information comes from the American Family Association Journal April 1997 and May 1997)

3. At the very minimum this type of media will desensitize us to acts of violence and lewd and immoral behaviors. At the most people could try to imitate what they see on these films in real life.
- J. Ungodly media is big business and generates huge profits. Note the following facts:
In 1996 Americans spent 8 billion dollars on ungodly media. Hard core video rentals rose from \$75 million in 1985 to \$665 million in 1996 (887%). Americans spent \$150 million ordering adult movies on pay-per-view TV. Another \$175 million was spent to view pornographic movies in hotel or motel rooms. Estimates run between \$52 million and \$200 million for revenues from porn sales on the Internet.²¹ The problem is not going to go away in the foreseeable future. What can be done to defend our homes against this onslaught?

IV. DEFENSE PLAN FOR SOLIDIFYING OUR HOMES AGAINST UNGODLY MEDIA.

- A. **Who is responsible?** We all like to blame someone else in today's culture. The state is failing, or the school is failing, or the church is failing to do its job. Examine with me the following facts.
 1. An 18 year old high school graduate will have lived 157,680 hours in his/her life.
 2. Of that time 52,560 hours will be spent sleeping (average 8 hours per day) or 33.3%.
 3. Of the total time 16,380 hours will be spent in school (average 7 hours per day for 13 years) or 10.4%.
 4. Of the total time, if [s]he goes to church services every Sunday Am for Bible study, AM Worship, PM Worship, Wednesday PM Bible study, one week for a Spring meeting, one week for a Fall meeting, and one week for VBS [s]he will have spent 3,760 hours in Church or 2.4%.
 5. That leaves a balance of 84,980 waking hours or 54% that you as parents in your home are responsible for teaching and training your children.
 6. If the Church did all it could to train and teach your child (2.4%) and the school did all it could to teach and train your child to do right (10.4%), then the two together could only influence your child one-fourth of what you as parents in your home will influence your children ($12.8\%/54\%=1/4$) by the age of 18.
 7. Parents let us rise up and defend our homes and influence our children so that they will not pursue avenues of ungodly media.
- B. **What saith the Scriptures?** God's word has not left us without teaching regarding these matters. Read and study closely the following scriptures.
 1. Galatians 5:9 A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump.
 2. 1Corinthians 15: 33 Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners.
 3. Philippians 4:5 Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand.
 4. Individuals and nations have always faced the choice of following God or something or someone else.
 - a. Joshua 24:14 Now therefore fear the LORD, and serve him in sincerity and in truth: and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt; and serve ye the LORD. 15. And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which

your fathers served that [were] on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.

- b. 1Kings 18:21 And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? if the LORD be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word.
- c. Psalms 1:1 Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.
5. Fathers are expected to show and teach their families to follow the way of the Lord. Genesis 18:19 For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment; that the LORD may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him.
6. The most devastating cost will be in terms of souls which will be lost because of these ungodly avenues of destruction. Jude 1:4, 15,18

CONCLUSION: If we do not watch it, listen to it, call it, subscribe to it, rent it, or buy it the suppliers who produce it will soon stop making it. At least it will not be influencing parents and children in our homes.

ENDNOTES

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¹⁶Ibid., p.47.

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Hooten, p.12.

¹⁹Ibid., p.11.

²⁰"Porn Industry, An Obscene Picture Of Greed," American Family Association Journal, April, 1997, p.10.

²¹Ibid.

Steve Stevens is a native of West Virginia. He was baptized by his father, Earl Stevens, on January 22, 1967 at St. Marys, WV. He preached his first Gospel sermon at the age of nine at Daybrook, WV. He began conducting Gospel Meetings and directing Vacation Bible Schools in June of 1970. In the Fall of 1970 he began preaching on a weekly bases with several congregations. His first located work was with the Norway Church of Christ in Fairmont, WV from 1975 through 1981. He began his current work at Hundred, WV on April 1, 1981. He is married to the former Karen Barnhart of New Freeport, PA, and the Lord has blessed them with five children: Rebecca, Melissa, Jonathan, Stephanie, and Victoria.

SOLIDIFY THE HOME BY GODLY MOTHERS

Will Montgomery

TEXT: Titus 2:3-5

The aged women likewise that they be in behaviour as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things; That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, To be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed.

INTRODUCTION:

1. The home today is under attack from all sides.
2. The moral fiber of our nation is deteriorating.
3. For the most part our nation is like those in Jeremiah's day.
Jeremiah 6:15 Were they ashamed when they had comitted abomination?
Nay, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush.
 - A. Our nation is not ashamed of it's sins.
 - B. Our nation cannot blush.
 - C. Proverbs 13:34 Righteousness exalteth a nation but sin is a reproach to any people.
 - D. Psalms 9:17 The wicked shall be turned into hell and all nations that forget God.

1. WE NEED GODLY MOTHERS LIKE EUNICE, TIMOTHY'S MOTHER.

- II Timothy 1:5 When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also.
- A. Mothers that will instill in their sons and daughters principles from the word of God that will guide their lives.
 - B. Someone has said that a godly mother is the glue that holds the home together.

2. THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN THE HOME IS SEEN IN TITUS 2:5

To be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed.

- a. Discreet- Sober-minded, temperate, of sound mind, sane.
Curbing one's desires and impulses, self-controlled.
- b. Chaste- Pure, pure from carnality, modest.
- c. Keeper at home- Caring for daily activities of the home, working at home.
- d. Good- Of a good constitution or nature, pleasant, agreeable, joyful, good-hearted, upright, honourable.
- e. Obedient to their own husbands- In subjection.

3. THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN THE HOME

A. Women have the power to shape the future.

1. The hand that rocks the cradle rules the world.

a. Many successful men attribute their success to the love and encouragement of their mothers. On the other hand those men who have failed in life place the blame with theirs.

2. The early formative years of a child are guided by loving Christian mothers.

a. Professionals say that the first six years of a child's life are the most important. For the most part all of a child's personality and character is formed in those first six years. If the mother is not in the home at that crucial and precious time then valuable time is lost.

3. Why should T.V., magazines, movies, etc., produced by non-christians do this?

4. What about day care?

a. 4.6 million children are in day-care. For some this is a necessity. Due to today's economic conditions some mothers must work. In the year 2000 3 of every 4 women will work outside of the home.

However, you can still utilize the time that you have with your children in the proper way.

5. Titus tells the older women to teach the younger women to:

a. Love their husbands.

1. This means the proper love and respect due a husband from his wife. We would think that this comes naturally but for some it does not. Many children today do not see the proper respect between a husband and wife in their homes and so it must be taught.

b. Love their children.

1. This also seems like a natural act, but for many it is not. Look at all the cases of child abuse and neglect inflicted on children by their mothers.

4. IN THE OLD TESTAMENT AS WELL AS THE NEW TESTAMENT WE SEE GODLY MOTHERS.

1. Moses mother

Exodus 6:20

Numbers 26:29

Hebrews 11:23 By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw he was a proper child; and they were not afraid of the king's commandments.

a. Moses mother had faith in God's care.

1. She hid him in the bulrushes.

Hebrews 11:24-25 By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasure of sin for a season.

2. She taught him to serve God and the importance of faithfulness over wealth and power.

2. Mothers today

1. Need to teach these same valuable lessons. We need taught that suffering and sorrow may come our way merely because we are following Christ.

I Peter 4:16 Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God on this behalf.

2. Children need to be taught the importance of obeying the gospel and faithfully living the christian life.

3. Samuel's mother

I Sam 1:2

I Sam 1:11-27

I Sam 2:19

Hannah had no child. She prayed to the Lord and received a son. She gave him to the Lord. She caused him to dedicate his life to the Lord. And even though he was under Eli's tutelage she visited him and cared for him. She made a coat for him. What a great sacrifice she made in giving her only child to the service of the Lord.

1. Mothers, do you stop your children from serving the Lord by?

a. Allowing them to miss services.

b. Not bringing them to class or worship because they are too young.

c. Making excuses for them when they need discipline.

d. Not being a good example yourself.

4. The virtuous woman

Proverbs 31:10-31

1. Her price is far above rubies.

2. Her husband trusteth in her.

3. She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life.

4. She worketh willingly with her hands.

5. She is like a merchant's ship. Willing to go to whatever lengths necessary to provide food for her family.

6. She riseth while it is yet night and giveth food to her household.

She is not lazy.

7. She helps the poor and the needy.

8. Her husband is known in the gates when he sitteth among the elders of the land. She bolsters her husbands reputation and does nothing to bring

reproach to his name.

9. Strength and honour are her clothing.
10. She openeth her mouth with wisdom and her tongue is the law of kindness.
11. She looketh well to the ways of her household and eateth not the bread of idleness.
12. Her children rise up and call her blessed; her husband also and he praiseth her.
13. Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the Lord she shall be praised.

5. Mary the mother of Jesus

Luke 2:40

The child grew and waxed strong in spirit filled with wisdom and the grace of God was upon him.

Luke 2:52

And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature and in favour with God and man.

6. Elizabeth mother of John the Baptist

Luke 1:6 And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless.

CONCLUSION:

Godly mothers make sacrifices for their children. They try to be the best examples possible and teach their children the great and precious truths found in God's word. Godly mothers want their children to go to heaven. Mothers have gone without to give their children the best in life. But let's not forget the most important thing that we can give our children is a christian home based on the word of God.

THE MOTHER'S LOVE

Over the forest and treeless plains
And over the heights above,
"Tis ever the same , the heart of the home
Is the throb of the mother's love.
It kneels by the bed of the drowsy head
And whispers a lullaby
That softly streams through the baby's dreams,
"Fear not, for Mother's nigh";

It flows from her lips to her finger tips,
Caressing the baby's curls;
It shines in her eyes that sympathize
With the tears of her little girls;
The sorrows and joys of her little boys,
It only can understand,
And it hallows the touch we love so much,---
The pressure of mother's hand.

It mends the ball and the broken doll;
It finds the missing knife,
And all day long it weaves a song
"Round the wearisome tasks of life.

It looks above to the God of Love
And sighs, "Thy will be done."
On every sea and on every land
Beneath the sky's blue dome,
The mother's love is the life and the light
And the throbbing heart of the home.

Will Montgomery - Will was born in East Liverpool, OH, January 11, 1947. He was baptized into Christ by Frank Higginbotham in Chester, WV in 1972. While serving as a deacon for 8 years, he preached at Chester and other local congregations when needed. He began located work with the East Liverpool congregation in 1981 where he continues in his 14th year. He has a weekly radio program, has spoken on lectureships and conducts 2-4 Gospel meetings per year. He is married to the former Anita (Miller), who's father, Carl Miller served the Chester congregation as an elder for many years before retiring in 1992. Will has one daughter, Tracy who is married to John Knight and one granddaughter, Jocelin.

PREACH THE WORD WITH PREPARATION

2 Timothy 4:1-4

Frank Higginbotham

God has granted to His children the privilege of bearing His message of salvation to the human family. He did not entrust this work to angels. It was entrusted to 'earthen vessels'. He did not commit this work to mankind in general. The church is the 'pillar and ground' of the truth. (1 Timothy 3:15). Only those who were committed to the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth would act responsibly in this situation. Therefore, it is with great joy and also an awareness of the seriousness of this charge that we today look to our obligation. The Bible speaks of the hearts that we teach as being different kinds of soil. This illustration is seen in a study of the account of the sower. (Luke 8:4-15). Not all hearts are the same. Not all soil is prepared to receive the seed. The seed is the word of God. (Luke 8:11). It is the truth that will free men from their sins. (John 8:32). We were not given liberty concerning what we are to preach. We must preach the Word. Some of the Word that we teach will fall by the wayside. It will be heard but the Devil will then come and remove it quickly. If the Word is left in the heart, the possibility is that it will be believed and the person saved. Some of the seed that we sow will fall on the rock. They will receive the Word with joy but there is no root. They will believe for a while and then in time of temptation they will fall away. Some seed falls among thorns. They are soon choked out by the cares and riches and pleasures of this life. To this point the picture seems bleak. However, now the picture changes. Some seed falls on good ground. These are good souls who have an honest and good heart. The Word produces fruit in this kind of soil. It is this positive response that gives Christians the incentive to continue preaching the Word. This parable of the Lord helps us to realize how the work we do will be received by those who are taught. Now it is time for us to look at the preparation that we must do if we are to be effective. The preacher wants to be a good minister of his responsibility. Paul told Timothy that if he put the brethren in mind of what they needed to know, he would be a good minister of Jesus Christ. (1 Timothy 4:6). He also urged that we be vessels of honor, sanctified and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work. (2 Timothy 2:21). The word 'meet' means fit and proper to be used in the work of the Lord. Some teachers of God's word have not made sufficient preparation. Thus, the work suffers because of the lack of preparation. Let us now look at some areas of preparation that will help make us good servants of the Lord.

It should be very clear that we cannot help someone to know God if we do not know Him ourselves. God is our maker. He has shown love and concern for His creation through out all time. (Genesis 1:26,27). It would be indeed foolish for us to deny our creator. (Psalms 14:1). As our maker, He deserves our total devotion and love. Solomon proclaimed that our whole duty is to fear God and to keep His commandments. (Ecclesiastes 12:13). Throughout time men have tried to find God by looking in a number of different places. Some have sought Him through money and material things. The love of money is the root of all evil. (1 Timothy 6:10). The rich fall into a snare and many times become victims of their wealth. Others have sought God through worldly wisdom. Paul addresses this matter as he writes to the church at Corinth. Paul states that after the world sought God through wisdom and failed, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save the lost. This is not foolish preaching but rather the simple and plain message of Christ on the cross for the sins of mankind. The cross of Christ was to the Jew a stumbling block and to the Gentile it was foolishness

but to those who are saved, it was the power of God to salvation.(1 Corinthians 1:21-24). It would be futile for someone who has never experienced salvation to try to teach another about it. Knowing God involves us in doing the commandments of the Lord. (1 John 2:3). The one who knows God and loves Him with all of his heart will have an influence on others when he tries to teach them. If our life is not properly touched and ordered by the teachings of the Lord, we would fall into the same category as the Jews to whom Paul wrote in Romans chapter two. They were busy trying to teach others but were not living in the way of God. They were saying that you must not steal but they themselves were guilty. They proclaimed that adultery is wrong but were guilty of it. They denounced idolatry but were guilty of sacrilege. How could anyone listen to what they said if they did not practice it? As a result of this Paul says that the name of God was blasphemed among the Gentiles because of them. (Romans 2:21-24). We have somewhat the same problem existing today. The message may be good and right but if the messenger cannot bring his life in compliance with it, the result will be that God's way will be evil spoken of. Preachers need to preach to themselves first. This does not mean that the preacher must be perfect. Such a preacher does not exist. However, this does not excuse preachers in the pulpit who do not even make a good attempt at letting the gospel order their lives. The message of the gospel is greatly enhanced by a godly messenger. If we want to be 'meet for the Masters work', we must spend some time in working on our own spiritual life. When we encourage others to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord, we need to take heed. (2 Peter 3:18). Knowing God is an essential to being successful in the great work God has given to us.

The second essential that we want to consider is that the preacher must be prepared with a knowledge of the Word of God. Why would anyone attempt to teach another when he does not know the way? This world is filled with false teaching. Some of those who teach error are dishonest and prove it by the way they handle the word of truth. Others however, are honest but have been misled. This does not remove their guilt. Any teacher should study enough that he is sure that he is not misleading lost souls. Jesus warned about false teachers who would lead other men in the wrong direction and said that both shall fall into the ditch. (Matthew 15:14). We are urged to take heed to ourselves and to the doctrine so that we might save both ourselves and others. (1 Timothy 4:16). The greatest question any man could ask us is, "what must I do to be saved"? We must be prepared by study to give a correct answer. Peter urged us to be ready to give an answer for the hope we have within us. (1 Peter 3:15). That hope is not based on feeling or fantasy but on Biblical evidence. We must study to be able to give that hope to others. Bible ignorance becomes very apparent when it is displayed in the pulpit. People have a right to expect to hear Bible. They have a right to demand book, chapter and verse preaching. It is no wonder that we have people departing from the truth when all that they have heard is a steady diet of philosophers, think so's and speculation. When they become accustomed to this kind of preaching, they are unhappy with a man who quotes 'too much' scripture. Perhaps the reason we quote so little Bible is that we know little and do not want to put forth the time required to quote it. Certainly all preachers are busy with matters that seem very important but there needs to be a balance. Time must be given in visiting, and social activities but this must not take precedence over diligent study of God's word.

Any successful preacher must take his work seriously. Saving souls is not play. Many have reduced the gospel to the level of having fun and pleasure. While it is wrong to condemn all pleasure, the work of preaching goes beyond a ball game or party to keep someone coming to worship services. We are dealing with lost souls who are about to step into eternity unprepared to meet their God. There is nothing funny about a person going to Hell. This serious warning is given by James. "My

brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation," (James 3:1). This passage is a preface to some serious instruction concerning the use of the tongue. James is not telling us to refuse to teach. He rather is urging us to be aware of the responsibility that a teacher has. Our condemnation will be greater if we fail to appreciate the obligation we have to lost souls. A man should not preach unless he is fully aware of this fearful responsibility. We are dealing with lost souls. The soul is man's most precious possession. We own nothing that even compares with it in value. Jesus asked what a man would give in exchange for his soul. If we had the whole world and lost our soul, what would it profit? (Matthew 16:26). We cannot afford to deal lightly with the most important thing that any man possesses. Remember also, that we are advising people in view of eternity. If we are lost it will not be just for a day, a week or even a year. If we advise a man wrong and his soul is lost, there is no turning back. We cannot not afford to take this responsibility lightly. We must be serious about it.

There also must be a genuine love for lost souls. Think of the great love God had for the world. Paul states that God commends His love for us in that Christ died for us. (Romans 5:8,9). But further it must be noted that this gift of God's Son was not given for good people but for sinners. Jesus stated that those who are whole do not need a physician but those who are sick. He came as the great physician to save those who are sin-sick. (Luke 5:31,32). Stubborn and rebellious people were loved by God enough that He was willing to allow His own Son to die. Try to imagine a greater love than this. Remember also that Jesus willingly went to the cross for us. Jesus stated that He laid down his life by His own choice. He had power to lay it down or take it up. (John 10:17-18). His fleshly side struggled with the death on the cross but He said that God's will had to done. (Hebrews 5:7,8). The message of this great salvation has been committed to God's people. We are obligated to carry this message to the whole world. Only those who share this love for the lost will get the job done. If you are not moved by a burning desire to help lost souls, you certainly will not be effective. If you can be indifferent to lost souls going into eternity without ever hearing this message of God's love, you are not at all prepared to preach the gospel. If the thought of a burning Hell does not make you want to do all you can to help turn the lost from this destruction, you are not the one for this job. Paul reminds us that we are to speak the truth in love. (Ephesians 4:15). Motivated by love for the Lord, the gospel and lost souls we need to go about our mission. Some have been very critical of older preachers of the gospel because they spoke the truth with such great plainness. We are told that they were so harsh that they demonstrated a lack of love for the lost. What kind of love would have been shown had they been so soft and easy that they gave the impression to the lost that there did not need to be any change made in their lives? Those souls may have felt good from the watered down preaching they heard but this would do little good for them as they suffered the pain of Hell. You do not do a man a favor by making him feel good while he is lost and in need of salvation. He needs to be told plainly so he cannot misunderstand what God wants him to do. No one approves abusive and rude talk on the part of a preacher. This however is a far cry from the plain and simple teaching that brought so many to Christ in time past. Perhaps if we would return to the loving plainness of a few years ago, we would be able to build more strong churches that would stand for something. We must prepare our heart to do whatever is necessary to show the love of God to the lost. In speaking of the young ruler who came to Jesus to learn the way of salvation, it is stated that Jesus beholding him, loved him. (Mark 10:21). The fact that Jesus loved this young man did not cause Him to hold back truth that was needed for his salvation. Because Jesus loved him, He spoke to him about the truth even though this was not anxiously received. It would have been a false claim of love if the Lord had sidestepped the needs of His hearer. Preachers today must commit themselves to speaking

the truth in love without any compromise. This love for mankind should be a driving force in our preaching.

Another essential in our preparation for preaching the gospel is that we develop a spirit of sacrifice. We must sacrifice for the cause of Christ. Every preacher needs to know that the work he is doing for the Lord will call upon him to give up some things that he could use for himself. There will be demands on his time. There will be things that he would like to do that he will be called upon to give up. Preaching does not always help a man to adequately supply the money he needs or wants to care for himself and his family. This willingness to allow others to make demands on you and your family needs to be understood before committing to preaching. We are to present our bodies as living sacrifices. (Romans 12:1-2). We are not our own. We have been purchased by the blood of Christ. (1 Corinthians 6:19,20). We must deny self and take up our cross and follow Christ. (Matthew 16:24). Let us also note the fact that the same verses that require sacrifice on the part of preachers also require this of all Christians. Christ gave His life to save the lost. What are you willing to give in order to help the lost to be saved. Many preachers have quit preaching because they were not ready or willing to have others make demands of them. It is quite clear that there are times that people become unreasonable. Though this is hard to deal with, our commitment to the Lord must be able to weather these storms.

Finally in preparing ourselves for teaching the Word of God, we must be aware of the urgency of this work. Jesus said that He had to do the work of God while it is yet day for the night cometh when no man can work. (John 9:4). There are two events ahead of us that impress the need for urgency in our work. First, souls are dying every moment. Death is an appointment made for us. It is appointed for all to die. (Hebrews 9:27). The time of death for us or for one with whom we are working, is unknown. James compares our lives to a vapor that appears and then quickly vanishes. (James 4:13-15). If we do not teach the lost while we are yet alive, there is no opportunity. We will be lost if we fail in this God-given responsibility. Also the honest souls that might turn are not given the opportunity. How often do we hear of a person who seemed to be interested in the church, passing suddenly into eternity? How sad for all when one passes into eternity unprepared to meet his God. Our work demands urgency, not delay. A second reason that we need to work quickly in saving souls is the fact that at some unknown time, the Lord will return. No man knows when Jesus will return. (Matthew 24:36). When He does come there will not be time for us to go around trying to hurriedly wrap up loose ends. If we do not work now it will be too late at the time of Christ's return. If a person does not realize that he is engaged in the most important work possible and that his time is limited, he will not make an effective teacher of God's Word.

When a man has made proper preparation and goes forth to sow the seed of the gospel, God has promised that his labor would be fruitful. The Word of the Lord will not return to Him void. (Isaiah 55:11). We must plant the seed and God will give the increase.

Frank Higginbotham-Frank was born in New Martinsville, WV on February 21, 1933. Son of Mr. and Mrs. A.G. Higginbotham. Attended public schools and was graduated from Magnolia High School in New Martinsville. Was graduated from Florida Christian College in Tampa, FL. Began first located work with the Columbia Street Church of Christ in Fairmont, WV ('54-'56) and then moved to Wellsburg, WV ('56-'58) and then to West Street in Weirton, WV ('58-'64) and then to Chester, WV ('64- 0. Currently in 32th year of work with this congregation. Radio Preaching: WETZ in New Martinsville, WMMN in Fairmont, WEIR in Weirton, and WOHI in East Liverpool, OH. Television

Program: WSTV Steubenville. Conducts 8-10 meetings per year. Has been speaker on Ohio Valley College Lectures 5 times and on the Ohio Valley Lectures 21 times and the Greater Kanawha Valley Lectures 8 times. Married to the former Rose Marie King (1954). Two children: Amy Jane married to Brent Gallagher (Preacher at Oakwood Road Church of Christ, Fairmont, WV); and Steven Franklin (Preacher at Glasgow, KY).

'GROUND THE CHURCH IN HOPE'

J.D. CONLEY

It's hard to believe that we are already enjoying the third **West Virginia School of Preaching Lectures!** It is my fervent prayer that this wonderful lectureship will have a long and fruitful future. My deepest thanks to brother Daugherty, the faculty, and the Hillview Terrace elders for not only the invitation to speak but for their many hours of hard work invested in the school and in this lectureship. May God continue to bless the **West Virginia School of Preaching** in all that she undertakes for the Lord and His kingdom.

THE SABOTAGING OF HOPE

In times like these, perhaps as never before, there exists a dire need for God's people to be a people of hope. In recent years, even within our own brotherhood, hope has fallen into disrepute. Incredible as it is, many gospel preachers have attacked, ridiculed, and have belittled hope by falsely equating it with doubt, uncertainty, and a lack of faith. From our pulpits and classrooms good brethren have been scolded for saying, "I hope to go to heaven", instead of "I know I am going to heaven." It's as though "open season" has been declared on hope. But hope is good! Anyone who makes the gross mistake of lumping hope in with weakness, timidity, and doubt, is bereft of understanding hope's vital and necessary role in the Christian's life. Even Jeremiah whose hope was repeatedly dashed wrote: **"The Lord is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in him. It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord."** Lamentations 3: 24,26

WHAT IS HOPE AND WHAT IS NOT

One reason hope is held in disdain by some, is because there exists a wide misunderstanding of the word. Contrary to what many are espousing, hope is not just wishful thinking. Nor is it preoccupation with a fanciful idea, or trying to believe the impossible. Quite differently, hope is the earnest expectation of being rewarded by God, if we have lived faithfully. Hope is genuine anticipation founded not on whims and dreams, but rather on promises from the Creator whom we're told cannot lie! It's noteworthy that one of the passages which declares God cannot lie, Titus 1:2, has as its subject matter, "the hope of eternal life"! Listen to how Paul, by the Holy Spirit worded this particular verse; **"in hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, promised before times eternal."** What does God promise in this verse? Hope of eternal life. But not only are we told what God promised, we are also told that He cannot lie about what He has promised! This verse alone conclusively shows that hope is much more than a capricious flirt with the future, here in the present! Conversely, our hope is grounded in God for who He is, what He has done and what He will do. That is reason enough to hope. W.E. Vine defined the word "hope" as it is used in the New Testament as: "favorable and confident expectation." Thus, we can see from its usage in the New Testament that hope can in no way be associated with doubt, suspicion or wonder.

THE ONE HOPE

In times like these there are many things for which people hope. The gambler hopes to win the lottery. The drunkard hopes for finding another drink. The junkie looks forward to another "high". The thief desires one more "big job". The liar hopes the truth will never come out. The homosexual hopes to sway the majority over to their way of thinking and practice. The politician wants one more vote. Therefore, since our society today has such an affixation with the wrong kinds of hope, it's crucial that we as God's children guard the hope which Christ and His word provides.

While the apostle Paul was unjustly serving a prison term, he wrote a letter to the church of Christ in Ephesus declaring: "**There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling.**" (Ephesians 4:4) Considering the vast array of things people are placing their hope and trust in today, this "one hope" of which the apostle writes is certainly a point of intrigue. But Paul does not say that a variety of hopes do not exist in the world, the contrary is sadly apparent. The point he is making is that Christians are to have the same hope. Why? Because there is only one thing worth hoping for in this life. There is only one hope that matters, therefore we as Christians must rally around this one hope and make it our common goal in life. But specifically, what is this "one hope"? Elsewhere in his epistles, Paul sheds a significant amount of light on this question. We have already considered the emphasis of Titus 1:2. In Titus 3:7 Paul writes again of "**the hope of eternal life.**" In 1 Thessalonians 5:8 he urges his complacent brethren to wake up to the fact that they are in a battle with Satan. He tells them to "**...be sober putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation.**" The apostle Peter as well pleads with us to "**Gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.**" 1 Peter 1:13. Therefore, it is incontrovertible that the "one hope" Paul wrote about in Ephesians 4:4, is the hope of being eternally saved in heaven! Having been reminded of this glorious truth let us uproot any trust we have in this fleeting world and ever heed these words, "**Set your mind on things that are above, not on the things that are upon the earth.**" Colossians 3:2.

THE VITAL NEED FOR HOPE

Not only does God's word clearly define what the "one hope" is, but it is just as clear in informing us of our need to believe and trust in this "one hope". In the past two or three decades it seems our brotherhood has embraced two extreme attitudes concerning the hope of eternal life. In one camp we find those who are dogmatic about their salvation and boldly proclaim, "I know I'm going to heaven when I die!" While on the other hand we have brethren who have just about come to the conclusion that making it to heaven is an impossibility. Both of these mindsets are out of line with scripture! Why? Because the first eliminates hope from the picture altogether while the second doesn't even give hope a chance. In both viewpoints hope is excluded. Brethren, the Bible teaches us to hope! Therefore, let it be said again, there is nothing wrong with hoping to go to heaven. Saying, "I hope to go to heaven one day", is right and good and harmonious with the teachings of the New Testament. On the other hand taking hope out of the picture altogether and saying, "I know I'm going to heaven one day", smacks of pride and overconfidence. Consider this question, "How can we know (beyond a doubt) that we will be faithful to the Lord ten years from now, or five years,

or even next year?" Can we foresee the future? The same apostle who has said so much about hope warns, **"Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."** 1 Corinthians 10:12. Is it possible to know whether or not we are in a saved relationship with the Lord right now? Yes. Can we know without a doubt that we will be in the future? How can we? By all means let us intend and hope to be!

Just as overconfidence should be kept in check so should a lack of confidence be brought up to par with regard to our eternal salvation. Some in the church have a depressing notion that because Jesus taught only a "few" will be saved, that that truth forever prevents them from being in that number. They fail to understand that the very mention of a "few" by our Lord gives them hope, and indeed they can be in that number. Folks of this sentiment need to be reminded that the Lord indeed is going to save some people and that He is merciful. But more importantly, as it pertains to our discussion, it is our hope and trust in the Lord, that is going to be a vital catalyst in our salvation. Without hope salvation can never be won. The apostle Paul wrote, **"We are saved by hope; but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why does he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it."** Romans 8:24,25. Paul explicitly affirms, "We are saved by hope." So in order to be saved, we must hope to be saved. We mustn't throw up our hands and say "What's the use?" We shouldn't reason that it's silly for foolish to hope. We needn't think either that all the people that are going to be saved have already died. Rest assured that as long as you are alive, your hope of being saved is alive. Listen carefully to part of the last verse of 1 Corinthians 13, **"And now abideth faith, hope, and charity...."** Paul here is telling us that hope abides, that is, it remains, it is in existence with us, so it is no more foolish to hope than it is to love or have faith. Hope is just as vital to our salvation as obedient faith and a benevolent spirit! Without hope our love for others and our faith in God would be significantly diminished, thus so would our prospects of being saved. Remember, not only is our salvation conditioned upon faith and works, but also on hope. Hebrews 3:6 says, **"But Christ as a son over his own house; whose house we are, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end."** Knowing these things let us ever press onward to the goal!

THINGS THAT PRODUCE AND INCREASE HOPE

In times like these when gloom and despair are etched in the lives of countless millions it would do us well as God's people to seek after things that will produce hope in our lives. After all in Hebrews 6: 18,19 it teaches that hope is a stabilizing force in our lives. **"That ...we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast..."**

Foremost, the promises of Jesus ought to produce a surplus of hope in our lives. We sing "Standing On The Promises" but how many of us, because of a shortage of hope, have slipped from where we once stood? Rest assured Jesus hasn't moved! He still wants all people to learn of Him in order to provide rest for their souls. Matthew 11: 28-30. His word still stands for the Christian who longs for His return and an eternal dwelling place with Him. John 14: 1-3. Therefore, if we want our hope increased, our faith must be strengthened, because as Hebrews 11:1 teaches, **"Faith is the substance of things hoped for."** From this verse we learn that faith and hope are inextricably linked

together. Both rise and fall together. Faith undergirds hope. Without faith hope falls. It necessarily follows then that a shortage of hope is due to a shortage of faith. To increase our faith and consequently our hope, we must **"hear the word of God"**. Romans 10:17.

Studying the lives of the apostles can produce and increase our hope. To know that Paul referred to himself as **"the chief of sinners"** before he obeyed the Lord, gives us hope of our salvation. Consider that even after he obeyed the gospel, he still recognized that he had shortcomings in his life. He acknowledged to the church at Philippi, **"Not that I have already obtained, or am already made perfect; brethren, I count not myself yet to have laid hold."** Philippians 3:12a,13a. In essence Paul is confessing, "I'm still not all I ought to be". The important thing was, as he went on to say, was the fact that he was ever striving to be all God wanted him to be. May we not overlook Paul's motivating factor, which was hope! His goal was **"the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus"**. Philippians 3:14. Who among us would doubt the apostle Paul's salvation? His life, not sinless by any means, but mature in Christ, ought to always produce hope in our life.

Consider Peter who on more than one occasion marred his association with Christ by making rash statements and acting out of turn. While the Lord was yet in the flesh and dwelling among us, Peter was guilty of rebuking the Lord, Matthew 16:22. In turn Jesus stingingly rebuked Peter by calling him Satan, and referred to him as a stumbling block, vs. 23. Then of course who can forget the three times Peter blatantly denied that he even knew Jesus, not only that but according to Mark these denials were coupled with swearing and cursing on Peter's part! Mark 14:71. Even many years after Jesus ascension back to heaven Paul rebuked Peter to his face for the hypocrisy he had displayed to appease some Jews, Galatians 2:11,12. So Peter too, just as Paul, was not perfect. Peter had many of the same faults we have. But as with Paul, who among us would question the salvation of Peter? Because of Peter's perseverance he was able to overcome his shortcomings and was able to later write these hope giving words, **"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to his great mercy begat us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, unto an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you."** 1 Peter 1:3,4.

A PLEA FOR A RENEWAL OF HOPE

Time and space do not permit a discussion on all the things from God's word that provide us hope. But the promises of Christ and the lives of Paul and Peter ought to be sufficient to ground the church in hope! Brethren, we can go to heaven! It's not impossible! But on the other hand it's not a cinch either! If we make it there, it won't be by accident or because of half-hearted efforts. It will be because we purposed in our hearts to go there and lived our lives accordingly. In times like these certainly we can see this wicked world is not our home. Our home is in heaven. Jesus is now preparing it for our arrival. Peter said it's reserved for you and I. Jesus is planning and is intending for us to live with Him one day, are you? It's my hope that in times like these you are. **"For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel....if ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard."** Colossians 1:5,23a.

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GROUND THE CHURCH IN WORSHIP

Dan Kessinger

In times like these...is a description of urgency. Indeed, the great kingdom of God is at a crossroads in her journey, and in times like these, choices will be made over a variety of issues. We are not so naive as to believe that all choices are created equal, neither do we choose a road less traveled because of its disuse; we seek old paths, not for antiquity but destination. We believe in answers, we believe in being grounded. By "grounding" we mean supplying a basis, foundation, or justification for action.

In whatever times we see during our pilgrimage, servants of the Lord will always find it necessary to thus be grounded. In times like these, when change and decay in all around I see, answers are still evident. In times like these, when worshipers have cast themselves adrift with no anchor, no rules, and no end in sight, we need the Lord's foundation. In times like these, when trivial societal change is proudly trumpeted as the rallying point for perverting the church, we need Divine justification for worship of the almighty. We need to ground the church in worship.

GROUNDING THE CHURCH IN THE CONCEPT OF WORSHIP

While men might on rare circumstances obey the laws of God by coincidence or personal preference alone, they never are pleasing to him under such ignorant circumstances. This is due to the fact that obedience to God is rooted in submission to him and his rightful authority. Those who would serve God need to understand those commands they have been given. This does not suggest that every detail, implication, reference and reason is perceptible to human eyes, but rather that commands misunderstood are commands disobeyed.

Some of the problems faced by the Church today in leaving the New Testament pattern of worship stem from misunderstanding of the very concept. For years the concept of proper worship was given high priority in our pulpits, but many evidently believed these basics of worship had been so thoroughly worked that this ground was left fallow for a generation. But a new generation arose that, like Pharaoh of old, did not remember. We learn a painful lesson about the basics when we forget to teach them.

Many have thus violated God's laws governing worship because of ignorance. Let us observe and define some important words dealing with worship, beginning with the word "Worship", translated from the Greek word "Proskeneo", which means to adore, prostrate, or to "kiss the hand of."¹ "Worship" is an evolution of the Old English word "Worthship", itself an indication of the mind of worship. Acceptable worship demands recognition of the superiority of God by the worshiper, a fact in harmony with the use of a word describing such acts of humble approach. Variations often describe objects of worship or the worshiper, but all suggest special reverence or homage paid. (Rom. 1:25, Acts 17:23, II Th. 2:4)

Properly defining worship remedies much difficulty, since many are confused about the most basic issue of worship, the object. Some have virtually suggested that we worship ourselves, and their demands have little or nothing to do with pleasing God. They forthrightly speak of "horizontal worship"² threatening us with the departure of a dissatisfied element. They proclaim worship to be for the benefit of man, since God himself needs nothing we have to offer (Acts 17:25). While true

that God needs not praise, to conclude and command in human-oriented worship is chillingly wrong.

Consider our current travail over "special music," as it pertains to the object of our worship. Some sprint over worship thresholds where angels never trod, evidently believing the change of scenery more important than the destination. They claim great concern for the church of the next generation, believing there are many acceptable and beneficial methods of worship which are not being utilized. Are we worshipping God or ourselves? Who gets chosen to sing the solos and in these choirs and quartets? Is it not the ones with the most entertaining voices? Special music in our assemblies is an example of some wanting to entertain us by worshipping ourselves.

We also should deal with the Greek word "Latreo." Though sometimes translated "worship" (Acts 7:42, 24:14, Phil 3:3 in KJV), versions which so render Ro. 12:1 ("service", KJV) do so with little justification. This wording is widely utilized to call all of Christian service worship, thus de-formalizing it. There are some texts available which readily illustrate the distinction between service and worship.

EXO 23:24 "You shall not bow down to their gods, nor serve them, nor do according to their works; but you shall utterly overthrow them and completely break down their {sacred} pillars. (NKJ)

MAT 4:9 And he said to Him, "All these things I will give You if You will fall down and worship me." (NKJ)

Certainly all of worship is service, but to thus render Ro. 12:1, as do the RSV, NIV, and NASV, is a mistake. The context and common usage in both testaments declare otherwise. (Acts 8:27)³

In light of God's imperative to "worship in spirit and truth" (Jno. 4:24), churches that would be grounded in worship ought to be familiar with both of these concepts. "Spirit" (Pneuma) is a word that "indicates our truest, deepest, noblest parts."⁴ If so, the proper spirit of worship must be bound in humility, consistency and awe-stricken devotion, as well evidenced in the Psalms.

PSA 51:17 The sacrifices of God {are} a broken spirit, A broken and a contrite heart - These, O God, You will not despise. (NKJ)

PSA 90:1 Lord, You have been our dwelling place in all generations. (NKJ)

PSA 100:5 For the Lord {is} good; His mercy {is} everlasting, And His truth {endures} to all generations. (NKJ)

PSA 119:97 Oh, how I love Your law! It {is} my meditation all the day. (NKJ)

Likewise, Christians need to understand the vitality of truth (Alethia) as commanded in John 4:24. These qualities are equally important; the same God commanded both. Vincent suggested that "Alethia" here demands a service "corresponding to the nature of its object."⁵ While this is true, it fails to tell the entire story, as only God has the sovereign right to decide which service appropriately serves him. We are dealing with the responsibility of the worshiper to identify the God he worships, and based upon the worthiness of the Almighty, to adhere to the actions he requires. In no era has it ever been appropriate to simply select the form of worship which seems most meaningful at the time.

In the judgement of this author, we have inappropriately categorized and compartmentalized "truth" and "spirit" in ways misleading. Indeed they are separate and distinctive elements, but to find one perfected where the other is lacking is rare. We wonder, when the infamous words "play on Miss Bertha" were uttered in Thorp Springs Texas, was it only a violation of truth, or were Addison Clark

et. al. also guilty of an evil spirit of division? Have we forgotten the evil intent of those determined to have their own way despite entreaties in tears?

Just as surely as a violation of the truth of worship reveals errors of Spirit, one who worships in truth with a poor attitude has no real motivation for purity in truth. If he really has no devotion in spirit, why object to the perversion of worship's truth?

(Matthew 15:7-9 NKJ)

(7) "Hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy about you, saying: (8) `These people draw near to Me with their mouth, and honor Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. (9) And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.'"

GROUNDING THE CHURCH IN THE PROPRIETY OF WORSHIP

If we have properly understood the meaning of worship, we may then proceed to the vital question of authority and propriety. In no circumstance is the attitude of a servant more evident than in his action as a worshiper. One of the many factors separating the Lord's Church from synthetic creations of men is the worship she renders. Time and space will not permit the examination of every issue, but we shall strive to give a biblical answer to some popular contentions that threaten our foundation.

Before we examine specifics, we need to consider the issue of authority. According to Col. 3:17, everything the Christian does must have authority from above; there is no exception to this rule. When the question of authority is raised, many believe that things of no consequence are not authorized, whereas only those issues specifically demanded by scripture are. In fact, if any activity is unauthorized, it is sinful. The Bible authorizes in various ways, and in varying degrees. Some activities are mandated through command, example, or implication. Others are matters of wisdom, expediency or convenience by the same 3 methods. Others are matters of indifference, but all of the above are in the scope of authority. This is old ground, but vital and true.

We are generally authorized, or permitted to act based on a general understanding of God's word. We do not find a law permitting us to drive a car, for the subject is not addressed. However, God's word instructs us in principle on how to drive one (subject to the law of the land), and generally authorizes its use as a tool. It may also be pointed out that singing has both general and specific authority, as do many commands. Jesus told us to "preach", but we may select any number of avenues which do not violate his commands or example, and thus are authorized.

When God has instructed us, we are not free to amend, abolish, or otherwise alter that command. God has not told us which songs to sing, but he has told us what kind. Thus, we are free to choose to sing any "psalm, hymn or spiritual song" which is faithful to him and know it is authorized. Had God instructed us to simply "praise", we would be free to choose the method we felt most effective. He did not. When God speaks directly to an action, that action alone is authorized, all others are sinful. When God speaks directly concerning a method, that method alone is authorized, all others are sinful. Our "ground" is authority.

Though some assumed "everyone in the church" understood why churches of Christ did not use a mechanical instrument of music, such was not the case. Thus, a frightening and discouraging number of our younger generation believes instruments of music sinful in worship. The reasons for this great failure are many. We have lost some to the leftover philosophical fumes of the 60's generation which taught the mutual exclusiveness of love and law keeping. Others were never impressed with the anger of a God whose authority is ignored. I fear others learned that it was

acceptable to sing hymns with instruments everywhere but the "sanctuary," and saw the inconsistency. Still others were simply never taught, as a corresponding generation of preachers feared controversy.

The Bible still forbids the use of instrumental music. It does so primarily because we have no authority for such, and the specificity of the command belies and attempt to interpret instruments into the equation. Likewise, examination of pertinent words reinforce the case for a capella music exclusively.

For instance, consider the form of "Psallo", translated "making melody" in Ep. 5:19. Much has been written of this word's etymology in an effort to press it into service as an unwilling bondservant to those interested in using instrumental music in worship. Words change with time, and indeed this one once described the plucking of an instrument string, as a harp is plucked. Unfortunately, in New Testament times, it is not used in this fashion, but had become generalized in just the way we see described in our English text. No credible version has ever translated the word in the way wished by some, for the simple reason that etymology does not define a word in current usage. In previous times, the word described any kind of plucking, including a bow string. Keep in mind that Ep. 5:19 also designates the place of "psallo" as well: that being in the heart.

Throughout the entire passage there is a contrast implied between the Heathen and the Christian practice. When you meet, let your enjoyment consist, not in fulness of wine, but fulness of Spirit; let your songs be, not the drinking-songs of heathen feasts, but psalms and hymns; and their accompaniment, not the music of the lyre, but the melody of the heart; while you sing them to the praise, not of Bacchus or Venus, but of the Lord Jesus Christ. ⁶

Have we given serious thought to simple command to sing? Have we forgotten that singing means words? One local televangelist on the Wheeling station has a theme song with a full band in an exciting melody. As the music fades into the beginning of the show, one can barely hear the lyrics begin with "Jesus is.....". Is what? I think it may be "the key", but I've never been sure. Or consider a scene from movies and television of the funeral of police officer. It must be traditional in some areas for "Amazing Grace" to be played on the bagpipes at the burial. It is a touching and hauntingly unique melody on the old Scottish instrument. But this grand old hymn is reduced to "blare, blare...blare, blare...blare, blare...blare, blare" etc., when piped and not sung.

Today, the Latin phrase "A Capella" means singing without mechanical instruments. But literally, it means "like the chapel", or "like the church". Clearly at some point it was known by all that a different way of singing was practiced in worship to God than on other occasions, and this was without instrumental music.

No major version has ever translated a verse relevant to singing with words "playing" or anything like that. Jesus and the Apostles did not use it, though the Bible records their singing (Mt. 26:30)(Acts 16:25)(I Cor. 14:15)(Romans 15:9). No one calling himself a Christian practiced instrumental singing until the advent of Pope Vitalian in 660 A.D., authority at the wrong time and from the wrong source. No credible historian will today make the case for the 1st century Church having used instrumental music in worship. After its initial introduction, it proved so troublesome it was withdrawn and not re-introduced until 800 AD, and not accepted widely in the day of Thomas Aquinas in the 1200s. If pleasing to God, why didn't the primitive church realize the value of its use. If indifferent, why did the Church only begin using them after 600 years? If innocent, why has it divided virtually every religious group?

Grounding the church in worship will prevent our losing innocents to the ravages of instrumental music. The church, which vowed to remember the malignancy of the melodeon, forgot

for the sake of union. The change agents among us pervert the truth of worship, tear the fabric of authority that clothes us and command acceptance of the very instrument that divided us, and my people love to have it so. Without the honesty to leave the Bride they hate, they make disciples more hell spawned than themselves. At the "Nashville Jubilee", and the "Tulsa Soul Winning Workshop", among others, they shipwreck the faith of thousands. Marvin Philips, architect of the Tulsa Workshop, recently stated in Gallipolis Ohio in a speech to the local Christian church, that "if we understood the Lordship of Christ we would not make instrumental music an issue." And my people love to have it so.

Being grounded in the propriety of worship also implies that we resist experimentation in areas of potential harm. Our lack of grounding is evidenced in the numbers of our young people who spend their time and money listening to such artists as Amy Grant. Several years ago, I read an interview with Amy Grant. A reporter followed her backstage as she prepared for one of her concerts where a dozen roses were awaiting her. When she read the attached card she became furious. It said "we love you and wish you would repent." She then launched into a vicious tirade against the close minded religious tyrants who dared oppose her. I have no idea who sent those roses, but the only possible error made was perhaps in casting pearls before swine.

Others flock to hear such "a capella" groups as AVB. We are dismayed by the willingness to support this nonsense by demanding specific condemnation of simulated instrumental music. Seeking loopholes in the law of God is, if not a forbidden practice, certainly a non-Christian attitude.

Being grounded in worship reminds us again of the "special music" controversy. We have generally avoided the use of such music in assemblies, but have widely utilized it in special settings. We now hear a call for a more widespread use of special music in assemblies among those who suggest change for change's sake. A deep rift is developing between two factions, as always is the case when worship evolves. The reason is simple: when one changes worship, he changes it for all, not just for himself. On the other side of the ledger, some opponents of special music are now beginning to question the wisdom of ever encouraging the use of special music, in or out of assembly.

There is no example of special music in the New Testament. Some would attempt to abuse I Cor 14:26 into an example of Special Music, but this argument has no basis. It simply refers to a miraculously endowed individual, and says he has a song, not a solo. He may be teaching a new song, or he may be leading a song. The miraculous context indicates he may be "composing" by the Spirit a new song. Much of this epistle was written to discourage the very practice so popular in religion today: using assembly to perform rather than worship.

We must seek several goals in worship. First and foremost, we must strive to be pleasing to God. In pleasing him we must exercise care that we are not crossing the boundaries and that we are not creating new ones. The participants in singing have been clearly revealed: all Christians are obligated to sing. The reflexive commands of Ep. 5:19 and Col. 3:16 demand it. At the same time, it overstates the case to say that any individual singing is unauthorized. If true, it would also be sinful to have bass and alto, and tenor leads. We would certainly be forced to give up singing as is common in weddings and funerals and other settings. Current limited use of special music neither justifies nor condemns, but does suggest a vulnerable inconsistency.

While it is difficult to dogmatically condemn special music in any dose or setting, it clearly fails as a substitute for congregational singing. Being grounded demands not only examination of current actions, but also of likely destinations. The limited use of select singing groups may not

violate the letter of the law, but it reeks of stretching the borders.

It would seem our best course is always to encourage all who are able and willing to praise God, as we would invite all to pray. Few would have a select group of folks praying, but many see little danger in inviting only a few to sing (I Cor. 6:12). The results of our extensive use of special music in alternative settings has been disastrous. We have become enamored with the groups to the omission of teaching and praise in song. Our college choruses sing Latin hymns, quartets invite the swaying of bodies, the clapping of hands and become wealthy from this tossed salad of worship and entertainment. The Biblical aim for full participation has been discarded in favor of good theater.

Today, we often hear of digressive congregations using exclusively new music which is written on overhead projectors. The projector is a perfectly acceptable tool, but the style seems to have become the focal point of new worship, not the substance. A grounded worshiper realizes that a projector and a songbook are equally authorized; he must also see there is no great inherent virtue in discarding songbooks, except to cause one to be very proud of his forward thinking.

Many of our erring brethren are also rapidly changing the songs that are being sung, serving several purposes. Since the New Hermeneutic is new, it serves to delineate between the old church, and the de facto new church. The faces and the address may be the same, but in practice it is truly a new organization. Like the "Lordship Baptism" of the multiplying ministries, new songs have become part of a new church order.

New songs serve as cover noise to draw attention away from other new practices. If people are convinced that change is automatically good, the larger agenda can be pursued unmolested. If we constantly use "contemporary Christian" artists as a source for songs, then we become familiar with these songs and learn to accept the artists and the practice. Furthermore, we can bridge the gap between a cappella and instrumental music with the rhythmic clapping of hands.

Changes in music should not be taken lightly. If not significant, the enemies of peace in the Lord's church would not so consistently make these changes! Even the goal of spontaneity in worship is not a Biblical mandate. The Bible nowhere commands or such spontaneity, while neither condemning so as long as it is spontaneously decent and in order.

A proper ground for worship will preclude the use of certain songs. I have no wish to be the judge of all the songs my brethren sing, but not all songs are correct, and we must sing "scripturally." We mean by this is that the words of the song teach no error, and that they in fact do teach something good. Songs are not obligated to be literally true, as this is not the function of any kind of poetry, including Bible poetry.

PSA 58:3 The wicked are estranged from the womb; They go astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies. (NKJ)

Clearly, this is what we call hyperbole, or exaggeration for effect. With regard to songs, this is called "Poetic License," and those who object to it reveal ignorance of the songs of the Bible.

Just as there is often a misunderstanding of the nature of poetry in song, sometimes we understand all too well. Take "Jesus is coming Soon," a song sung frequently but with little or no consideration of its message. The title tells a lie, and it quotes and cites Mt. 24 throughout in order to make the case for the imminent return of Jesus. "When these signs come to pass, nearing the end at last"- What signs? Jesus said in Mt. 24 there would be no sign of his coming, all of the signs dealt with the destruction of Jerusalem. This song teaches premillennialism as clearly as it can, and some refuse to see it because they love the melody or wish to avoid controversy. We honor the notion of poetic license, but we are obligated to be sensible.

We have been bequeathed some wonderful songs with grand poetry of the highest order. Try

improving on "How Great Thou Art" (Alton Howard tried and failed). Read or sing "O Sacred Head" without chills down the spine and tears in the eye. Or how about even "Amazing Grace", proof that even the simple can be sublime. Some suggest we ought not sing songs like "Night with Ebon Pinion" because people can't understand it. Rather, we need to be more literate and learn great lyrics. To reject great songs because we no longer read well and often enough to understand deeper more meaningful words is akin to replacing Shakespeare with a sitcom!

Grounding the church in worship includes propriety in communion. Failure to be thus grounded has resulted in a violation of truth in the day of observation, and spirit in its intent. In an effort to "lighten the atmosphere" of communion, some have decided the purpose of communion to be something other than the memorial of the death of our Lord. These teach its purpose to discern "the oneness of the body", in reference to church.⁷

1CO 11:29 For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. (NKJ)

This agenda based interpretation belies the stated purpose of Jesus in establishing his feast, and is inconsistent with the literal use of the word "body" throughout I Cor. 11. Those who insist that "body" means "church" want communion to celebrate the congregation, precisely as the condemned Corinthians were doing. They also ought to identify what "blood" is, if the "body" is the Church here.

1CO 11:27 Therefore whoever eats this bread or drinks {this} cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. (NKJ)

We wonder why authors like Cecil Hook are received by brethren as he writes concerning the Lord's Supper. We bemoan a lack of grounding concerning the day of observance and are reminded of God's instructions to Aaron concerning the Ark of the Covenant and the Day of Atonement. Hook says:

If its purpose is to make us think on the atonement, then what difference does it make at what hour or on what day we do it, or if we do it twice on a day or several times weekly?⁸

What difference indeed? What difference did it make concerning the Day of Atonement? Could we use his reasoning to anticipate a blessing for additional unauthorized days to celebrate God's atonement? God said:

LEV 16:2 and the Lord said to Moses: "Tell Aaron your brother not to come at {simply} any time into the Holy {Place} inside the veil, before the mercy seat which {is} on the ark, lest he die; for I will appear in the cloud above the mercy seat. (NKJ)

The real issue is not whether rebels understand the potential benefit of authorized, specific holy days, but whether God has identified and sanctified such days.

Many dismiss Acts 20:7 as merely coincidental or non-binding. We should consider the situation described in the previous verses, and not resort to such shallow proof texting. Paul was hurrying to Jerusalem for the Passover, yet he tarried at Troas 6 days. If it were acceptable to commune on any day one chose, why didn't Paul? Why do we have no contrary example? Why is the first day of the week the only day mentioned in all of I Corinthians, which deals extensively with worship abuse, particularly communion abuse?

As we conclude our lesson on grounding the church in worship, we turn our attention to the concept of experimentation. There surely are some things about the churches of Christ that are different not because of Scriptural mandate. Some of these are purely the product of tradition, but others represent a desire to avoid things lacking a sure basis. We wonder what is so valuable on the border of God's law that is absent from the center. What is the great virtue of such experimentation,

except for the chaos it is sure to cause?

In some "progressive" congregations, the role of women in worship has undergone change which is quite noticeable. They are leading in areas never before explored by our brethren, some in direct violation of Scripture. We have women teaching men in public classes, and leading prayers in mixed audiences. It is not my purpose to address these concepts since the inspired apostle has already done so and those interested in the truth on these issues can find it very plainly. But how about some other areas? Can a woman pass a communion or collection plate? Can she lead singing? Analysis of these roles reveals their absence of direct revelation in governing them, though certainly implied by God's commands to commune, sing, and give. Do these roles constitute leadership in violation of the principle of I Timothy 2:11-15?

At a glance, it appears there is no authority or leadership in the passing of a plate. Song leading, even though we have no specific instruction concerning who shall lead and who shall refrain, should be seen in a different category, i.e., it is absurd to claim there is no leadership in an activity that contains the word "leader". Still, many change advocates claim they are not seeking to break God's laws, and cite opposition to innovation as the leaven and legacy of the Pharisees. Ergo, the Church of Christ is nothing more than a Christian era sect, brothers under the skin with the hated Pharisees, guided by nothing but custom and tradition more restrictive than the Bible.

Perhaps opposition to such change is based on something other than only preference. Bitter experience has taught the Church to suspect a covert agenda in her restless element. Even if suspicions prove groundless, it is perhaps more accurate and certainly more charitable to characterize the reluctance to explore new roles for women as erring on the side of caution than the authoritarian rebellion of the Pharisees. We observe the call for these new "non leadership" roles proceeding from the same lips who also tell us that other admitted leadership roles would also be permissible. We wonder if this is coincidence and doubt it.

As this controversy continues to rear its ugly and divisive head, the disputants should not only ask if the passing of plates and leading of songs is permissible, but why it is such a priority. If this is not intended as a "soften up" blow to the midsection of the Church, why is it so relentlessly pursued and consistently practiced by those who believe women should preach, lead prayers and oversee? It is part of an ungodly agenda, and many brethren have yet to even suspect the knockout blow!

A rebellious spirit is as witchcraft, according to God's great prophet Samuel. The Christian is urged to be as faithful as he possibly can, to strive for godliness with all his being.

MAT 22:37 Jesus said to him, " 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.' (NKJ)

There is a basis, a foundation, and grounds for every action of service to God. This grounding process does not begin with his word, it concludes there. Being grounded does not begin with our information as we close the text, but with our hearts as we open it and begin to learn. Only seekers find.

ENDNOTES

¹ Strong, James Strong's Exhaustive Concordance, (Abingdon Press Nashville 1978) "Proskuneo" p 62 in Greek Dictionary

² Hook, Cecil Free in Christ, (New Branfels TX, 1988) p 87

³ Workman, Gary "What is Worship?" Spiritual Sword 24:2 (1/93)

pp 4-9

⁴ Vincent, Marvin R Vincent's Word Studies Vol 4 (MacDonald Pub. Co. MacLean Va) p 121

⁵ Ibid

⁶ W.J. Conybeare and J.S. Howsen The Life and Epistles of St. Paul (The S.S. Scranton Company Hartford Conn) p 775

⁷ Op. Cit. Hook, p 15

⁸ Ibid

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Dan graduated from Walton High School in Roane County, and received the A.S. and the B.S. each in Biblical Science from Ohio Valley College.

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GROUND THE CHURCH IN DISCIPLINE

Don Cooper

Introduction

Church Discipline Neglected, Study Reveals" is the title of an article which appeared in the August 1997 issue of the Gospel Advocate. The writer, Bob Whiddon, who preaches for the Eastside church in Portland, Oregon, says "The results of a survey taken last year show a disturbing trend in the practice of church discipline". I strongly suggest that every preacher and elder obtain a copy of that article and read it carefully and prayerfully.

When the apostle Paul warned Timothy that "perilous times" would come (2 Timothy 3:1) and that men would some day reject "sound doctrine" and that they would "turn away their ears from the truth" (4:3,4), he spoke not only of that day and age but most assuredly of the times in which we now live. And, the charge that he issued to the young gospel preacher, Timothy, becomes the charge given to anyone today who desires to preach the gospel of Christ. He (Paul) wrote, "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine" (4:2). Thus, preachers of today must accept the challenge to preach the truth on every subject, realizing that it will sometimes fall on deaf ears, and at times will cause quite a stir, even among those who profess to be followers of Christ. Preaching Christ is not easy at times. It is often times the most difficult task one might choose.

But, those who preach ought to remember that preaching Christ involves more than the first principles of salvation. When Jesus commissioned His apostles to go and "teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost", He further instructed them to teach the believers to "observe all things" that He had taught His apostles (Matthew 28:19,20). As we progress in our study we shall see that this included matters that necessitated forms of discipline. The apostles diligently obeyed Christ's commands in all things. Paul declared himself to be "pure from the blood of all men" because he had "not shunned to declare...all the counsel of God" (Acts 20:26,27). And, this he had done publicly and privately (vs 20).

As we pursue our subject, let us ask ourselves what Christ, Paul, Peter or any of the apostles and early evangelists would have to say today on the subject of discipline in the church. And, let us always be mindful that the church is to be the "pillar and ground of truth" (1 Timothy 3;15). We, the church, are expected to act upon what we know is true. Our actions must always agree with the "inspired of God" scriptures (2 Tim.3:16,17).

Defining Our Subject

First, what is meant by **Ground**? According to Webster's dictionary: (a) the data, premises, or evidence on which a conclusion, a theory, a belief, etc. rests for support, (b) hence, sufficient good reason or ground for complaint.

Next, what is meant by **Discipline**? It really generally means instruction and includes training which corrects, molds, strengthens or perfects. W. E. Vine: "Sophronismo, from Sophron, lit. saving the mind", as used in 2 Timothy 1:7. Some translations use the word "discipline" in place of "sound mind". McCord uses "good sense." Thus, the objective of those who teach God's word is to search for and then teach others the truth which is able to build us up and give us an inheritance

with those who are sanctified (Acts 20:32).

This lesson is focusing primarily on the church. However, the same principles of discipline used in keeping the church strong and pure will also keep the home intact and will help prevent failures in marriage and child rearing. There are basically three means of discipline which I would like to address in this lecture.

Instructive Discipline

As we noted earlier, part of carrying out the great commission is teaching those whom we convert to observe all that our Lord has taught in His word (Matt. 28:20). The book of Acts is filled with examples of such preaching that not only converted Jew and Gentile from their former ways, but also offered instruction and correction when dissension arose (Acts 6; 15, etal.). Not only is the word to be used to instruct doctrinally, but it is to be used to instruct one about morality. We are to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts and live ¹¹soberly, righteously and godly in this present world" (Titus 2:12). This teaching must be done by preachers, elders and other holy men (2 Tim. 2:2). God's word is sufficient to guide man spiritually and morally (2 Peter 1:3). It is the responsibility of elders to see that the church, the flock of God, is properly fed (Acts 20:28). This they do themselves and with the help of faithful and qualified teachers and preachers who are willing to fearlessly "preach the word". Thus, the **minds** of those who listen and take heed to what they hear **are saved**, or **disciplined** through proper instruction. May the day never come when we abandon efforts to preach the gospel of Christ which is able to save our souls (Romans 1:16). Nothing builds the church like sound preaching. There is no substitute for that which God decreed. When men, according to their own wisdom, devise means and methods contrary to God's way it ultimately will lead to failure (Isaiah 55:8,9)

Corrective Discipline

But, it is obvious that many who profess to follow Christ choose to ignore His instructions by engaging in sin, either doctrinally or morally. What must we do? We must first recognize that God has given us directions for dealing with such. We might call this step number two. We ought not neglect to give proper instruction to the body of Christ. However, if that is shunned, we should move swiftly to the next step which involves efforts to correct the situation. This is called in the Scriptures "restoring" the erring (Galatians 6:1). Notice that the "spiritual" have an obligation to restore the "erring"¹¹ brother(s). And, we must not forget that a proper attitude is required on the part of the one(s) attempting to restore the sinner, ie. "in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted" (6:1b). I am convinced that the reason we so often fail in trying to restore our brethren is improper attitude on our part. Are we truly interested in "converting the sinner from the error of his way" (James 5:16)? If we are, and if we will use the method which God has given in the right manner, we will, indeed, succeed in saving souls from death (ibid.), the second death (Revelation 20:4).

God's plan for correcting the wrongs in individuals and in churches works. It worked in New Testament days (Acts 8:18-24; 1 & 2 Corinthians). His plan will work today when we work the plan.

PUNITIVE DISCIPLINE

No one likes to talk about punishment. But, try as we may, we cannot escape the consequences of sin (Romans 6:23). The affects of sin in one's life is far reaching. Our influence on others is either good or bad. In this lesson we are concerned with dealing with those who disobey God's will. And, we are now at the point of implementing the most difficult of all means of **discipline**. All else has failed. Our attempt to persuade our fellow Christian of the error of his/her ways has failed. Our effort to bring about correction has failed. We have tried to teach him, we have prayed for him and with him (1 John 5:16). We have sought the help of others in trying to restore the sinner but to no avail. What shall we do? We must apply punitive discipline, the hardest type of discipline, and the one most often neglected by the church today. It is often called "the forgotten commandment". Is it really forgotten? No! Neglected? Yes! Note how often we find the command in the New Testament, beginning with Romans 16:17

"Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause division and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them". If one becomes immoral, that one is to be "put away", he is not to any longer enjoy the company of the saints (1 Corinthians 5:9-11). We must separate ourselves from such or else stand separated, even ourselves, from God. Notice also 2 Thessalonians 3:6 which says, "Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that wealketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us". It should be stressed that no partiality is allowed in the process of discipline. The same treatment should be expected by "every brother" that walks disorderly, regardless of his former status in the congregation. No exceptions should be made in the case of preachers, elders, etc. or in the case of offenses committed by their family members. "Prominent" members should find no favors. The amount one gives into the treasury should have no bearing on the matter of discipline. The fact that the offender might come from a family whose long standing in the church and/or the community is well known, doesn't alter the case one bit. "God is no respecter of persons:but...he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him" (Acts 10:34,35). So ought it to be in the church of today.

WHY DISCIPLINE?

Perhaps we ought to ask, why obey any command of God? The answer should be obvious; to please God. The "faith" chapter in the New Testament plainly states that only those who believe in God and do His will need expect to be rewarded (Hebrews 11:6). If we truly love Christ we will keep His commandments (John 14:15). If we really love our brother we will try to rescue him from ways of sin (James 5:20). If we love the church and wish to spare it from a multitude of sins" we will do all we can to restore our erring brother (Ibid.). In this same vein, we must not be ignorant of the leavening influence that sinful brethren can and usually do have on the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 5:6). Disciplining the sinful brother is just another way of following after things that make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another" (Romans 14:19).

HINDRANCES TO DISCIPLINE

Why do we see the disturbing trend in the church today in regards to discipline? I believe there are many reasons, many of which we have already noted from the Scriptures cited. But, allow me to put it in some language that hopefully all can better understand. Some hindrances that I see are

(1) Cowardice. Yes, too many of us are just plain scared to step out in faith and do God's will. What are we afraid of? Unpleasant repercussions? They will surely come, especially in cases where

the congregation has not been properly educated (instructed) on the subject, and in some cases where a tedious effort has been made to properly lead the congregation in the process of discipline.

But, who are we to be most fearful of, God or man? Did not Jesus answer this question for us (Matthew 10:28)?

(2) Politics, otherwise known as favoritism or partiality. We have already noted God's position on this subject (Acts 10:34, 35). Those who would find favor with God had better not be seeking favor with sinners. Ultimately, it will be God, not man, that judges us and metes out the rewards or punishment.

(3) Futility. "We've tried, but it just didn't do any good." Haven't we all heard that statement many times in an effort to excuse us from doing God's will in all things? This is exactly the same reasoning that some uses to excuse other perversions in the church. Attendance is declining, so we must resort to more "acceptable" measures. Acceptable to whom? Just because a few scripturally illiterate souls complain, are we to abandon the way of truth? Are we to allow a few spiritual renegades to disrupt the peace and unity of the church? God forbid that we should allow such a tragedy to occur. And, not all futility springs from within the congregation. Many times those who are disciplined find refuge in a neighboring congregation. Such ought not to be. Can one be disfellowshipped in one place and fellowshipped somewhere else? Not if he/she has been disciplined for the right reasons and in the right way. There are probably other hindrances to discipline that we could mention here, but I believe that the ones already given are sufficient and are probably the main reasons why we are so reluctant to follow God's plan today.

CONCLUSIONS

Preachers, do your part in preaching the truth at all times. Never shun to declare all of God's word, even if you are not appreciated by all the brethren for doing so. There is one who does love you for doing it and He will some day thank you for it. Elders, do your part in watching for souls. Remember, one day you must account for those souls over which you rule (Hebrews 13:17). Child of God, live "soberly, righteously and godly" (Titus 2:12). Not only will you please God who loves you and will reward you, but you will reap rewards, now and in the hereafter. You will also make the work of your elders more joyful and relieve them and others who love you of much heartache and sorrow.

"Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven" (Matt 7:21).

Biographical Sketch

Donald R. Cooper is the second son of the late Jesse R. And Sarah B. Cooper. Born and reared in Parkersburg, WV. Graduated from Parkersburg High School and an alumnus of Freed-Hardeman University, Henderson TN. He began preaching in June, 1952. He and his wife, Jan, were married March 7, 1954 and began full time preaching with the Lord's church in Washington, PA. Their labors have been with church in Maryland, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and West Virginia, including the Hillview Terrace congregation in the mid 70's. They are presently working with the church in Wadsworth, OH where they have been since June, 1985.

DISCIPLINE IN THE HOME

Steve Snider

Daniel Webster made this observation; " If we work upon marble, it will perish; if we work upon brass, time will efface it; if we rear temples, they will crumble into dust; but if we work upon immortal souls, if we imbue them with principles, with the just fear of the Creator and love of fellowman, we engrave on those tablets something which will brighten all eternity."

To watch a life unfold, to be directly and intimately involved as a guide to maturity and a supervisor of growth is what makes being a parent one of the most exciting and rewarding experiences in the world. As Daniel Webster so beautifully stated it we are working on something that has eternal significance. While it can be exciting and rewarding it is also one of the most challenging endeavors we will ever engage in. Fortunately, we are not left to our own devices but have been given an inspired manual that will help us if we will but turn to it and apply the principles that are found within its pages. I have heard the comment made many times over the years that one of the difficult things about being a parent is that children come into the world without an "owners manual." And no doubt this is true in many areas. We aren't provided with a manual that tells us what all to check when things aren't as they ought to be. We are not provided with a manual that tells us how to handle every little matter that comes along; but we have not been left completely without instruction! Especially in those areas that deal with rearing our children and guiding them in the way that they should go. God, the creator of all mankind, has lovingly provided us with His word and provided a great deal of instruction that when followed will help our children grow into outstanding young men and women.

The purpose of this lecture is to consider what God has told us concerning discipline in the home. This is an important and much needed study, especially in light of what is being taught in the world today. A couple of years ago I watched as a mother encouraged her teenage son to get into the car. She had come to pick him up from school and was pleading with him to get into the car so she could get to an appointment. He was talking to a friend and completely ignoring his mother, and when she asked him the third time to please come and get in the car he turned to her and said, " Will you shut-up and get in the car! I will be there in a minute.!" To my amazement, and great frustration, the mother turned and got into the car. I couldn't help but wonder what would cause her to allow her son to speak to her in such a horrible manner. If this were an isolated incident it wouldn't have been so bad, but having been around children and young people a lot the last few years I know that it isn't all that rare.

Discipline is one of those subjects that has been "tossed around" a great deal over the years. We all have known of parents who used physical punishment for almost any mistake a child made, to the point that it was abusive. We also have known parents much like the mother I just described who believed that **any** type of correction would be harmful to their child. If you read much you know that the so-called "experts" in the field also have a wide variety of opinions on the subject of discipline. I was asked by a psychologist to read a book entitled, "Alternatives to Discipline." The whole premise of the book was that discipline doesn't work and we must find alternative ways in which to deal with our children. Two examples from the book still come to mind:

In the first, a young child is in the grocery store with his mother and as he walks along he keeps grabbing things off the shelves. The book suggested that instead of disciplining the child the mother should place the child in the grocery cart and refuse to allow the child to walk through the

store.

In the second example a young boy has been using his fathers tools but never puts them back. Again, instead of disciplining the young boy the father should simply lock up the tools and not allow the boy to use them until he can be more responsible.

When I returned the book I tried to explain to the counselor that you can call it whatever you want but in both cases the children were disciplined. This ,however, shows how some people do not like the word discipline and obviously have a really narrow view of what is actually involved in discipline.

Another example of what the world around us is saying appeared in the Aug.25,1997 issue of Newsweek. The article was entitled,"Spanking Takes a Beating." The article told of a recent survey done involving 807 mothers who were questioned concerning their experience with children who were spanked. The survey showed that they believed that children who were spanked were more likely to cheat, lie, bully, break things, and antagonize their teachers and other children. The report also said that they identified spanking as a **cause and not just a consequence of bad behavior**. The final statement of the article was,"**since misfit kids are more likely to commit crimes as adults, we may all benefit when parents spare the rod.**" There was a picture of a father spanking a child and the caption asked the question, " Who's Misbehaving."

Many other tragic examples could be cited to show how far the world has moved from the Biblical standard concerning discipline in our homes but let us now turn our attention to what the Bible actually teaches.

DISCIPLINE DEFINED

When the subject of discipline comes up many immediately think in terms of punishment, but there is much more to discipline than that. Webster defines discipline as,"training that teaches one to obey rules and to control his behavior; treatment that corrects or punishes." The word discipline comes from the same word that we get disciple and that should help us better understand the term. Discipline involves instruction, guidance, help and training. Discipline will certainly involve unpleasant experiences but these will not be very effective unless they are outweighed by pleasant experiences. Discipline involves both preventive and corrective actions. Preventive discipline would be that teaching and guidance that helps a child mature enabling them to make right decisions. Corrective discipline would be those actions that are taken to put appropriate pressure on children to act in accordance with what they know to be right. When preventive discipline is practiced with success then corrective discipline will not be needed as frequently. On the other hand, if corrective discipline is not practiced when needed then preventive discipline will have little or no effect.

GOD EXPECTS DISCIPLINE TO EXIST IN OUR HOMES

There are numerous passages that teach us about God's desire that our homes be places where disciplined is practiced. You will notice as you read these passages that both types of discipline are mentioned.

Deut.6 4-7,"Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one! You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up."

Eph.6:4,"And you fathers, do not provoke your children unto wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord."

Heb.12:7,"If you endure chastening, God deals with as with sons; for what son is there

whom a father does not chasten?"

Prov.13:24,"He who spares his rod hates his son, but he who loves him disciplines him promptly."

Prov.19:18,"Chasten your son while there is hope, and do not set your heart on his destruction"

Prov.23:13,14,"Do not withhold correction from a child, for if you beat him with a rod, he will not die. You shall beat him with a rod, and deliver his soul from hell."

If we want our children to be kind, appreciative, and pleasant, then these qualities must be taught and demonstrated in our homes. If we want to see honesty, truthfulness, unselfishness, and faithfulness in our children then these characteristics should be taught and demonstrated from the very beginning. We must understand that heredity does not equip a child with proper attitudes and beliefs; children will learn what they are taught.

At the same time that teaching, (by word and example) is taking place it must also then be reinforced with correction. Dr. James Dobson made this interesting observation:

"At a recent psychologists' conference in Los Angeles, the keynote speaker made the statement that *the greatest disaster of this century is the belief that abundant love makes discipline unnecessary*. He said that some of the little terrors who are unmanageable in the school classroom are "mistakenly" believed to have emotional problems. They are referred to the school psychologist for his evaluation of their difficulty, but no deep problems are found. Instead, it becomes obvious that the children have simply never been required to inhibit their behavior or restrict their impulses. Some of these children came from homes where love was almost limitless."

Dr. Dobson then comments that respectful and responsible children result where the proper combination of love and discipline are present. God certainly expects us to love our children, but He also has shown from His word that true love will involve a tremendous amount of teaching and guidance with the appropriate amount of correction provided.

PRINCIPLES FOR DISCIPLINE IN THE HOME

In preparing this lesson I came across several suggestions by different writers concerning discipline and how it should be carried out in the home. I believe these are practical and also in keeping with the principles that have been set out in the word of God.

1. Parents must live disciplined lives. As parents we are deceiving ourselves if we believe that we can teach our children by the "Do as I say but not as I do" method.
2. Developing respect for the parents is critical in child management.
3. The best opportunity to communicate often occurs after punishment.
4. Control without nagging.
5. Don't saturate the child with materialism.
6. Avoid extremes in control and love.
7. The child should understand what the discipline is for and why it is being imposed.
8. The discipline should be fair.
9. Discipline should be consistent.
10. Discipline should be as closely related to the offense as possible.
11. The discipline administered should not harm the child.
12. Discipline should be administered by someone who loves the child and is loved by the child.

It has been pointed out over the years that the best measure of anything should be; "Does it work?" When properly applied, discipline works! It develops mutual respect between the child and the

parent, it causes family members to love and trust each other, it provides us the opportunity to introduce God to our children, it permits teachers to do their real job in the classroom, it helps our children to grow into responsible adults. To carry out Biblical discipline in the home requires courage, consistency, diligence and patience. Surely, though, the reward of seeing our children grow up as fine young men and women will make the effort worth while.

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Solidify The Home Against Materialism

Bill Covan

Introduction:

We live in a materialistic world, especially in this country. Who would have ever thought that one would pay \$1.00 or \$1.50 for a bottle of water when you can get water out of your own spigot. Most households have at least two vehicles. In some families each person has their own transportation. You are not one of the in-crowd unless you own a beeper, a cellular phone, a CD player, a large-screen television and a VCR. Then there are the memberships too a fitness center, certain brands of clothing and shoes and time sharing of condos. A recent survey showed that kids today are consumed with things and pleasure.

What is materialism? One man said, "It was saving things without a heavenly purpose for them." As we go through the scriptures I believe you see a picture of what materialism is and its effect upon us. Let's turn to the word that "contains all things which pertain to life and godliness" (II Peter 1:3).

What is wrong with being materialistic?

1. An attitude of high-mindedness develops. (I Timothy 6: 17-19)

The word *high-minded* (KJV) is translated proud or arrogant in other translations. Jesus points out this very thing in the parable of the Rich Farmer in Luke 12. The farmer became proud of those things with which God had blessed him. The farmer said, "Soul, *thou* hast much goods..." (Luke 12:19). God does not want a man to be proud of such things (James 4:6).

2. A trust in material things may develop. (I Timothy 6:17)

Notice Paul describes riches as uncertain. Again, the rich farmer began to trust in his riches when he made this statement, "And I will say to my soul, soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry." But God said unto him, "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall all those things be, which thou hast provided." (Luke 12:19,20). The farmer trusted riches as a guarantee for "many years." Jesus further responds, "So is he that layeth up treasures for himself and is not rich toward God. (Luke 12:21).

3. One becomes oblivious to needs of others. (Luke 16)

In the story of the rich man and Lazarus, the rich man ignored a beggar who laid at his gate. Lazarus only wanted the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table, but the rich man ignored the need of Lazarus.

4. People will lie. (Acts 5:1-9)

Ananias and Sapphira sold a possession of land. They kept back part of the money and lied about it. The end result was that they were struck dead.

5. People will betray others.

Judas betrayed Jesus (Matthew 26:14-16). The guards who guarded the tomb of Jesus were bought off (Matthew 28:11-15). Delilah betrayed Samson (Judges 15-16).

6. The temptation to err. (I Timothy 6:5-11)

“But they that are rich fall into temptation and a snare and unto many foolish and hurtful lusts which drown man in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil; which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.” Some key words in this passage are: *they that will be rich*- means to desire, obsession for; *drown*-sink as in a shipwreck; *love of-coveting* for or after; *some coveted after*-means to give oneself up to; *erred*-strayed away from; *pierced*-to torture one’s soul. Material things become one’s obsession and all else is neglected, including one’s spiritual life.

7. The problem of covetousness and idolatry. (Colossians 3:5; Luke 12:15)

One’s life becomes engrossed in things and the gaining of more things. Things actually becomes idols to a person. Time and talent are devoted to things rather than the Lord.

8. The word is choked out of a person’s life. (Matthew 13:22)

In the parable of the sower, Jesus said that the lusts of other things, pleasures of life, cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word of God out of a person’s life. One produces no fruit to perfection.

With all of these scriptures of warning, surely one can see the problems and dangers connected with materialism.

What should my outlook be concerning the material things of this life?

1. Paul gave some instructions. (I Timothy 6:17-19)

A person is to do good, do good works and share with others.

2. Jesus gave some instructions. (Matthew 6:19-34)

We are to lay up treasures in heaven. Could these treasures be the things Paul wrote about in I Timothy 6:17-19?

3. Contentment must be given consideration. (I Timothy 6:5-11; Philippians 4:11)

Look at the key words: wants, needs, contentment, learned. God blesses us and supplies our *needs* not our *wants*. The distribution in Acts 4 was according to *needs*. Contentment is satisfaction with what one has. *Learned* means “to learn by use and practice, to acquire the habit of. One must learn to be content.”

4. Other factors to be considered

Remember that the reason a person works is to provide for our families (I Timothy 5:8) and to be able to give to others (Ephesians 4:28; Acts 20:35). Also remember that a Christian is just a pilgrim and stranger passing through this world (I Peter 2:11). Since a Christian is just “passing through”, we are not to fall in love with (I John 2:15-17; James 4:4) not be entangled with the affairs of this world (II Timothy 2:4).

Putting all these pieces together forms a picture for the Christian as to material possessions and his involvement with this world. Our involvement with the world as Christians is to bring glory to God, to be the light of the world and the salt of the earth and to teach the gospel.

Some practical thoughts

1. Our homes do not need every luxury or gadget that comes on the market.
2. Our families do not need to be involved in every school or community activity.
3. God, the church, brethren and lost souls should be top priorities.
4. Live within your income.
5. Remember that your purpose as a Christian is to glorify God, live Godly lives and teach the gospel.
6. We live *in* this world but we are not *of* this world.
7. A Christian's involvement is to be with people rather than material things.
8. Things will be burnt up at the end of time but people will live on (II Peter 3:11).
9. Blessings are a by-product of faithfulness and service to God.

William L. Covan

Preaching & Teaching Experience:

Graduate of Ohio Valley College (1961-63)

Graduate of Preston Road School of Preaching, Dallas, TX (1973-75)

Preaching for 25 years: 22 years located work:

Brookville, PA (July 1975-July 1979)

Indiana, PA (July 1979-November 1983)

Struthers, OH (November 1983 - present)

Speaker for: Ohio Valley College Lectures

Pennsylvania Labor Day Lectures Youth Rallies in Pennsylvania & Ohio

Singles' Retreats

Senior Saints

Gospel Meetings in Ohio, Pennsylvania & West Virginia

Conduct Personal Evangelism Seminars

Work with Christian Youth Camps:

Pennsylvania Christian Camp for 8 years - Director Senior Week

Northeast Ohio Christian Youth Camp for 14 years - Senior Week

Director and President of Board (7 years)

Personal Background:

Grew up in Grove City, Ohio. Married for 33 years wife - Norma from Pittsburgh, PA 4 children (ages 20 to 32) 5 grandchildren

DISCIPLINE IN THE HOME

James Farley

Introduction:

1. God ordained and instituted the home in His divine plan for mankind.
 - a. A study of Genesis chapters 1-3 reveals this to be so.
2. The home was ordained by our heavenly Father for several reasons.
 - a. Companionship
 - i. God saw that it was NOT GOOD that man should be alone!
 - ii. Genesis 2:18
 - b. Satisfaction of physical needs
 - i. Hebrews 13:4
 - ii. I Corinthians 7:1-2
 - c. Propagation ---- having children
 - i. Genesis 1:28
 - ii. Psalm 127:3-5
 - d. So that the children born can have care and training
 - i. Proverbs 22:6
 - ii. Ephesians 6:1-4
 - iii. Colossians 3:20-21

I. Discipline is teaching and training

- A. Too often we think only of corporal punishment when we use the word discipline.
 1. It is true that God expects and commands that we will often have to punish disobedient children.
 2. Proverbs 13:24; 23:13; 29:15
 3. Hebrews 12:5-11
 4. However, godly discipline is certainly NOT limited to such corporal punishment.
- B. Ross W. Dye has a good paragraph in his small tract on the topic:
 1. "The central element of discipline is teaching. Unfortunately many people think of only punishment when discipline is mentioned. That is part of it, but it is not even the main part. No one can control children unless he gets control of their minds. One can hardly expect to watch his children every minute, but teaching can be with them night and day. If we will properly teach our children, they will have a set of values that will govern them. A child who has been trained as he ought to be will find it very hard to ignore his own conscience. This will be a much more powerful restraint than locking him in his room or threatening him with punishment."

--DISCIPLINE IN THE
HOME
Ross W. Dye
- C. We cannot isolate our children in this world, so we must insulate them!

1. Rearing children involves much more than just providing for their physical needs.
2. We must do much more than just "make a living" for them . . . we must help them to make a life for themselves.
 - a. Proverbs 22:6
 - b. Ephesians 6:1-4
 - c. We are responsible for "training them up" . . . for "bringing them up" in God's right ways.
3. God's right ways (His righteousness) is revealed in the gospel. (Romans 1:16-17)
4. We are instructed and taught how to live righteously the gift of God's verbally inspired Word. (2 Timothy 3:16-17; Titus 2:11-12)
5. Our children must see and hear and know that we are students and teachers of the Word!
6. We must teach the Word to our children.
 - a. Deuteronomy 6:3-9; 11:18-21
7. If our children can build their lives upon God's Ways, they will be able to withstand the "storms" of life. (Matthew 7:24-27).

II. The church can help parents who are truly interested in bringing up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord

- A. Children who see their parents as people who truly put God's kingdom first will grow up likewise loving the church of Christ. (Matthew 6:33)
- B. The church, through preaching, Bible classes, etc. can certainly reinforce the teaching that parents do in the home.
- C. However, it is a grave mistake to believe that the church has the primary responsibility to train up our children!
 1. Youth programs, Sunday school classes, printed materials, etc., can serve ONLY as supplements for parents.

III. Furthermore, it takes more than just teaching ---- it takes a good example.

- A. Christians are to be the "salt of the earth" and "the light of the world" (Matthew 5:13-16).
 1. Certainly we want to serve God in this way toward our children.
- B. In turn, our young people can be good examples to all around them. (I Timothy 4:12).
- C. Some GOOD EXAMPLES from the Bible.
 1. Enoch -- Genesis 5:22
 2. Abraham -- Genesis 18:19
 3. Joshua -- Joshua 24:15
 4. Lois and Eunice -- 2 Timothy 1:5; 3:15
- D. Some BAD EXAMPLES from the Bible.
 1. Eli -- I Samuel 2:12; 3:13
 2. Jeroboam -- I Kings 12:25-33; 15:25-26
 3. Omri -- I Kings 16:25-30
 4. Ahab and Jezebel -- I Kings 16:30; 22:51-53

Conclusion:

1. There is certainly no more urgent need today than discipline in the home.
2. The church will be stronger, and society in general will be better, if and when we get back to the way God intended the home to be.

James Edward Farley was born on May 3, 1952 in Montgomery, West Virginia. He was the eighth of eleven children born to William H. and Clista Farley. He graduated from Montgomery High School in 1970. In the fall of 1971 he joined the U.S. Army where he served for 6 ½ years. Shortly after entering the military, he was sent to Hanau, Germany where, in April 1972, he obeyed the gospel and put on the Lord in baptism.

While stationed in Germany he met his wife Linda. Jim and Linda have been married for 24 years. They have two children, Tim who is 23 and Jenni 21.

Jim entered Freed-Hardeman College in the Spring of 1978 in order to better prepare himself to preach the gospel, which he has been doing now for 19 years.

While at F-HC he preached for the church in Clifton, TN. Upon graduating he moved his family to Moorefield, WV. He has also preached in Winchester, VA and Seth, WV. He is currently located in Gallipolis, OH but in November 1998 will be moving to work with the brethren in Pikeville, KY.

PREACH THE WORD WITH PERSEVERANCE

John M. Brown

Perseverance means continuing on; not giving up; not quitting; constancy in doing something, in spite of difficulty or opposition; steadiness; steadfastness; persistence; determination. To persevere is to not give in, give up, or give over; it is to not quit or quail, stop or cease, abandon or desist.

We all admire perseverance in every realm of life. "Gentleman" Jim Corbett, holder of the heavyweight championship boxing title in the last century, described the perseverance necessary to be a winner as the ability to "Fight one more round." Thomas Edison experienced many multiple failures before he got his electric light to burn. Great generals have learned the lesson that perseverance is that characteristic which distinguishes victory from defeat. Great athletes have become such because of perseverance. Artists and writers have succeeded simply because they failed to quit. The man considered our greatest President had successive failures in both business and politics - Abraham Lincoln.

While we admire perseverance in business, athletics, art and invention, we must not neglect application of the principle of perseverance to the greatest work in all the world -- preaching the gospel of the Son of God!

The wonderful charge of Paul to Timothy, "Preach the word...", echoes in the mind and heart of every faithful proclaimer (2 Timothy 4:2). Would Paul have countenanced quitting in this young protege, disciple, and son in the Gospel? No more than he did towards John Mark, whom he desired not accompany him on his further preaching journeys (Acts 15:37-40) because of his previous failure to fulfill responsibility (Acts 13:13).

Yet, many preachers quit preaching; some even quit following the Lord entirely. They don't "Preach the Word with Perseverance." Let us address this matter.

WHY SOME QUIT PREACHING

There are undoubtedly many reasons why men have forsaken the task of preaching the good news. A few:

1. **DISCOURAGEMENT** is, without doubt, one of Satan's greatest weapons in the life of a preacher, or any Christian. How many men have quit because they became discouraged? Has any preacher, at some time or other, not been affected by this dreaded plague? It has been my observation that this is perhaps the greatest cause of preachers moving from one work to another -- they just get discouraged! Surely we as preachers can make application of a principle found in the lesson of the Parable of the Sower (Matthew 13:3-9, 18-23) and not become easily offended, upset, discouraged, or distraught. No Christian, and certainly no preacher, can do much for the Lord if he wears his feelings on his sleeve. We need tender hearts and tough hides! We must recognize that we

are to endure hardness as good soldiers of Christ (2 Timothy 2:3), engaged in warfare (2 Corinthians 10:3-5; Ephesians 6:10-18; 1 Timothy 1:18). Thus we are not to desert under fire, or be found absent-without-leave!

2. **IMMORALITY** has been the culprit behind some preachers quitting. When I was yet in college, I kept hearing older men warn of the "dangers" preachers faced regarding relationships with the opposite sex. Frankly, I didn't fully comprehend the instruction and thought the warnings overstated and somewhat exaggerated. Time and experience, however, have proven those warnings right and proper, as I have unfortunately learned of more than one preacher whose ministry was wrecked and ruined by immorality. "Keep thyself pure" (1 Timothy 5:22) is not advice for Timothy only.

3. "**LITTLE CARES**" have overwhelmed many preachers. Like the traveller in Africa who lamented he was not bothered by the lions and tigers, but by the gnats and mosquitoes, so sometimes preachers become overly burdened by little, insignificant, petty matters that distract attention from greater, more needful things. I don't know any preachers who have been worn out, or burned out, by preaching; what wears men out are the day-to-day petty grievances and childish ramblings of certain discontented brethren. Let us, as preachers, not be burdened by the "cares of the world" (Matt. 13), knowing indeed that as we "seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness" (Matthew 6:33), so we will keep our minds and hearts focused on the things which are above (Colossians 3:1-2).

4. **FAILING TO STUDY** has hindered some preachers. The gospel preacher must continue to grow, even as every other Christian must (2 Peter 3:18). Perhaps it relates to problem number 3 above, perhaps it is at times laziness, but some preachers are not diligent students of the sacred text. The old joke about a preacher having to move after three years because he ran out of sermon outlines did actually happen, I am told, to one particular individual, who is said to have candidly admitted to others his lack! Foreshame! We cannot impart that which we do not know; let us determine to be faithful, hard-working, acute, careful, students of the sacred text.

5. **FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS** have forced some preachers out of full-time ministry into another work to adequately provide for their families. The Bible certainly teaches the responsibilities of brethren toward preachers in this regard (1 Corinthians 9:6-16), but sometimes through ignorance, and perhaps on occasion through covetousness, this obligation has not been satisfactorily met. I don't know preachers in my acquaintance in our brotherhood who are just preaching "for the money"; I do know some preachers who had to leave full-time preaching because of the lack thereof. This is too bad! Brethren, let us ensure we discharge our liabilities in these regards. Know what "adequate wages" are, and know about some of the financial disbursements and needs often peculiar to preachers (such as expenses, social security, retirement, taxes, etc). Learn about these things and don't "starve your preacher out." If a man refuses to preach the truth or if he is lazy, don't give him a cent. But on the other hand, if he proclaims the truth and does the work of an evangelist (2 Timothy 4:5), recognize he's worth every penny! "...for the labourer is worthy of his hire" (Luke 10:7).

WHY PREACHERS MUST NOT QUIT

Now consider some reasons why preachers must not quit preaching.

- 1. BECAUSE THE LORD DIDN'T QUIT!** Christ is the greatest motivation for faithful commitment and dedication! Though Jesus in the garden prayed "Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me...", yet the cup of suffering, overflowing and undeserved, Christ drank nonetheless: "...not my will, but thine, be done." (Luke 22:42), The One guilty of no sin, whose back was lashed until the blood ran and the gore spattered, the One who had done no wrong, was marched through the old stone streets of Jerusalem, up to the hill called Calvary, and nailed to the cross, as pain raced across His body. But in all of this undeserved suffering, He didn't quit! Rather, He "endured the cross, despising the shame" (Heb. 12:2). Is He not our Supreme Example of perseverance???
- 2. BECAUSE THE APOSTLE DIDN'T QUIT!** In spite of harassments, threatenings, persecutions, beatings, imprisonments, even death, they did not quit! Paul, who endured more hardships than any preacher I have ever known (read 2 Corinthians 11:23-28), is able to say, when about to go the last mile of the earthly journey, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith" (2 Timothy 4:7). An old preacher stood before a congregation one day, and said, "Brethren, it is time for me to retire. I wear two hearing aids. I wear tri-focals. I sometimes walk upon a cane. I think the Lord is telling me it's time to quit." And dear white-haired sister met him at the back door, and said "Preacher, you've got it all wrong. The Lord isn't telling you to quit. He's telling you that if you keep on going, He'll keep patching you up!"
- 3. BECAUSE WE MUST BE STEADFAST!** If steadfastness has application to every Christian's service to God, and it does (see 1 Corinthians 15:58), then does it not have application also to the work of preaching? The verse cited above could easily have been taken as a text for this whole sermon! In preaching, be steadfast! In preaching, be unmoveable! In preaching, be always abounding in the work of the Lord!
- 4. BECAUSE WE HAVE A RACE TO RUN!** Like every Christian, we preachers must "...run with patience the race that is set before us" (Hebrews 12:1). It is always with a tinge of sadness that I hear about some man who had previously given himself fully to the work of preaching who now sells insurance, or some other such endeavor. Now there is certainly nothing dishonorable about working in business; but usually when a preacher leaves preaching to pursue some other course, it is because something negative has prompted it. Too bad! Let us, as preachers, determine to persevere in our labor of proclaiming the unsearchable riches of Christ! (Ephesians 3:8)
- 5. BECAUSE WE MUST DO THE WORK OF AN EVANGELIST!** We must remember as preachers that we have a work to do, and we must determine to fulfill and complete that work. There is a note of melancholy that rings through an "unfinished sympathy"; there is certainly a note of sadness that sounds in the life of a preacher who has quit. Determine, as one older preacher told me he was planning, to "die with your boots on!" When I had just begun preaching, a man asked me, "Do you work, or are you just a preacher?" I admit that I had no ready response. But I determined to get one, and shortly thereafter I had an answer to anyone that asked me about my "work" -- the

words of Paul to Timothy, "But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry" (2 Timothy 4:5). Yes, preacher, do the WORK of an evangelist, and don't stop until your work is done! (see John 9:4)

So, are preachers to be quitters? NO! And a thousand times, No!

Preacher, no matter what comes your way, PREACH THE WORD! If your family and friends object, PREACH THE WORD! If brethren disappoint you or even mistreat you, PREACH THE WORD! If you live to be old, or die young, PREACH THE WORD! If things go well, or trouble surrounds, PREACH THE WORD! When people want to hear the message, and when they don't, PREACH THE WORD! If sickness comes, or death invades the ranks of your family, PREACH THE WORD! If other preachers compromise, PREACH THE WORD! If persecution comes, PREACH THE WORD! If you experience great success, or fail at some tasks, PREACH THE WORD! In season, out of season, with all long-suffering and doctrine, and with steadfast, determined perseverance, PREACH THE WORD!

GROUNDING THE CHURCH IN LOGIC: ITS ROLE IN THE NATURE OF GOD, MAN, THOUGHT AND BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION

JODY APPLE

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to present and explain five fundamental areas that affect the role and value of logic in Biblical interpretation.

We will proceed by examining the following: (1) the nature of man; (2) the nature of the soul; (3) the nature of reason; (4) the nature of the laws of thought; and (5) the natural application of logic in the discipline of Biblical hermeneutics.

I. The Nature of Man: Created in The Image of God

The Bible quite plainly declares that God said "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness..." (Gen 1:26; all citations ASV unless noted). The following verse indicates that the Godhead ("us" and "our" in vs 26) did just as they planned: "God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them." (Gen 1:27)

To fully understand the import of what it means to say that man is created in the image of God, we would have to examine in detail two major disciplines: (1) "theology," the study of God and (2) "anthropology," the study of man. Though we cannot presently engage in an investigation of these two disciplines, we can observe a few principles that will help us understand what it means to say that man was created in the image of God.

As observed above, Genesis 1:26-27 affirms that mankind bears some likeness to his Creator. Numerous Biblical references corroborate this affirmation, as seen in the following three examples:

(A.) *"Furthermore, we had the fathers of our flesh to chasten us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live?"* (Heb 12:9)

Hebrews 12:9 identifies God as the "Father of spirits." Man, though possessing a physical body, is still essentially a spiritual being; and God, the "Father of spirits," ("the Father of *our* spirits," cf. Robertson) is the Creator of our spirits.

Paul, in 1 Thessalonians 5:23, teaches that man is a tripartite being composed of spirit, soul and body. At death: (1) "the dust return(s) to the earth as it was," that is, the body returns to the earth (Eccl 12:7); (2) the spirit (i.e., the animating, or life-giving, force within man) goes back to God — "the spirit shall return unto God who gave it." (Eccl 12:7); and (3) the soul continues on (Rev 20:4ff).

Of the three facets of the nature of man listed in this passage, two of the three refer to "spiritual" qualities — life (i.e., spirit) and soul.

This reference to God as the "Father of spirits" demands that: (1) all souls are created in God's image, and (2) all souls bear some resemblance to their Creator. (cf. Num 16:22; 27:16; Job 12:10; Is 42:5; 57:16; Zech 12:1.)

(B.) *"He hath made everything beautiful in its time: also he hath set eternity in their heart, yet so that man cannot find out the work that God hath done from the beginning even to the end."* (Eccl 3:11)

Man's resemblance to God is also seen in this passage from Ecclesiastes. God has set "eternity" in the hearts of all men created in His image.

The term "eternity" is translated from the Hebrew "olam," which occurs 439 times in the old testament. It is most frequently translated as ever (272), everlasting (63), old (22), perpetual (22), and ever-

more (15). It refers to periods of long duration, antiquity, and forever. It entails continuous, or perpetual, existence and is inclusive of eternal principles.

To say that God set "eternity" in the heart of man is to contend that all men bear the imprint of an eternal God, in some sense, in the essence of their being. It does not mean that man is eternal, but rather that he bears the internal markings of He who is eternal — God.

© "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hinder the truth in unrighteousness; because that which is known of God is manifest in them; for God manifested it unto them. For the invisible things of him since the creation of the world are clearly seen, being perceived through the things that are made, even his everlasting power and divinity; that they may be without excuse:" (Rom 1:18-20)

This passage teaches many crucial truths, among them: (1) God has revealed Himself, (2) God has manifested Himself via His creation, (3) we can perceive (i.e. know) God, in part at least, through His creation, and (4) even some aspects of His divinity ("Godhead" in KJV) are known through His creation.

Note also that verse 19 of this passage states "that which is known of God is *manifest in them.*" Robertson notes that the manifestation was "in their hearts and consciences." The aorist verb indicates that the nature of manifestation involves punctiliar action, in this case action which had already transpired, and the consequence of which continues on.

In this sense, Romans 1:19 parallels the thought of Ecclesiastes' "eternity in their heart." God has created man in such a way that the Divine nature has always been manifest in the heart and conscience of souls created in His image.

There are many additional passages which convey similar lines of thought, but the thrust of these three is typical. The nature of God is, in some sense, both deposited and reflected in the essential nature of mankind.

II. The Nature of The Soul: The Essence of Man

"And Jehovah God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul." (Gen 2:7)

We noted previously that man is a three part being, composed of spirit, body and soul. How is each of these three elements of man's nature related to the nature of God?

(A.) We cannot say that our *bodies* bear a true likeness to the nature of God, because God is a spirit and does not possess flesh and bones (Jn 4:24; Lk 24:39). Though our bodies are made by God (Gen 2:7; Eccl 12:7), we understand that they were actually created from earthly, physical elements and thus do not carry a true, or eternal, divine imprint upon them.

(B.) Likewise, though man is a living spirit, we cannot truly compare that which is alive and finite, with that which is alive and infinite. Man's spirit lasts upon this earth for seventy to eighty years (cf Ps 90:10ff), but God is eternal, from everlasting to everlasting (cf. Gen 21:33; Ex 15:18; Deut 33:27; et. al). The physical body of man is subject to the ravages of time and decay and ultimately returns to its constituent elements (cf Eccl 12:7). God, a spirit without flesh and bones (Jn 4:24; Lk 24:39), is not subject to the effects of temporal-spatial relationships. Though there are similarities between man's finite animate life and God's eternal existence, there is the distinct element of contingency about the former that does not apply to the latter. Man, though a "living" soul dwelling temporarily in this world, was ultimately made to "live" in another world greater than this one (cf Heb 11:8-10, 13-16), a world in the very presence of God (1 Jn 3:1ff, Rev 21:1ff; 22:1ff). God, however, has *always* "inhabited" this place (cf Ps 80:14; Eccl 5:2; cf also the "God of heaven" passages in Chron., Ezra, Neh. and Dan.).

(C.) Of the three parts of man's being, it is the role and function of the soul that is of supreme importance. It is this element which bears the *most resemblance* to the person and personality of Deity.

Though there may be additional attributes of the soul of man worthy of consideration, five prominent aspects are developed here:

(1.) Intellect: Man possesses a rational component to his soul that reflects a like rational component in the attributes of God's nature.

Among the divisions of the larger component of intellect are man's ability to:

(a.) learn, or to acquire and increase knowledge; (b.) reason - man can weigh data, facts, evidence; process knowledge, infer, deduce, deliberate; (c.) engage in thought - which transcends the purely physical, though the physio-mechanical is included; (d.) imagine, visualize, dream; e. create, invent, devise; (f.) believe - based upon knowledge and will, judgment; (g.) make decisions - accept, reject data, facts; (h.) judge - moral, rational, aesthetic; (I.) remember; (j.) reflect (ponder, weigh, meditate, consider, concentrate); (k.) have expectation (hope); (l.) make plans; and (m.) have a certain disposition of mind (think a certain way)

In all of these subdivisions, man has the ability either to conform to the will of God (and thus be "God like"), or to deviate from the will of God (and thus be "un-God like"). Furthermore, the intellect of man is effected by other constituent elements of the soul: emotion, will, conscience, and the ability to act.

(2.) Emotion: The soul of man is characterized by emotion, as is the character of God.

Emotion is defined as: "1. An intense mental state that arises subjectively rather than through conscious effort and is often accompanied by physiological changes; a strong feeling; 2. A state of mental agitation or disturbance; 3. The part of the consciousness that involves feeling; sensibility."

(AHD)

According to this definition emotion develops *subjectively* through *unconscious* effort. It is imperative to observe, that while this is certainly true in some (if not many) cases, emotion can also be affected or developed as a result of conscious and objective causes. The difference between the two is, in part, the difference between reaction and action; habit and self-control (cf. discussion of will to follow).

As a being capable of emotion, man has the ability to feel and experience at least the following:

(a.) anger, indignance; (b.) sadness, sorrow; (c.) comfort, consolation; (d.) happiness, joy; (e.) love; (f.) hate; (g.) despair; (h.) humiliation; and (I.) peace

There are, of course, many more wide-ranging human emotions that might be enumerated, but these surely provide a sampling indicative of the sentiments and affections that are part of the soul of man.

In all of these emotions, man has the ability either to conform to the will of God in them (and thus be "God like"), or to deviate from the will of God (and thus be "un-God like"). From a Biblical perspective, it is man's duty to hate what God hates and love what God loves (cf Pr 8:13; Ps 119:104, 128; Amos 5:15). The emotional state of man, like the other elements of the soul, is affected (directly and indirectly) by man's intellect, will, conscience and ability to act.

(3.) Will: The soul of man exhibits characteristics of will (also called free will, or free moral agency) and volition, in much the same way Deity does.

The will is such that:

(a.) it is a metaphysical faculty; (b.) it is a mental capacity; (c.) it can be exercised (cf. action); (d.) it can be of a specific disposition, inclination and resolve; (e.) it can reflect purpose, determination, intent, deliberateness; (f.) it can be demonstrated through spontaneous desire; (g.) it can manifest itself through choice, decision and judgment of long standing; (h.) it can be auton-

omous, or self-directed, and function entirely at its own discretion; (i.) it can, through repeated expression, form routine habits, and thus define character, and (j.) it can be influenced by external factors

Through all of these aspects of man's volitional nature, man can either be submissive to (via obedience), or rebellious toward (via disobedience), the will of God (cf. the emphasis in both old and new testaments on "choice:" Deut 11:29; 30:15; Josh 24:15; Mt 11:28ff; Rev 22:16ff; et. al.). The will, like all facets of the soul, is influenced by man's intellect, emotions, conscience and his ability to act.

(4.) Conscience/Morals: Man, unique among the creatures of this world, possesses the ability to weigh his will, actions, intellect and emotions according to certain real, or perceived, standards. In this regard man has a conscience which mimics the intrinsic standards of Deity Himself.

That man's soul is in part characterized by the possession of conscience demonstrates at least the following:

(a.) man has the ability to recognize standards, even ultimate standards; (b.) man has the ability to differentiate between right and wrong; (c.) man is possessed of a sense of "moral oughtness;" (d.) man's conscience transcends geographic, political, provincial and temporal standards; (e.) the existence of conscience is universal; and (f.) man's conscience ("moral compass"), though affected by environment, reason, emotion, instruction, religion, law, society, family, etc., is primarily and uniquely individual and autonomous

In all aspects of man's sense of conscience and morality, he has the ability either to conform to, or rebel against, an ultimate Divine standard of right and wrong. Man's conscience can also be influenced by rational thought, sentiment, volition and his ability to act.

(5.) Action: Man, Like God, Has The Ability to Act.

Action is defined in part, as: "1. The process of doing or performing something; 2. Something done or performed; a deed; 3. A decisional product, such as a statute, decree, or enactment, delivered by a legislative or a judicial body," (AHD) Note this definition refers to a "decisional product," and that such has application to behavior. The previous elements which comprise the soul of man function in concert in such a way as to allow, or cause, man to act, or accomplish certain things, via thought, speech and physical deeds.

We note concerning man's ability to act the following:

(a.) action is influenced by reason; (b.) action is influenced by emotion; (c.) action is influenced by volition; (d.) action is influenced by conscience; (e.) though influenced by other factors (environment, social morés, family, etc.), action is supremely individual; (f.) though influenced by other factors (actions of others, politics, religion, law, etc.), responsibility for action is supremely individual; and (g.) functioning in concert with other elements of the soul of man, action determines behavior, conduct, habit, character and destiny

As with all other aspects of the soul of man, man's ability to act (via thought, word or deed) can either be in or out of harmony with the will and nature of God.

III. The Nature of Reason: God's and Man's

We have noted thus far that: (1) man is made in the image of God, and (2) that the "soul" of man is that element of man's nature most reflective of God's own nature. Of the five facets of man's soul elaborated upon above (reason, emotion, will, conscience and action), it is *reason* that is of paramount importance as we ultimately move toward a consideration of the role of logic in Biblical hermeneutics.

Why this is the case, however, is predicated upon an understanding of the role that reason plays in salvation, on both God's and man's part.

(A.) God and Reason

A study of the existence and attributes of the Godhead is a very rewarding, if not exhausting study. To do a thorough job a diligent student would have to investigate all Biblical references to every aspect of God's character — a truly daunting task.

From a much simpler perspective, we often refer to God as omnipotent (all powerful), omnipresent (He is everywhere), omnibenevolent (He is infinitely loving) and omniscient (God is all knowing.) For the purpose of this present study, it is paramount to focus on that attribute of God that we refer to as omniscience. The term literally means "all knowing," and as it applies to God has tremendous import, for our God is a God of knowledge (1 Sam 2:3; Ps 147:4-5). As such:

- (1.) God knows all that can be known (Job 28:10)
- (2.) He knows the future before it comes to pass (Is 42:9; 46:10; 48:4-6)
- (3.) He knows all that can be known about the activities and conditions of all men (Ex 3:3-20; 6:1; 11:1; Num 14:27; Job 24:24; Ps 33:13; 66:7; Prov 5:21)
- (4.) He knows the hearts and minds of men (1 Chr 28:9; 1 Kgs 8:39; Is 66:18; Lk 16:15; Acts 1:24; 12:8; et. al.)
- (5.) He knows every detail about us, even the very number of hairs upon our heads (Mt 10:29)
- (6.) In summary: there is nothing that God does not know...He knows all.

But God's capacity for knowledge is more than just an infinite collection of facts and data. God is infinitely rational, or reasonable, as we shall presently note.

(B.) Man and Reason

Man's use of raw knowledge (facts and data) must take place within certain prescribed parameters so that we may find God (Acts 17:24-30; Ps 14:2ff; 53:2ff), and be found in His sight as wise (cf the numerous injunctions in Proverbs).

It is for this reason that we see man encouraged and prompted to not only learn God's will (Mt 22:16; Mk 2:10; Lk 20:21; Jn 8:32; et. al.), but also to be reasonable in the use and acquisition of such knowledge (see terms to follow). Some form of "know" is used with such frequency in the new testament (e.g., KJV - 576x; ASV - 599x, NKJV - 607x) that it is impossible to construct a Biblical soteriology apart from it.

The terms translated as some form of "know," including the following: (a.) ginosko, (b.) eideo, (c.) epiginosko, (d.) epistamai, (e.) histeemi, (f.) proginosko, (g.) suneideo, (h.) parakoloutheo, (i.) agnoeo, (j.) diaginosko, (k.) gnosis, (l.) epignosis, (m.) sunesis, (n.) episteemon, (o.) agnosia, (p.) gnostos, (q.) phaneros, (r.) pleerophoreo, (s.) anagnoridzomai, (t.) gnoridzo and (u.) diagnoridzo. These terms occur so routinely in the

new testament that every aspect of our Christian faith is easily seen to be connected to a *knowledge* of the will of God.

An overview of the use of “reason” reveals the same prevalence of usage. The terms translated as some form of reason in the new testament are as follows: (a.) dialogizomai; (b.) logizomai; (c.) suzeteo; (d.) dialogismos; (e.) sullogizomai; (f.) arestos; (g.) dialegomai; (h.) alogos; (I.) suzetesis; (j.) logikos; (k.) atopos; and (l.) logos.

This list, though long, is not exhaustive; it does not include additional terms relating specifically to proving, demonstrating, trying, etc., that are found throughout the new testament scriptures. But, based upon this preliminary investigation we are able to draw specific conclusions about both the nature of man and God.

If (1) a knowledge of God is necessary for a soul to become a child of God, and if (2) reason is also necessary for a soul to become a child of God, and if (3) becoming a child of God demands that we become like God in some respects, then (4) it is safe to say that God must not only be a God of knowledge (as already noted), but (5) He must also be a God of reason.

An examination of these premises yields the conclusion that God is a God of reason:

(1.) Is knowledge a part of what we must attain in order to become a child of God? The Bible is quite clear — 2 Peter 1:1-5 teaches: (a.) that through *knowledge* of God and Christ our grace and peace are multiplied (vs 2) ; (b.) that through *knowledge* of God we are called to glory and virtue (vs 3); (c.) that through *knowledge* of God we receive precious promises (vs 4); and (d.) that because of a *knowledge* of those promises we become partakers of the divine nature, that is like God (vs 4). It is for this reason that we are so diligently admonished to grow in knowledge (vs 5ff; cf. 2 Pet 3:18). *It is obvious that knowledge is a necessary requisite for the salvation of man.*

(2.) Is reason a part of what we must engage in to become a child of God, and use to teach others to become children of God? Again, the Bible is quite clear — (a.) 1 Peter 3:15 says we must be prepared to “answer” (from “apologia” meaning a verbal defense, speech in defense or a reasoned statement or argument, cf Phlp 1:7, 17); (b.) 1 Thessalonians 5:21 teaches we must “prove” all things (from “dokimadzo” meaning to test, examine, prove, and scrutinize to see whether a thing is genuine or not, cf Rom 1:28; 12:2; Eph 5:10; 1 Jn 4:1); and (c.) in Acts 17:3 Paul was “opening and alleging” truths about the nature of Christ. The term “opening” (from “dianoigo”) literally means to open by dividing or drawing asunder, to open thoroughly; but it also has reference to opening the mind of one, to make one cause to understand a thing, to open one’s soul, to rouse in one the faculty of understanding or the desire of learning. What Paul did in this setting was exactly what Jesus did in Luke 23:45 where it says “Then *opened* he their mind, that they might understand the scriptures;...” It is also what the Lord did through Paul in the teaching and conversion of Lydia (cf. Acts 16:14). *It is plain that we must engage in reason in order to become a child of God and in teaching others to do the same.*

(3.) Must we become like God and Christ in order to become children of God? The answer by now should be obvious. The passage just noted (2 Pet 1:1-5) speaks of becoming a “partaker(s) of the divine nature.” Furthermore, 1 John 3:1-2 teaches “Beloved, now are we children of God, and it is not yet made manifest what we shall be. We know that, if he shall be manifested, we shall be like him; for we shall see him even as he is.” *It is not possible to become a child of God except that we become God-like.*

(4., 5.) Thus, if both knowledge and reason are requisite for us to become a child of God, and if becoming a child of God demands that we become like God, it is essential to conclude that our God is a God of reason, as well as knowledge.

We could have simply cited a few verses in order to draw the same conclusion: (1) Psalm 147:4-5 — “He counteth the number of the stars; He calleth them all by their names. Great is our Lord, and mighty in power; His understanding is infinite.” Verse 4 speaks of God’s infinite knowledge, but verse 5 addresses His infinite understanding (or wisdom, inclusive of reason); (2) Isaiah 40:28 — “Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard? The everlasting God, Jehovah, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary; there is no searching of his understanding.” The last phrase, “no searching of his understanding” indicates infinite wisdom and reason.; and (3) Romans 11:33 — “O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past tracing out!” This verse speaks of the “depth” (i.e., unbounded, or limitless) of both God’s knowledge and wisdom/reason.

By taking the longer course, as opposed to simply citing verses similar to the ones just mentioned, we were able to demonstrate how the reasoning ability of both God and man are intertwined with one another. Our own ability to reason mirrors God’s ability to reason, because God made us that way.

IV. The Laws of Thought: God’s and Man’s

Having concluded that: (1) man is made in the image of God; (2) that the “soul” of man most reflects God’s nature; and (3) that both God and man are characterized as beings of reason; we proceed to the heart of our present endeavor.

Though it is true, as just studied in section III, that man and God are alike in that they possess reason as an essential component of their respective natures, there is much more to be said about an *even closer parallel*.

It is a matter of superlative importance that we understand that not only do God and man share reason as a characteristic of their natures, *they also share the specific methods employed in reasoning*. Their *patterns* of reasoning are such *that they are identical*. Both are “governed” (for want of a better term as it applies to Deity) by “laws” of thinking, commonly styled “laws of thought.”

These “laws of thought” might be understood by some to apply only within the philosophic, or scientific, study of logic. To understand them only within this setting is not only unfortunate; it is a mistaken assumption. These principles are pandemic, having universal application in every discipline, including, but certainly not limited to, Biblical studies.

Furthermore, the “laws of thought” are self-evident, axiomatic and autopic (self-authenticating). This simply means that the “laws of thought” are of such constitution that logic, reason, argumentation, communication, etc. of all kinds, because they depend upon the “laws of thought,” cannot proceed in any degree without both their existence and veracity being implied.

These laws of thought are: (1) the law of non-contradiction; (2) the law of excluded middle, and (3) the law of identity. What do they mean? How do they apply to God and man? And, how do they apply to our study of the word of God?

(A.) *What do these laws mean?*

(1.) the law of non-contradiction [in symbolic form: $\sim(p \cdot \sim p)$]: (1.) with reference to propositions (non-ambiguous statements that are either true or false), this law

states that it is false to say that any given proposition is both true and false in the same field of reference; (2.) with reference to things, this law states that it is false to say that a given object both possesses and does not possess the same characteristics in the same frame of reference;

(2.) the law of excluded middle ($p \vee \sim p$): (1.) with reference to propositions, this law states that any given proposition is either true or false; (2.) with reference to things, this law states that a given object either does or does not possess a certain characteristic;

(3.) the law of identity ($p > p$): (1.) with reference to propositions, this law states that the truthfulness of a proposition implies the truthfulness of that proposition, (2.) with reference to things, this law states that any given object is that given object.

It is obvious that these principles are fundamental and unmistakably obvious. There is nothing mystical, magical or mysterious about them. They are clear. They reflect common sense. And, they are true.

(B.) How do these "laws of thought" apply to God?

Without a doubt, what we are about to discuss here is the *most critical aspect* of our study. To say that we can have some knowledge of how God "thinks" seems to be the vertex of presumption and folly. We hasten to state, however, that we *do not* know how God "thinks" because *we* are so great, but rather because God who is *great*, has *given us insight* into how He "thinks."

It is our contention here that God "thinks" consistently with the "laws of thought" itemized above, and that we can know this by examining God's divine revelation. Consider the following selection of verses, all of which indicate that there exists an ultimate standard God recognizes, and which also demand that because of this ultimate standard (i.e., the very nature of God Himself), God *always* acts, speaks, and "thinks" in a manner consistent with it.

(1.) God, in all cases, acts consistently with His own nature. Indeed, it is impossible for God to do otherwise.

(a.) Deuteronomy 7:9 — "Know therefore that Jehovah thy God, he is God, *the faithful God*, who keepeth covenant and lovingkindness with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations, ..."

(b.) 1 Corinthians 1:9 — "*God is faithful*, through whom ye were called into the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord."

(c.) 2 Timothy 2:13 — "if we are faithless, he abideth faithful; *for he cannot deny himself.*" (cf. additional passages which teach that God is "faithful," e.g. 1 Cor 10:13; 1 Jn 1:8; et. al.)

(2.) God is a God of truth.

- (a.) Exodus 34:6 — “And Jehovah passed by before him, and proclaimed, Jehovah, Jehovah, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and *abundant in lovingkindness and truth*,...”
- (b.) Deuteronomy 32:4 — “He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: *a God of truth* and without iniquity, just and right is he.” (KJV)
- (c.) Psalm 31:5 — “Into thy hand I commend my spirit: Thou hast redeemed me, *O Jehovah, thou God of truth.*”

(3.) *God, because He is faithful to His own nature and a God of truth, can never lie.*

- (a.) 1 Samuel 15:29 — “And also *the Strength of Israel will not lie* nor repent; for he is not a man, that he should repent.”
- (b.) Titus 1:1-2 — “Paul, a servant of God, and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God's elect, and the knowledge of the truth which is according to godliness, in hope of eternal life, which God, *who cannot lie*, promised before times eternal; ...”
- (c.) Hebrews 6:18 — “that by two immutable things, in which *it is impossible for God to lie*, we may have a strong encouragement, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us:...” (Note: cf. additional passages that address the oaths and promises of God.)

(4.) *It is part of the inherent nature of God, a God who is faithful to His own nature and a God of truth, to stand for and recognize truth (and moral) related principles that are consistent with, and perfect examples of, the “law of non-contradiction” and the “law of excluded middle.”*

- (a.) God knows that truth and lies are at opposite ends of the moral, and logical, spectrum:
 - (1.) 1 John 2: 21 — “I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it, and because *no lie is of the truth.*”
 - (2.) 1 John 2:27 — “And as for you, the anointing which ye received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any one teach you; but as his anointing teacheth you; concerning all things, *and is true, and is no lie*, and even as it taught you, ye abide in him.”
- (b.) to deny God's teachings, which are always consistent with the laws of non-contradiction and excluded middle, is to deny truth (and thus God Himself), and to affirm a lie:
 - (1.) John 8:44 — “Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father it is your will to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and *standeth not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father thereof.*”

(2.) Romans 1:25 — “for that they *exchanged the truth of God for a lie*, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen.”

(3.) 2 Thessalonians 2:11-12 — “And for this cause God sendeth them a working of error, that they should *believe a lie: that they all might be judged who believed not the truth*, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.”

In summary, God “thinks” (if we can justly speak of such from our perspective) in accordance with these “laws of thought.” His infinite nature, which He cannot deny, is the absolute and objective standard of all truth and righteousness.

(C.) How do these “laws of thought” apply to man?

If, as we have already abundantly demonstrated, the essence of man is a reflection of the nature of God, and if God is “governed” by the principles inherent in the “laws of thought,” then man must be likewise directed. This is true in all areas of study.

Every discipline that man is involved in is governed by the “laws of thought.” All language, logic, and communication is ruled by these ubiquitous principles. They apply to “hard” sciences such as mathematics, physics and chemistry, where it is impossible to carry on any research, experimentation or calculation without relying upon these principles. They apply to “behavioral” sciences such as psychology and sociology. They simply apply to every area of learning.

The “laws of thought” are of such constitution that no thought, reason, communication or knowledge of any kind can proceed without both their existence and veracity being implied. Let us now consider how they have specific application to our study of God’s word.

(D.) How do these “laws of thought” apply to our study of the word of God?

If God has created man with the “imprint” of His nature upon him, is it possible that God has also created a written revelation with His “imprint” upon it as well? Surely we see that this is not only possible; it is reality.

This is what we expect to find in God’s word: (1) If God is faithful to His own nature, we expect the word to be faithful to His nature. (2) If God is true, we expect the word to be true. (3) If God cannot lie, then the word cannot lie. And (4), if God — because He is faithful, because He is true and because He cannot lie — recognizes and upholds the principles of the “laws of thought” in all things, then we would expect the word of God to do the same. All God’s revelation upholds the principles inherent in the “laws of thought.” They are consistent echoes of His own infinite nature.

Is it possible that man — created in the image of God with the ability to think according to divinely implanted patterns — has the ability to read and understand a book that God has given to him, a book that is itself a reflection of God’s nature? Indeed, because both man and book are created with a divine stamping, it would appear that the book and man were made with each other in mind — a book that reveals God for a man made in God’s image.

To be succinct: (1) God's thoughts in His word are such that they can be perceived by mankind through man's God-given way of thinking; or (2) man's thought processes are sufficiently like God's that man has the ability to understand God's revealed word. Because God, who "thinks" a certain way, has made man in His image, man thinks in a manner that is a consistently analogous counterpart to God's own "thinking," and thus perfectly suited to know God's revealed will.

This is evident when we examine scriptures which show that the "laws of thought" apply to man's study of the word of God:

(1.) it is by revelation that we know what is true and what is error (ultimately), and how to distinguish between the two.

(a.) 1 John 4:6 — "We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he who is not of God heareth us not. By this we know the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error."

(b.) 1 John 5:7 — "And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is the truth."

(c.) 1 John 5:20 — "And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life." [Note: the word "understanding," from *dianoia* (trans. as mind, understanding and imagination; means the mind as a faculty of understanding, feeling, desiring; understanding; mind, i.e. spirit, way of thinking and feeling; and thoughts, either good or bad. By means of divinely authorized revelation, i.e. truth, we are given a "mind set" that allows us to understand the mind of God and Christ.)]

(2.) Christians are under obligation to speak and teach only what is true, and to conscientiously avoid all lies

(a.) Romans 9:1 — "I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience bearing witness with me in the Holy Spirit, ..."

(b.) 1 Timothy 2:7 — "whereunto I was appointed a preacher and an apostle (I speak the truth, I lie not), a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth."

(c.) James 3:14 — "But if ye have bitter jealousy and faction in your heart, glory not and lie not against the truth."

(d.) 1 John 1:8 — "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us."

(3.) to deny truth is to deny God's word, which is a denial of God

(a.) 1 John 1:10 — "If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us."

(b.) 1 John 2:4 — "He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; ..."

(4.) Christians are under obligation to practice only what is consistent with the truth.

- (a.) 1 John 1:6 — “If we say that we have fellowship with him and walk in the darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: ...”
- (b.) 1 John 3: 18-19 — “My Little children, let us not love in word, neither with the tongue, but in deed and truth. Hereby shall we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our heart before him: ...”
- (c.) 2 John 1:4 — “I rejoice greatly that I have found certain of thy children walking in truth, even as we received commandment from the Father.” (cf. 1 Jn - 3 Jn)

As it applies to man’s study of the word of God, it is evident that the principles which inhere in the “laws of thought” are no less binding.

V. Logic and Biblical Interpretation: Applying The Rules of Thought

In this, our last segment of study, it will be our purpose to briefly discuss how man (1) created in the image of God, (2) created with an immortal soul, (3) created with the ability to reason after a fashion that is God-like, is able to (4) understand God’s divinely revealed word — and is able to do so by means of a science called logic.

For some, the very utterance of the word “logic” brings fear and dread. That is regrettable. Logic is nothing more than a systematic application of the laws of reason. It is a cohesive system following rules and principles, that when given sufficient perusal, study and implementation is clear cut to any diligent student.

Logic has been called a tool, but such a utilitarian definition allows some to believe that logic is simply a means to an end, with no justifiable existence of its own. But if logic is a systematic application of the laws of reasoning, and if it yields conclusions that are not only consistent with these laws, but also with truth and ultimate reality, then it must be that logic has an ontological value all its own. This simply means that logic, or the rules of reason, is just as essential as reason itself. Indeed, there is no reason without corresponding *rules* of reason, or logic.

If we took the time necessary to thoroughly examine (1) the nature of all truth, knowledge and reality; (2) the nature of the Godhead, (3) the nature of the inspired and authoritative word, and (4) all the specific statements of truths contained in that divine revelation, we would find that principles of reason, logic, permeate everything. Though it is impossible to give logic its just due in a matter of a few paragraphs, at least one attempt at argumentation in its defense is certainly worthwhile.

Jesus’ Defense of The Baptism of John

The Bible addresses the issue of authority in hundreds of passages. Perhaps the most prominent of these is found in Jesus’ discussion with the chief priests and elders about John’s baptism. What is of great significance in this setting, in addition to the issue of authority, is the manner in which Jesus answered the questions of the priests and elders. He did so by using fundamental principles of reason, or logic.

This is what we read in Matthew 21:23-27:

Now when He came into the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people confronted Him as He was teaching, and said, “By what authority are You doing these things? And who gave You this authority?” But Jesus answered and said to them, “I also will ask you one thing, which if you tell Me, I likewise will tell you by what authority I do these things: “The baptism of John—where was it from? From heaven or from men?” And they reasoned among themselves, saying, “If we say, ‘From

heaven,' He will say to us, 'Why then did you not believe him?' "But if we say, 'From men,' we fear the multitude, for all count John as a prophet." So they answered Jesus and said, "We do not know." And He said to them, "Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things."

We learn a number of important lessons concerning authority and logic from this passage:

(1) *Everything in religion is practiced by one of two authorities: the authority of God or the authority of man.*

This is what Jesus meant when he said to the Jewish leaders "The baptism of John, where was it from? From heaven or from men?" If it was "from heaven," it was of divine origin. If it was "from men," it was not. These were the only two choices. There were (and are) no other alternatives.

By presenting his question in this manner, Jesus made use of a simple disjunction, an "either...or" form of argumentation. It is a type of the "law of excluded middle," which states that any given proposition is either true or false

($p \vee \sim p$). A pure form could have been stated in either of the following ways: (1) "The baptism of John was either from heaven or it was not from heaven," or (2) "The baptism of John was either from man or it was not from man." In both of these re-formulations of Jesus' statement, the latter part of the disjunction ("not from heaven" in the first, and "not from man" in the second) is equivalent to "man" or "heaven" respectively. Jesus' statement, then, is a minor variation of the "law of excluded middle."

(2) *Of the two authorities, the one that we are expected to follow is God's authority, and the one we are expected to reject is man's authority.*

The Jews to whom Jesus was speaking understood this point very well. When Jesus asked them about the baptism of John, the Jewish leaders understood that there were only two choices, only two sources of authority. They *reasoned* correctly when they said that if the baptism of John was from heaven (from God), they should have obeyed it.

They *reasoned* correctly again when they said that if John's baptism was from man (of purely human origin), they would have been in direct opposition to the majority of the people who believed that John was a true prophet of God. Either way, God's authority was obviously *implied* and the Jewish leaders were faced with a most discomfoting situation.

In response to Jesus' question about the authority of John's baptism, the Jewish leaders said "We do not know." They refused to answer such a simple question (i.e., choose one of two obviously contradictory disjuncts), for in so doing they would have incriminated themselves.

Such is the power of logic and reason when correctly applied. The religious leaders were stymied, not because the conclusions were incomprehensible or untenable, but rather because they were so easily forced to see the error of their ways.

(3) *We learn further that when pressed with the question of authority in religious matters some people will refuse to see what is most clear.*

It seems obvious that choosing to serve God would necessarily demand that we refuse to serve man-made religious authorities. But sometimes the obvious, even when presented in the simplest of logical choices by the Lord Himself, is difficult to grasp. If there are only two choices to make, and if one is obviously wrong, how can we be so reluctant to say that the remaining one is correct?

The problem is not merely an intellectual one. If a student learning the rudiments of arithmetic is given a multiple choice problem, he knows that sooner or later, even by guessing, he can stumble on the correct answer. If there are only two answers given as possible solutions to a problem, the student knows that the second answer must be the correct one if he first chooses the incorrect one. There are no other choices. The answer is obvious. If only two choices exist, and if one can be definitively re-

futed, the remaining choice is obviously vindicated. Unless, of course, you are uneasy about the resulting *consequences* of admitting that choice.

Within the realm of religion and morality, what is obvious in other disciplines suddenly becomes blurred and fuzzy — not because of a deficiency in the intellect, or reasoning ability, of man, but rather because of the *will* of man. In our earlier discussion we noted that the five attributes of the soul of man were such that they all influenced one another. The priests and elders serve as an example of *reason overrun by volition*. It wasn't that these religious leaders could not admit the truth; they did not *want* to admit the truth.

If admitting God exists or that God has taught some specific truth inherently demands us to think, speak and act differently, then it is understandable to see how some might balk at such a momentous admission. It is *intellectually* possible to know it, but because of an *unwillingness* to accept the consequences and live accordingly, it can be *volitionally* and thus *verbally* denied.

Why reject logic?

Without a doubt, God is infinite in all respects, including His ability to know and reason. Man, though finite, was divinely created with the ability to parallel the principles God manifests in reason. For example:

(1) In thought: man has the ability to think like God because God has made him that way, not because man has, on his own, figured out who God is and what God is like.

(2) In our knowledge of the world: man has the ability to perceive God via His creation (Rom 1:20; Ps 19:1; Acts 14; etc.), because God has given man that ability, not because man's "science" is so great by itself.

(3) In our knowledge of the word of God: man has the ability to know God's will in His word because God made him was that ability, not because man is so intuitive or intelligent that he can know all about God without special revelation.

And (4), In morality: man has the ability to become like God ("Ye shall be ye holy, for I am holy," Lev 20:7; 1 Pet 1:15-16), not because man is so special in and of himself, but rather because God made him with that ability.

In spite of the omnipresence of logic and reason, there are many who deny and reject it. Those who deny or compromise: (1) the true nature of Deity, (2) the inspiration and authority of the Bible, (3) the objective and absolute nature of Bible truth, (4) an objective system of ethics, or (5) an objective system of Biblical interpretation are engaged in denials consistent with a rejection of logic and reason.

When we deny logic, reason or the "laws of thought":

(1) In the realm of knowledge — we embrace subjectivity. Everything is true, everything is false. Nothing is true, nothing is false.

(2) In the realm of reality — we become existentialists. What my situation is determines what is right or wrong, true or false for *me*. Present situations, feelings and emotions determine what is present reality. Tomorrow's situations and emotions will determine a new reality.

(3) In the realm of morality — we encounter relativity. There are no final standards of right and wrong. All is relational.

(4) In the realm of culture — we endorse multi-culturalism. No practices, cultures, traditions or beliefs are inherently right or wrong. All have equal value. They are all simply a related consensus of varying populations.

(5) In the realm of religion — we encourage denominationalism, universalism, ecumenicism, new age and world religions, mysticism, and an "every man does that which is right in his own eyes" religion. Religious "truth" is subjective, existential and relative. All religions are okay.

(6) In the realm of true Christianity — we demand diversity, union and freedom at the expense of purity, doctrine and separateness. As Paul Johnson has stated: “Lots of well-meaning Christians, however, seem to operate with the misconception that biblical revelation is somehow exempt from the law of contradiction. They suggest that God’s truth can contravene logic if God is so pleased.” (*The Law of Contradiction*)

Each of the above rejections is a rejection of form, of patternism, of “blue print” theology. All these denials, rejections and objections point to a similar pathology: a rejection of reason and logic. Logic is the “ultimate pattern,” because ingrained within us are certain immutable “laws of thought” that are beyond anyone’s ability to change, manipulate, or alter in any way. Upon these laws hinge the nature of reason and thought, the nature of communication and language, the nature of reality, the nature of knowledge and truth, the nature of revelation, and, in large measure, the nature of God.

It is the plea of God through His divinely inspired word that we be a people dedicated to the use of reason and logic as we: (1) demonstrate the vanity of worldly wisdom (Rom 1:21; 1 Cor 3:20); (2) persuade souls of gospel truths (Acts 17:17; 18:4, 19; 19:8); (3) encourage souls to practice righteousness (Acts 25:25); (4) prepare ourselves to defend the faith (1 Pet 3:15; and (5) accept the chastening that God delivers in our own lives (Heb 12:5).

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"IN TRUTH"
W. TERRY VARNER

INTRODUCTION

"These things write I unto thee, hoping to come unto thee shortly: But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth" (1 Timothy 3:15-16).

1. The **implications** from the text of 1 Timothy 3:15:
 - a. The *privilege* as members of the church of Christ.
 - b. The *responsibility* as members of the church of Christ.
 - c. The *honor* of being members of the church of Christ.

2. Paul viewed his privilege, responsibility and honor, as an apostle and Christian, of :
 - a. "The grace of God which was given unto me" (1 Cor. 3:10).
 - b. Though not apostles, as fellow Christians, we ought to have the same attitude "**In These Times**" toward the church of Christ and the truth.

3. The objectives of our study this hour are to:
 - a. Set forth well-defined terms of the text.
 - (1) **The Church--"The House Of God."**
 - (2) **The Church--"The Pillar and Ground."**
 - (3) **The Church--"Of the Truth."**
 - b. Observations and applications from the text:
 - (1) The *necessity* of upholding "the truth."
 - (2) The *nature* of upholding "the truth."
 - (3) The *results* from the neglect of failing to uphold "the truth."

THE CHURCH--"THE HOUSE OF GOD"

A. The **church** of the New Testament.

1. The word *church*¹ is from the Greek *ekklesia* (*ek*=out of) and (*klesia*=called); i.e. the "called out" ones.

2. "*Called out*" ones references the spiritual family² of God and implies that one is:

¹The word church occurs 115 times in the New Testament and is translated as "assembly" (Acts 19:32,39,41) referring to the citizens of Ephesus. It is used one time to reference the nation of Israel as "the church in the wilderness" (Acts 7:38). The remaining 111 times references to the spiritual family of God with Christ as its Head (cf. Eph. 1:22-23; Col. 1:18).

²Membership in the spiritual family of God; i.e. the church is by obedience to the gospel (Rom. 1:16), God's instrument to save. This involves:

- (1) A personal faith (Heb. 11:6) that works by love (Gal. 5:6).
- (2) Turning from sin and embracing God's way, termed as repentance (Luke 13:3,5; Acts 17:30-31).
- (3) Confessing the precious name of Jesus (Acts 8:37; Rom. 10:10).
- (4) Immersion into the Godhead for remission of sins (Matt. 28:19-20; Acts 2:38; 2:16) in order to be a "new creature" (2 Cor. 5:17; Rom. 6:3-4).
- (5) Faithful, sacrificial and committed life in Christ unto death (Rom.

- a. Called out of darkness *into* light (Acts 26:18).
- b. Called out of the power of Satan *into* God (Acts 26:18).
- c. Called out of the world *into* Christ (John 17:15; Gal. 3:26-27).

B. The **church** is divinely described as:

1. "*The house of God, which is the church of the living God.*"

- a. "*The house;*" i.e. the church, the family, the body of obedient believers.

Hendriksen states: "House" is correct here, not "household" as in verses 4,5,12. Believers are God's *house* or *sanctuary* (I Cor. 3:16; 6:19; II Cor. 6:16) because God *dwells in them*. Hence, Paul continues: **which is the church of the living God** (*not the temple of dead idols!...*) (*New Testament Commentary: Exposition of the Pastoral Epistles*, p. 136).

b. "*Of God*" is a prepositional phrase affirming that the "house" (church) is owned "of" God (1 Cor. 6:19-20), which was purchased by the blood of Christ (Acts 20:28).

- c. "*The church of the living God*":

(1) "*The church*" references to the "called out" ones, the Family of God, the Body or those in the covenant relationship with God.

(2) "*Of the living God*" references in opposition to the temple of the Ephesians Diana, etc.³

(3) There are a series of definitive phrases⁴ used in the New Testament to describe both the spiritual nature and work of the church in the world in behalf of God.

8:1; 12:1-2; Acts 11:23; Rev. 2:10).

³There is an important contrast suggested by the phrase "the church (assembly) of the *living God*." The phrase "of the living God" is set in contrast with the pagan temples and their dead idols. Idols in pagan temples were made of dead materials and by man; whereas, it was *the living God*, the very giver of life (John 1:4) and the "Father of spirits" (Heb. 12:9). See, Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul's Epistles to Timothy*, p. 606). We can faithfully trust in the living God Jehovah and live (1 Tim. 4:10).

⁴While the following list of definitive phrases describing the spiritual nature and work of the church is not exhaustive, we set forth the following list and their suggestive nature and the reader may develop further the list from his own study:

(1) The spiritual *Body of Christ* emphasizes the Christian's relationship to Christ, who is the head of the Body, the church (cf. Eph. 1:22-23; Col. 1:18).

(2) The spiritual *Temple*, which is "not made with hands" (Acts 17:24), emphasizes (a) the habitation of God (Eph. 2:21-22), (b) the great High Priesthood of Christ (Heb. 2:17-18; 3:1; 4:15; 5:55-6,10; 7:15-17,26, etc.), and (c) the priesthood of believers (1 Peter 2:5,9).

(3) The spiritual *Bride of Christ*, who has been espoused "to one husband. . . as a pure virgin to Christ" (2 Cor. 11:2), emphasizes the Christian's relationship between Christ and the church as illustrated by the relationship of the husband and wife (Eph. 5:22-33).

(4) The spiritual *Kingdom of God* or *of heaven* emphasizing that IF one (the Christian) is in the kingdom, THEN he (the Christian) is in the church, and subject to the "only Potentate, King of kings, Lord of lords" (1 Tim. 6:15). The terms church and kingdom are used interchangeably (cf. Matt. 16:18-19). See, "The Kingdom of Heaven," by David P. Stevens, *Therefore Stand*, XIII:85-86. Also, "The Church Triumphant--Is It The Kingdom?" by Noah A. Hackworth in *The Church Triumphant* edited by Bobby Liddell, 16th Annual Bellview

They describe both the positive and negative nature of the church; thereby, eliminating the many false conceptions of the church as held by so many.

2. The church is the spiritual family of God, the Father (cf. Matt. 6:10; Luke 11:2). This is where God's presence dwells (Eph. 2:21-22); therefore, everything must be as God wants and not as men may wish.

THE CHURCH AS "THE PILLAR AND GROUND."

A. "Pillar" (*stulos*) meaning:

1. "A column supporting the weight of a building is used (a) metaphorically, . . . of a local church as to its responsibility, in a collective capacity, to maintain the doctrines of the faith by teaching and practice" (W. E. Vine, *An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, III:184).

2. The term *pillar* emphasizes the "supporting function or stand. In a transferred sense it may denote a reliable person" (G. Kittel and G. Friedrich, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, One Volume Edition, p. 1096).

B. "Ground" (*hedraioma*) meaning "a support, bulwark, stay" (Vine, *op. cit.*, II:181). *Hedraioma* is from *hedraios* meaning steadfast, firm; from *hedra*, a seat.

C. The emphasis of application is that the church is to be the support, bulwark (a defensive wall; fortified rampart) and stay of the eternal truths of the living God.

1. The church is the bulwark of the eternal truths of the living God who is willing to challenge false teachers both within and without the church.

2. The eternal purpose of God is set in the church to support *truth* (her foundation) and *protecting* (defense) and *preserving* (offense) the truth in the great battle and fight against all of God's (church's) enemies (see, H. Balz and G. Schneider, *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*, I:662). This describes the "**behavior**"⁵ (1 Tim. 3:15) or conduct

Lectures, Pensacola, FL: Firm Foundation Publishing House, 1991, pp. 93-102.

(5) The spiritually *Saved* emphasizing the saved are added to the church by God (Acts 2:47); therefore, it is impossible to be saved and not be a member of the church of our Lord. No saved are outside of the church belonging to Christ (cf. Matt. 16:18; Col. 1:18; Acts 20:28).

(6) The spiritual *Army of God* emphasizing the militant nature of the church and her marching orders to "fight the good fight of faith" (1 Tim. 6:21) by "contending earnestly for faith" (Jude 3).

⁵ "**Behave**" in 1 Timothy 3:15 is the idea that the "life lived in the faith is a persuasive teaching" (C. Spicq, *Theological Lexicon of the New Testament*, I:75n40). The church bears God's saving truth to all the world with the assurance that "the gates of hades shall not prevail against it" (Matt. 16:18). This suggests that the church (1) shines as light in the world of darkness (Acts 26:18), (2) draws men into it via the message of truth (John 6:44-45; 12:31-32; Rom. 1:16; 2 Tim. 4:1-4), and (3) recognizes there is a "spirit of truth" and a "spirit of error" (1 John 4:6) and knowing the difference so as to stand or uphold the truth both defensively and offensively.

("know how" [*eides*]: i.e., the possession of knowledge and skill necessary to accomplish the desired goal," F. Rienecker and Cleon Rogers, *Linguistic Key to the Greek New Testament*, p. 624), of "the house of God" or "the church of the living God."

THE CHURCH AND "TRUTH"

A. "Of the truth."

1. "Of" is a preposition denoting possession and relates to the church as the repository of "the truth" (Jude 3).

2. "Truth" (*aletheia*) meaning that which is genuine or certain, reliable and authentic. It references to Christianity (2 Peter 1:12). The church's witness to the truth is equated with that of divine revelation--the Bible (3 John 12). (See, Kittel, *op. cit.*, I:37-38).

B. The church is the buttress of truth and is to proclaim the truth so clearly that no one can raise any objection (Spicq, *op. cit.*, I:58). Paul states: "For we can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth" (2 Cor. 13:8). At the same time, the context suggests the contrast between truth of the living God in opposition to fables, myths, error, false teaching, apostasy, et. al. (See, J. A. Bengel, *New Testament Word Studies*, II:520).

OBSERVATIONS AND APPLICATIONS OF THE TEXT

A. The church must understand the *necessity* and *nature* of upholding the truth and the *results* from neglecting to uphold the truth. It is essential that we understand both the New Testament teaching and the philosophical concepts of society in our time. *This demands proper preparation both to proclaim and to defend the truth.*

B. Our age is no different than the society in which the first century Christian lived and the church of Christ existed. Our age has been described as a postmodern culture.⁶ Society has a serious distrust in *reason* and *knowledge* of God. Many have both rejected and forgotten the words of Jesus: "and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32) and "thy word is truth" (John 17:17).

C. No more important matter could be considered by men than that of understanding our times. So many, both within and without the church, deny that we can know the truth and know that we know it. Absolute truth (there is no other) is rejected without a blink of the eye. Samuel M. Thompson said it well: "The only sound reason to advocate that a religious doctrine be accepted is to be found in its truth. If there is truth in religion then in addition to sincerity there must be the desire for truth, a desire strong enough to compel belief to change whatever is found to be false" (*A Modern Philosophy of Religion*, p. 90).

D. We desire to set forth a few observations and applications showing that the church, as the pillar and ground of the truth, has the responsibility to uphold the truth in this confused

⁶ We recommend brethren to read and become familiar with *The Death of Truth*, edited by Dennis McCallum (Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1996, 288 pages). This volume contains one of the better series of articles on the current cultural thinking known as Post-Modernism. It shows its challenging manner toward Christianity. It sets forth clearly how effective and confusing Post-Modernism is in insisting there are no absolutes not only religiously, but also in Health Care, Literature, Education, History, Psychotherapy, Law, Science, etc.

and disturbing time. The following are some of our relevant challenges to the faith and oppositions to the faith.

1. **That truth can be both added to and subtracted from.** Compare the warning in Revelation 22:18-19. Divine truth is set forth in the inspired, inerrant, infallible, complete, all-sufficient and authoritative Word of God--the Bible (2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 John 9-11; 2 Peter 1:20-21).

2. **That truth⁷ is absolute and attainable.** There are those both in the church and in the world who advocate there are no absolutes and that we can only seek truth, but never find it. Both John 7:17 and 8:32 state that a man, with a good and honest heart (Luke 8:15), can seek and know the truth. It is not at all unusual to hear men state: "In that we differ, how can anyone ever be certain that he has or knows the truth?" But this stands in stark contrast to John divinely writing of the distinction between "the spirit of truth" and "the spirit of error" (1 John 4:6). While I may not know all truth, I can know many things about truth. Likewise, I can test all statements and teachings in light of the Word (1 John 4:1); thereby, knowing that I know the difference between truth and error.

3. **That truth must not tolerate error.**⁸ If this is not the case, then the Bible is contradictory (cf. John 7:17; 8:32; 2 Tim. 3:16-17; Phil. 1:17; Jude 3; 1 John 4:1,6; 2 John 9-11). This is equivalent of affirming that a man has the right to be wrong and at the same time affirming that a man does not have to be right about anything. Right and wrong (truth and error) is determined by the Word of God.

4. **That truth must be defended.** It is often argued that "the truth does not need defended." There is one problem with this statement--it is **not true!** Jude writes that Christians are to "contend earnestly for the faith" (Jude 3). The word "*contend*" emphasizes the combatancy and militancy of the church in the great battle to defend truth against those who deny and/or attack it. "*Earnestly*" suggests intensity; i.e., a real battle, struggle, or fight. Peter stated that Christians have an obligation of "being ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason concerning the hope that is in you" (1 Peter 3:15). The word "*answer*" means "defense." Thus, we have a divine command to defend the gospel (cf. Phil 1:17).

5. **Truth must be obeyed.** Peter wrote: "Seeing ye have purified your souls in your obedience to the truth" (1 Peter 1:22). When we obey the primary commands of the gospel, we obey the truth. Truth demands that one continue faithful in all things. It was to Christians that Paul asked: "Who hindered you that ye should not obey the truth" (Gal. 5:7).

⁷Dennis McCallum writes of the attitudes of our present generation: "Your neighbors think your faith is 'right for you.' Unlike modernism, which treated religion as superstition, post-modernists happily accept any religion--as long as it makes no claim to universal truth or authority. Religion is at the heart of the postmodern revolution. How does a Christian live and share his or her faith in a gullible, undiscerning world?" (*The Death of Truth*, p. 17).

⁸Again, McCallum writes of our present societal philosophy: "Tolerance gone extreme, as in the increasingly common view that we should never criticize another culture or question an individual's moral decisions, because all views deserve equal respect" (*op. cit.*, pp. 14-15).

6. **Truth must be loved.** We cannot be a follower of Christ and not love the truth. He is the truth (John 14:6). If we "receive not the love of the truth," we will not be saved (2 Thess. 2:10). We must speak the truth in love (Eph. 4:14-15) from a heart of faith that works by love (Gal. 5:6).

7. **Truth must be rightly divided.** We read: "Give diligence to present thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, handling aright the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15). To rightly divide or to handle aright the Word of truth is to make the right application. We must be able to distinguish between faith and opinion, as well as when an account of action (example) is binding.

8. **Truth must adorn our lives.** Paul writes that Christians "may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things" (Titus 2:10). One who professes to be a Christian but fails, because of his sin, to apply and radiate the doctrine of Christ in his life, brings disgrace to the cause of truth. We must live lives which exemplify the doctrine of God.

CONCLUSION

1. Paul writes a *message* the church must understand: "For our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against powers, against world-rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual host of wickedness in the heavenly places" (Eph. 6:18). This states that Christianity was not only born in a hostile environment, but exists in a hostile environment. It is to thrive in a hostile environment.

2. The church must be *militant*; i.e., "engaged in warfare or combat: fighting; aggressively active, combative. We are commanded to "fight the good fight of the faith" (1 Tim. 6:12). Our militancy is not because we do not love peace. We do love peace, but we love truth more. It loves souls; and error and false teaching and philosophies damn souls (cf. Col. 2:8).

3. For the church to be militant, we must pray for *boldness* as did Paul in Ephesians 6:19-20 and *wisdom* (James 1:2-8). We must feel ashamed when we make an unholy alliance or peace with error. We dare not be friends with the world (James 4:4).

4. May God bless us to uphold the truth of which the church is the pillar and ground (1 Tim. 3:15).

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

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SOLIDIFY THE HOME BY GODLY HUSBANDS

Eddie Cooper

Introduction:

The word "SOLIDIFY" means "to become solid, hard, etc." (Webster) The word "HUSBAND" is a contraction of two words: "house" and "band". The husband is the "house-band", a band of strength around the home, upholding, protecting and keeping it together." The word "HOME" means "the place where one lives; the place where one was born or reared, etc." (Webster) Dan Harless has well observed, "The Christian Home is a place of warmth and enduring love. In it are ties of affection undimmed by time and space. It is a composite of faith and discipline and is tempered with loyalty, respect and loving devotion." The word "GODLY" means "devoted to God." (Webster) With all of these definitions in mind, let me try to state my assignment. The lesson is that as married men, we are to make solid, the places where we live, being devoted to God. That is the lesson in a nutshell. It is so easy for us to see what the home should be, but it is a whole different ballgame when it comes to making it what God wants.

"Weak husbands and fathers are one of the prime causes of our serious social situation. The man's absence from the home and his virtual abdication of authority are having a critical impact on his wife, daughters, and especially his sons." (Max Lerner, 20th Century Christian, February 1969, p. 3)

Dorothy Nevill and Sandra Damico in their book HUMAN RELATIONS said of the husband, "The personality and background of the husband, not the wife, were the important factors in the success of the marriage." (Quote: Christian Bible Teacher, Eddie Lewis, April 1990, p. 172.)

In a study conducted by Dr. Robert Blood and Dr. Donald Wolfe of the University of Michigan, interviewing more than 900 American wives, they found that the wives said they wanted **COMPANIONSHIP** from their husbands even more than they wanted love and/or money. Also, nearly all the wives, including those without children, stated they become increasingly less satisfied with their husband's **COMPANIONSHIP**, a decline that the researchers described as "corrosive." (Quote: Christian Bible Teacher, Eddie Lewis, Apr. 1990, p. 172)

The reason many marriages fail is **NEGLECT** on the part of the husband. Neglect of the wife, children, family togetherness and family spirituality. The husband is throwing all these responsibilities onto the wife and many have rebelled. Some of the underlying causes of neglect are: selfishness, pride, a lack of courtesy, a lack of communication, and a lack of **DESIRE** to help and know the family.

TO SOLIDIFY THE HOME, THE HUSBAND MUST LOVE HIS WIFE

(Eph. 5:25)

- A. Note the degree of love --"Even as Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it."
 - I. She is glorious to him...(5:27)
 - a. "He that loveth his wife loveth himself." (5:28)
 - b. "For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even

as the Lord the church." (5:29)

-2-

2. Genuine love is defined in I Cor. 13:4-8.
 - a. Love must be real, it cannot be faked. (Rom. 12:9)
 - b. It must be that which abhors, that is it turns away in disgust, any evil that would invade that relationship.
 - c. Love also cleaves to that which is good or excellent. (Rom. 12:9)
 1. Just think what would happen, even in good marriages, if the couples were even to make the effort to be COMPASSIONATE, KIND, HUMBLE, GENTLE, and PATIENT.
 2. There would be no bitter differences, no vicious fights, no harsh words, no indifference in love, no petty jealousy, no devious behind the scenes maneuvering to get one's way at the expense of the other, and no attempt to cheat or defraud in any way whatsoever. (Cf. Phil. 2:3,4; I Cor. 16:14; Col. 2:2; I Pet. 4:8)
- B. This means that his attitude toward his wife is proper....(Eccl. 9:9)
 1. He gives her honor, considers her precious, realizing that she is the weaker vessel. (I Pet. 3:7)
 2. He sees her as an heir of the grace of life. (I Pet. 3:7)
 3. He seeks no release from her. (I Cor. 7:27)
 4. He is not bitter against her (Col. 3:19), even when she may act irritably due to sickness, because of exhaustion, or even when she may be just plain old grouchy.

**TO SOLIDIFY THE HOME, THE HUSBAND MUST SEVER AND UNITE TIES
(Gen. 2:24; Eph. 5:31)**

- A. So often a husband is tied to his mother or father in such a way as to prevent his making a good home.
 1. At the first sign of trouble, he heads for his previous home.
- B. "Leave" (Hebrew, azab) means "to loosen, i.e., relinquish, permit." (Strong's, p. 590)
 1. "Leave" (Greek, kataleipo) means "to leave down, i.e., behind." (Ibid.)
 2. This does not mean that a man is not to have any kind of contact with his parents, but that he is to sever his former ties, establishing his own home, becoming head of his own home.
 3. This would also indicate or imply that the man getting married ought to be responsible enough to provide for his mate.
 4. So often, marriages are in trouble at the outset because the man who decides to take upon himself the responsibility of a home is not able to take care of those responsibilities, financially or otherwise.
- C. Genesis 2:24 also says, "...and shall cleave unto his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh."
 1. "Cleave" (Hebrew, dabaq) means "to impinge, i.e., cling or adhere; figuratively, to

catch by pursuit: --abide fast, cleave (fast together), follow close (hard after), be joined (together), keep (fast), overtake, pursue hard, stick, take." (Strong's, p. 198)

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2. "Cleave" (Greek, proskollao) means "to glue to, i.e., figuratively to adhere: --cleave, join (self)." (Ibid.)
- D. "One flesh" suggests unity, harmony, oneness.
 1. This would suggest that a husband severs particular ties with his parents and establishes another with his wife.
 2. Problems arise in a home where there is no unity or harmony of purpose.

TO SOLIDIFY THE HOME, THE HUSBAND MUST REALIZE THAT HE IS MARRIED TO ONE

- A. God's law limits a man to having one wife at a time. (Mt. 19:8,9; Rom. 7:1-3)
 1. Mt. 19:5 says, "They twain" (one husband plus one wife).
 2. Gen. 2:24 says, "His wife" (one husband plus one wife).
 3. Paul wrote, "His own wife" (one husband plus one wife). Cf. I Cor. 7:2
- B. The Christian husband seeks to imitate Jesus' faithfulness to His bride by being faithful to his wife, thus he is a devoted husband.
 1. He does not seek other women.
 2. Mt. 5:28 needs to be heeded, and if problems arise it would be good to imitate Joseph...(Gen. 39:7-12)
 3. The husband should have a determination to fulfill his vows, "until death do us part."

TO SOLIDIFY THE HOME, THE HUSBAND MUST BE THE HEAD OF THE HOME (Eph. 5:23,24; I Cor. 11:3)

- A. This is God's line of authority in the home.
 1. His headship is such that his wife respects him. (I Pet. 3:7; Eph. 5:33)
 - a. Her desire shall be unto him...(Gen. 3:16)
 2. It does not teach that the woman is inferior to the man, but it is simply teaching roles.
 3. Throughout Proverbs, it is the husband whose authority is visible.
 - a. He initiates the teaching.
 - b. Admonitions are introduced as coming first from the man and then from the woman...(Prov. 1:8)
- B. This does not sanction totalitarian rule.
 1. This leads to tyranny and a domineering attitude.
 2. The husband is the one who binds the family together.
 - a. Many families are in trouble because husbands have refused to perform this duty.
- C. Our Lord gives us an example of the kind of leadership He wants from the husband in Mark 10:42-45.
 1. Normal leadership rules over others, but Christ-like leadership is a servant/leader relation.

2. The beauty of marriage has been corrupted because husbands have not fulfilled, but have abdicated their God-given roles. (I Cor. 11:8,9; I Pet. 3:7)

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**TO SOLIDIFY THE HOME, THE HUSBAND MUST BE CONSIDERATE
(I Pet. 3:7)**

- A. What does *CONSIDERATE* mean?
 1. Basically, it means a husband will be understanding, investigate, get some insight into, and be sensitive to his wife's needs.
 - a. Simply stated, he will study her
- B. He will speak affectionately to his wife. (Prov. 19:22; 17:14; 14:22b)
 1. This refers to a covenant fidelity.
 2. In contrast are acts of cruelty and insensitivity.
 - a. The Song of Solomon is a good manual for husbands to use in discovering how to speak affectionately (Songs 1:15; 4:1-11; 6:4-9; 7:1-9)
 - b. Solomon saw his wife as a beautiful, unique treasure and told her so.
 - c. Such should be the practice of all husbands.
- C. The husband should thank God for the "good" wife that blesses his life.
 1. He should view his wife as a "gift" from God.

CONCLUSION:

One of the most poignant stories in the entire Bible is the story of Hosea, the Old Testament prophet who married a harlot named Gomer--a gripping love story of a man who loved a woman despite her unfaithfulness to him. She spurned his love and turned to other men, bringing shame on Hosea. But even then Hosea never ceased to love; for when Gomer slipped into degradation, Hosea forgave her and brought her back home to him. His was an incredible, forgiving love.

We are to love our wives as God loved us and as Christ loved the church, and this involves forgiveness, concern, understanding, acceptance and sacrifice. It costs to be a husband, but what wonderful compensations follow.

Prayer for a Christian Husband

"Lord, may there be no moment in my life
When she regrets that she became my wife.
Help me to do the utmost that I can
To prove myself her measure of a man.
Since years must bring to all their load of care,
Let us together every burden bear,
And when Death beckons one its path along,
May not the two of us be parted long!

Eddie Cooper - Eddie was born April 23, 1946 to Denver and Florence Cooper and married Barbara Buckley on September 2, 1966. They have two sons: Jason and Scott.

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SOLIDIFY THE HOME AGAINST UNGODLY EDUCATION

D. Gene West

Introduction:

1. After the colonial period had begun to wane in this country, and men began to see freedom and liberty for what they are, they began to call for public universal education in the United States.
2. It took some time for this concept to take hold and begin to advance because it had always been held by the populations of other countries of the world that education belonged to the privileged few who made up what was considered the aristocracy.
3. Not since the days of the Greeks had man taken the time to educate women, and never in the history of the world was education made available to women on the same terms as it was made to men.
4. America embarked on the great and noble project of educating every educable person at the expense of the public.
5. For many years, and for several generations, this noble endeavor was emphasized throughout our country, and that emphasis was accepted by the people at large, until back in the 1940's and 1950's ninety-four per cent of the American public could read and write in our language.
6. The old-fashioned schools taught, "Readin', Writin', and 'Rithmetic," and the students were, "Taught to the tune of the hickory stick."
7. Discipline was not lax in the school, and there was co-operation between the home and the school.
8. The result of this was that children learned all the basics they needed in order to further their education at college, or in university, and America stretched herself toward her Zenith as a society and as a nation of people.

I. THE BEGINNING OF THE DOWNFALL OF AMERICAN EDUCATION.

A. Things do not happen in a corner, nor do they happen in a moment in the twinkling of an eye.

1. As early as the 1920's there arose in this country a great furor regarding the teaching of evolution in the public schools, as that theory was set forth by a would-be English clergyman by the name of Charles Darwin.
2. Charles Darwin had written, in 1859, a book which he entitled, "On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life." In this book, he claimed that man had sprung from other "primates" such as monkeys, and that the earth is a very old planet having been formed from gases in space. (He never told us where space came from! Or, where the gases came from!)
3. He just began where he wanted and went where he pleased, and the world has never been the same since! He fiddled with this book for years putting it through six revisions, and finally died never having made his explanation of evolution satisfactory to even himself. (Of course, he borrowed the idea from Greek philosophers who had set it forth three hundred years before the birth of Christ.)

B. This theory (Hypothesis) was brought to a head by the "Scopes Trial" in 1925 in Dayton, Tennessee.

1. At that time it was urged that the teaching of evolution as a viable alternative to creation was being kept out of the public schools, and that evolution should be taught on a par with creation.
2. In our time the very opposite is correct. Evolution is taught in the public school, not as a theory, but as a fact, and through the work of the ACLU all references to religion are taken out of the public schools of our land. They were aided in this by a rather stupid Supreme Court which is not protecting "freedom of religion" as it is set forth in the Constitution, but are programming the nation in the new concept of "freedom from religion."
3. John Scopes would not even recognize the length to which evolution has gone in molding the minds of American children today.
4. ACLU stands for American Civil Liberties Union, which is Hell's legal arm in America today.
5. Look at the conditions of American schools today. Everything from rape to murder takes place in the "Halls of Education."
6. As one high school Principal told me, back in the 1970's, "The parents are afraid of the children, the School Board is afraid of the parents, the Superintendent is afraid of the School Board, the Principal is afraid of the Superintendent, the teachers are afraid of the Principal, and the kids aren't afraid of anything."

C. When one adds to this predicament, the invasion of the public school system, when in the 1930's, John Dewey, who was a rank Humanist, was named "The Father of American Education."

1. One begins to see the magnitude of the problem which is set before any parents who have children in the public school system, or even grandchildren, in that same system. (Can you imagine how Dewey could be the "father" of American education when he did not even come along until that process was well over a hundred years old?)
2. Slowly, but surely, the Humanists have taken over the school systems of our nation until as a net result of their labor 26% of the students graduating high school are functionally illiterate, that is, they cannot read a TV Guide!
3. But what is more harmful, the Humanists, under the guise of not teaching values, are teaching values that are diametrically opposed to reason, common sense, and the Bible.
4. Public education in America today is in a mess, and is headed for its inevitable downfall!
5. Notice an article from the "Wheeling Intelligencer" from about six weeks back that revolves around a new math course being taught in such places as Virginia and California called "Whole Math." (Read article.)
6. If having a "right attitude," according to Humanists concepts is not shaping values, then we would like to know what is.

II. WHAT CAN CHRISTIAN PARENTS AND GRANDPARENTS DO TO OFFSET THESE

HORRIBLE TRENDS IN AMERICAN EDUCATION? HOW CAN THE CHRISTIAN HOME FIGHT THESE THINGS?

A. Some have opted to give up on the public system and establish private schools where the Bible and its principles can be taught, where the theories of evolution and Humanism can be challenged.

1. One of the problems on this matter is that evolutionists and Humanists soon find their way into even these private schools, and begin teaching their dastardly doctrines.

2. This is permitted, even encouraged, by the post-modern leadership of many of the schools. 3. This is particularly true of colleges and universities, perhaps more-so of them than the religious grade schools and high schools.

B. Whether a school is parochial or public, parents need to be aware of what is being taught in them!

1. Parental awareness is an absolute must when it comes to education on any level and in any place.

2. Obviously the public schools are not teaching, and have not for some time taught, that which children need to know.

3. Children are no longer taught to read, they are taught humanist attitudes in the name of reading, and the same can be said for math, spelling, and geography.

4. Parents need to be aware of what is being taught in the name of what, and start getting into the fray to remove Humanist school boards and teachers from the system.

5. But people are content to allow anyone who runs for the school board, and claims that he is interested in children, to do whatever he pleases with the lives of their children.

C. So, one of the things that we can do to offset the horrible teaching of the humanists is to develop parochial, or private school systems, in which the parents are kept constantly aware of what is being taught to their own precious offspring.

1. If such is not possible, one must take a militant interest in the public school, and be willing to fight to the bitter end to get our children educated, and not just brain-washed by the Humanists.

2. This will not be an easy job because the Humanists have the greater part of the legal and court systems on their side!

3. It is going to take a lot of lawsuits by a lot of noisy people before the public school system is returned to the people from whom it was taken.

D. Another thing that can be done by a Christian family to solidify the home against our godless educational systems, is for the parents to opt for a thing called "Home Schooling."

1. In "Home Schooling" parents simply keep their children out of the public system, and out of a private system, and teach them at home what they want them to know, including the Bible.

2. However, even in this, the state has asserted itself and stolen more freedom from the home, in that the parent doing the teaching has to have an education equal to that of the public school teachers, and the state reserves the right to test these children in order to ascertain whether or not they are being properly taught.

3. So, if the teaching parent does not have the education to do this, the state can force you to put your children into another system.

4. Some time ago I read a report on how much better children did, that is, those from private schools, and those from "home schooling," on standardized tests as opposed to what the children in public schools were doing. (I could not find the article, but the scores of children taught at home, and in private schools, were fantastic when compared to the children who are being taught in the Humanist's system.)

5. It is our opinion that the "home schooling" method is one of the very best when the parents(s) can meet the state standards in order to do the teaching at home.

6. Recently, in a column written by Abigail Van Buren, who is a liberal Jew, and with whom I have but one thing in common, and that is that we are both members of the human race, her own impressions of children who were educated by the "home schooling" method, was that she had received enthusiastic letters from hundreds of home schoolers, and former home schoolers, from all over the nation, and that she was "...impressed with their level of literacy."¹

7. (Read the letter from Kelly in Escondido, California.)

III. THINGS ONE CAN DO TO OFFSET HUMANIST EDUCATION WHEN THE CHILDREN ARE FORCED TO ATTEND PUBLIC SCHOOLS.

A. Take time to teach your children that they have the **right** to question anything they are taught during any and every school day.

1. Teach them not to be rude, but that they have the **right** to challenge anything and everything that a teacher may say in the course of a day, or of a study.

2. They have a right to demand that evolutionists **prove** what they teach in the public system, 3. Incidentally, the latest answer to proving evolution comes from a college professor in California who told students that scientists did not have to prove evolution, they knew it! (How does one **know** what has never been **proven**?)

4. Let your teachers know that you believe the Bible, and what it says concerning creation, and you will not have your children taught otherwise.

B. Take the time to challenge the teachers, as well as the school boards, letting both them and your children know that you want them to have an education that will count, and not just some flippant study of a thing that never came to pass.

1. This must be done in the spirit of Christian love, but it must be done. (The best way to keep some people "honest" is to constantly look over their shoulder!)

2. It is fundamentally dishonest to teach Humanistic theories and values in the name of education.

3. Don't be afraid to use the legal system to do this, if it is absolutely necessary.

C. Constantly do some "home schooling" on your own. By that we mean: Ephesians 6:4, And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the **Lord**.

1. Take time to teach your children, on a daily basis if possible, the wonders of the Word of God.

2. Teach them while they are young that God created the heavens, the earth, and all things therein.

3. When they become older they will look upon the theories of evolution as a laughable study in the ludicrous which they will neither accept nor believe.

4. See that they associate with other Christians who will not corrupt the good morals that you are trying to instill in them. (1 Corinthians 15:33)
 5. Insist that your children, when they reach an appropriate age, read and study the Bible for themselves.
 6. Make liberal use of such instruments as **Discovery** magazine, a paper for children produced by brother Bert Thompson, and by brother Wayne Jackson.
 7. Read and study some scientific things for yourself so that you can teach your children that there is no contradiction between **true** science and the Bible.
 5. And while you are teaching such things, so live that the children are assured that you are trying to be a Christian, in the fullest sense of the word.
- D. Let teachers know that you resent their attempts to teach Humanist's attitudes (values) to your children, for they have no right to do so, that is the province of the home.
1. Don't be afraid to visit your child's school room, and to listen carefully to what goes on, for it is still true that "...the man who pays the piper calls the tune."
 2. Support your child fully in those times when he may suffer because of what he and his family believe.
 3. Don't just turn a child over to the school system for six to eight hours a day thinking that you can relax and ignore him during that time.
- E. Take some time to study with your children, and in so-doing you may be able to ward off the untruthful teachings that are found in some textbooks.
1. Review the textbooks of your children and insist that they be filled with decent and respectable language, and not a bunch of filth by which small-minded people express themselves!
 2. Remember that the school years are the most impressionable years of a person's life, and it is during that time that the truth will be sealed in a child's mind, perhaps, forever.

III. A WORD OF CAUTION.

- A. Not every teacher in every school system is the kind of teacher of which we have spoken.
1. We know of many teachers in the public systems, with which we are familiar, who are devoted Christian people and do all that they can to offset the teachings of the Humanists around them.
 2. These people are to be praised and supported in all their attempts to overcome the obstacles that are around them.
 3. Let them know that you care, and that you appreciate what they are doing on behalf of the children who study under them.
 4. Be as strong in your support of good teachers as you are in opposition of the others.
- B. You may even find it necessary to remove your child from the class of one teacher, and put him in the class of another one in order for him to be educated and not brain-washed.
- C. Don't be afraid to ask Bible school teachers and preachers of the gospel to do some considerable teaching on these subjects, if you feel that you need help with them.
1. Teachers should openly teach the truthfulness of the creation of the world, and all things therein.

2. Preachers should never shun to declare the whole counsel of God with regard to such things as the creation of the world, and of human beings.
3. Recently, a teacher told me that scientists had recently discovered, through a study of DNA, that all people had descended from one woman who came from central Africa.
4. I told him that I did not know the precise location of where she had come from, but all true followers of God had known that all mankind had descended from one woman since the earliest of times in the history of the world, and that that woman had a name which was Eve. I also told him that when all the scientific evidence was in that the true scientists would announce that all mankind had descended from one male, and that his name was Adam.
5. His reply was, "But now we have the scientific evidence." I told him that we had always had the scientific evidence, and that was the Word of God. (It seems never to occur to people that the Bible is evidence!)

Conclusion:

1. You could probably think of a dozen things, or more, that parents can do to help their children overcome ungodly education, and to solidify the home against those who attack faith and hope.
2. In times like these we cannot afford to be timid, and in interest of the souls of our children, we cannot afford to take lightly the spiritual threat that is found in the school systems that we support with our tax-dollars.
3. In times like these we must be assertive, so far as our faith is concerned, in whatever ways are right and necessary, to offset the teaching of the humanistic school systems that have for the last sixty years been developing in our land.
4. We may be persecuted when we assert our faith, but "All who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution," Paul told the preacher Timothy. (2 Timothy 3:12)
5. The souls of thousands of children have already been snatched away from Christ because of the teachings of various school systems. The possibility is great that they will never return to Christ, and will be forever lost to the Lord and to us.
6. So, let us work and pray for the betterment of the school systems of our land, and thank God that we still have a voice in what may or may not be taught!

1. Van Buren, Abigail, "Home Schooling Gets Good Grade," **THE INTELLIGENCER**, (Wheeling, Wv) volume CXLV, Number 26, p. 9, September 23, 1997

D. Gene West-Gene was born in Chester, WV, and attended public schools in Hancock County. He earned an Associate in Arts Degree from Freed-Hardeman College, a Bachelor of Arts Degree from West Liberty State College and a Bachelor of Science Degree from Fairmont State College. He has served churches in Martin's Ferry, OH; Kissimmee, FL; Hundred, Moundsville, Vienna and Fairmont, WV. He presently preaches for Steelton Church of Christ in New Martinsville, WV. He was baptized by brother Jess Nutter in 1950. He was the owner and editor of *The Bible Herald* for several years, and has spoken on numerous lectureships and conducts several gospel meetings each year. Gene and his wife, the former Shirley Bissett, have three children: Kandi Davis, Mary Kessinger and Todd and five grandchildren.

Solidify the Home By Godly Wives

Andy Robison

Who is affected by ungodly wives?

Women (in keeping with the scope of this lecture) who ignore God's teachings in reference to their role in the home hurt and help jeopardize untold numbers of souls. The sum of those, however, who are influenced toward heaven by godly wives, is a story which shall likely never be told. An unyielding power of influence exerts itself through each particular person—for good or evil. "For none of us lives to himself, and no one dies to himself." (Romans 14:7) Wives are surrounded by souls in impressionable relationships: Their children rely on them; their husbands expect to trust them. Their parents have high hopes for their familial success, as do their in-laws. When these people are reasonably minded, the godliness of wives is a treasure greater than gold, whether or not it be acknowledged. Ungodly selfishness, on the other hand, is a searing acid that eats away at the self-esteem, trust, and faith of those nearby. The damage is immeasurable, for it stretches beyond those who know ungodly wives to all who participate in the institution of family. When families break up, the institution itself takes a blow, as does the standing of professional sports when athletes' reputations are impugned, and as does the regard of a business when its executives are charged with impropriety. Ungodliness hurts society. Godliness solidifies society's foundation—the home.

The Holy Spirit declares by rhetorical question that godly wives are, like jewels, precious due to their rarity. "Who can find a virtuous wife? For her worth is far above rubies." (Proverbs 31:10) The beauty of godliness emanates not by accident nor by nature. It must be inwardly pursued, exercised toward, and outwardly expressed. (1 Timothy 6:11; 4:7,8, 2:9,10) It is one of the graces added during devoted disciples' lives. (1 Peter 1:6,7) It is walking worthy of the calling of God's great love (1 Timothy 3:16; Ephesians 4:1), according to the plan given us (2 Peter 1:3), in order to be content in this world (1 Timothy 6:6) and rewarded in the next (2 Peter 3:11). "Godliness is profitable unto all things" (1 Timothy 4:8), to be sure, for it enhances all human and spiritual relationships to all God would have them to be. This truth extends considerably to the God-given role of wives in the God-ordained institution of marriage.

Wives were intended by God to function as cheerful helpers in the home. (Genesis 2:18-24) Husbands who find wives concerned with being godly uncover precious treasure. "He who finds a wife finds a good thing, And obtains favor from the LORD." (Proverbs 18:22) "Houses and riches are an inheritance from fathers, But a prudent wife is from the LORD." (Proverbs 19:14) "An excellent wife is the crown of her husband, But she who causes shame is like rotteness in his bones." (Proverbs 12:4)

Divinely ordained roles of wives could be summarized in the words of Proverbs 31:11: "The heart of her husband safely trusts her..." Godly wives who solidify the home will have the complete trust of their husbands in every way.

Godly husbands can trust godly wives to remain faithful in...

Their Commitment

Godly wives recognize first their responsibility to keep their affections at home. The

wedding-day promise to "love, honor, and cherish... till death do us part" is a reflection of the scheme God designed. When questioned about the Mosaic temporary tolerance of corruptions of the marital plan, Jesus reiterated God's design, and emphasized a stricter reinstatement: (Matthew 19:4-6) "And He answered and said to them, "Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning 'made them male and female,' {5} "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'? {6} "So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate."" (Matthew 19:9) ""And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery."" The interpretation of these verses is self-evident. God wants wives to stay married to their husbands "as long as they both shall live." The one exception granted, mercifully, is to the innocent victim of spousal unfaithfulness.

Wives concerned with godliness exercise themselves, in various manners, towards the keeping of their marital vows. Several stipulations of God's will involve themselves in wives keeping themselves in such a way that their husbands can safely trust them in their fidelity.

God pronounced in Eden, "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh," (Genesis 2:24) Oneness of flesh is enjoined upon spouses, as is a commitment surpassing all others. This commitment involves the body and the mind. It is a physical pledge and an emotional engagement. The uniting of mind and body is to be so complete that the commitment abounds past all other bonds the spouses have previously formed in life.

In most cases, the closest relationship known to people before marriage is that with their parents. The parents provide physically for the children, and the emotional attachment of extended togetherness grows strong. This bond must be subjugated, however, to the priority-commanding bond of marriage. Father and mother must, in a sense, be left. The members of the newly established home must stick together in their decision-making and problem-resolving. There is no place for running back to "Mommy and Daddy." Godly wives give constant attention to avoiding this temptation.

It is ever-tempting for spouses to compare one another with parents—be it for fault-finding comparison or appreciative contrast. Dyer difficulties arise, though, when spouses run to parents in time of trouble. They are going to the wrong home! It is no longer theirs! Reconciliation must take place within the husband-wife relationship, not the parent-child. Husbands (or wives) are the ones who have received the promise that lasts "till death do us part," not Moms or Dads! When reconciliation is avoided through recalcitrant retraction to parents, God is not honored, His commandment is broken, and permanent non-reconciliation (divorce) is lurking in the dark shadows. Marital unity demands emotional faithfulness. Godly wives do all within their power to work out their problems with their husbands in their own home.

Oneness of flesh is a principle that presumes physical fidelity. Unregenerate people seek fulfillment of every lust, since they live for little more than sensory pleasure. (cf. Ephesians 2:1-3) God never intended for bodies to be used so liberally. "Foods for the stomach and the stomach for foods, but God will destroy both it and them. Now the body is not for sexual immorality but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body." (1 Corinthians 6:13) Sexual sins abound in the world, often without any expressed guilt on the part of man, but always with the imputed guilt of Righteous, Almighty God. Unfaithful spouses sin against themselves (1 Corinthians 6:18), against their sexual partner (1

Thessalonians 4:6), and, mostly, against God (1 Thessalonians 4:8; Genesis 39:9). The sin of spouses' infidelity is so serious that it qualifies as the only reason for innocent spouses to remarry. (Matthew 19:9) Godly wives keep themselves physically pure. They reserve themselves for their husbands—in word, in thought, and in deed.

Godly wives avoid placing themselves in tempting situations. They take seriously the admonition of 1 Corinthians 6:18—"Flee sexual immorality." Lewd movie scenes will not be watched, suggestive passages will not be read, tempting relationships will not be fostered among those women whose husbands can safely trust them. They strive to keep their minds pure, so their bodies will not follow into sin. (Matthew 5:27,28)

Godly wives show their husbands appropriate physical attention, so that he will not be tempted to infidelity. The Holy Spirit viewed this as a primary means of minimizing sexual temptation: "Now concerning the things of which you wrote to me: It is good for a man not to touch a woman. {2} Nevertheless, because of sexual immorality, let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband. {3} Let the husband render to his wife the affection due her, and likewise also the wife to her husband. {4} The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. And likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does. {5} Do not deprive one another except with consent for a time, that you may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again so that Satan does not tempt you because of your lack of self-control." (1 Corinthians 7:1-5)

Husbands and wives must give themselves physically to one another. There is no place in God's plan for withholding—save by consent for the purpose of spiritual meditation. This command carries several implications. Surely, Godly spouses, who reserve themselves for one another, see their limitation not as a reason for an attitude of apathy toward bodily care and cleanliness. Rather, they want to keep themselves desirable—not for the sake of showiness in the workplace and among friends, but for the benefit of their partners whom they love.

Their Role

(Ephesians 5:22-24) "Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. {23} For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. {24} Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything." So read the inspired words from the pen of the apostle Paul. Yet the implications are much less than accepted in the world today, and even sometimes ignored in the church. Why?

A perception exists that submission is equal to inferiority. The utter absurdity of this misleading view is illustrated by Christ's submission to His equal—the Father (John 1:1-3; Phil. 2:5-8; John 6:38), by Christian citizens' submission to even pagan government (Romans 13:1-7), and by employees' submission to employers. Positions of role do not determine personal worth. Further, in Christ's kingdom, greatness comes through submission.

The instructions of submission are unpopular also due to their abuse. Domineering husbands have mentally whipped wives with these verses of Scripture without heeding God's commands to them to love their wives as Christ loved the church and to love their wives as their own bodies (Ephesians 5:25, 28). When husbands act as they should, wives' submission becomes a joyous relief, instead of a burdensome chore.

Godly wives remain faithfully content in their God-given role as the husband's helper.

There is more to the role of godly wives. The principle of contentment is ever so important.

They must live within the husbands' means, provide for the family's needs, and continue in a cheerful disposition (Proverbs 31:10-18). Godly wives do not complain of their lack, nor desire to bask in pleasure. They wish to remain of service to the Lord, to their families, to the church, and to people all the days of their lives. This takes a great deal of faith. Godly wives are those who always seek the kingdom first (Matthew 6:33).

Their Instruction

(Titus 2:1-5) "But as for you, speak the things which are proper for sound doctrine: {2} that the older men be sober, reverent, temperate, sound in faith, in love, in patience; {3} the older women likewise, that they be reverent in behavior, not slanderers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things; {4} that they admonish the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, {5} to be discreet, chaste, homemakers, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be blasphemed."

As wives fulfill the godly roles of teaching their young ones to love husbands and love children, and do the things mentioned by Paul in this passage to Titus, they must remain faithful to the Lord in that instruction. There is no place for bitter sarcasm about the marriage or parental relationship, or about the servitude they feel they have experienced in the home. Teaching is primarily by example, but also by words. When young people hear the bitter comments of distraught wives, they learn a distorted view of God's plan for marriage.

God also plans for wives of ungodly husbands to be instructors of those husbands. Believing wives are to stay with their unbelieving husbands, so long as the husbands allow that to be possible (1 Corinthians 7:10-16). The reasons include the possibility of being a godly influence upon the husbands and the children. The examples of godly wives may win unbelieving husbands to the Lord (1 Peter 3:1-6).

Conclusion

I know a lady who is suffering with cancer. Through it all she keeps molding the character of those around her by her godly example. She says to a young mother who is close to her twenty and twenty-two year old sons: I know I can go on now, because my boys have such a good person as you to watch out for them. She calls from her hospital bed to a young friend of the family, a single engineer, telling him she has some pretty nurses that he needs to come meet. She receives the final blow to her hopes against the consuming disease, then comments, "We're going to have to pray like we've never prayed before."

She is honored by the loving commitment of her husband to be by her side, by the warm devotion of her sons conscientiously caring for her every need—from delivering her a drink of Sprite and wiping a drop of sweat off her forehead, to keeping her from getting too tired from too much company.

The company is not likely to stop. For years she has volunteered at the hospital and endeared herself to the community. She has friends in number as few know. News of her latest step in her illness spread over the phone lines faster than live reports of strikes and wars spread over the airwaves. Through her own illness, she requests prayers—yes, on behalf of herself, but also on behalf of those she meets in the hospital: Of a twelve-year old child with serious cancer; of a friend in her community diagnosed with a similar disease. She requests prayers, not only for their healing, but also for their

openness to the gospel of Christ. From her bed, which she is most of the time unable to leave to attend church services, she diligently labors to get others to try the church and hear the teaching of the truth.

Her children rise up and call her blessed. There are too many stories to be remembered, too many tales to be told, of her tender love and devotion, of her care for her children and their friends. At about eight and ten years of age, the boys went with her to the grocery store. They hid a neighborhood boy in some laundry in the car. Arriving at the store, twenty minutes from home, the mother was confronted with the stowaway. The experience might turn negative here for some families. But this mother's way of firm and gentle discipline makes it a warm memory to her children.

This family is solid. Its members stick together. Untold numbers of other families have received inspiration from it to continue in their faithfulness to commitment in spite of problems. Untold numbers have been influenced for the gospel. All by the solid character of a woman who desired to be, worked to be, and lives a godly life as a godly wife.

"Who can find a virtuous wife? For her worth is far above rubies." (Proverbs 31:10)

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PREACH THE WORD WITH PURPOSE

Charles C. Pugh III

In times like these there certainly is a crucial need to (1) preach (2) preach the word and (3) preach the word with purpose. In his final charge to Timothy the apostle Paul gave the evangelist the following reminder: "But you have carefully followed my doctrine, manner of life, purpose . . ." (2 Tim. 3:10). The word purpose (prothesis) means "his aspiration" (Friedrich, Gerhard, ed. Theological Dictionary Of The New Testament, Wm. B. Eerdmans: Grand Rapids, Volume VIII, Sixth Printing, 1978, p. 166). It refers to a plan, resolve, will (Brown, Colin, ed., The New International Dictionary Of New Testament Theology, Zondervan, Vol. I, pp. 696-697. Purpose involves "chief aim" in life (Guthrie, Donald, Tyndale New Testament Commentary - The Pastoral Epistles, Wm. B. Eerdmans, Fifth Printing, 1972, p. 160). This original word for purpose appears in the following additional passages: Acts 11:23, Rom. 8:28; 9:11; Eph. 1:11; 3:11; 2 Tim. 1:9).

What do we aim to do when we preach the word? To what do we aspire? What is our plan, or goal, when we preach the word? What is the purpose of gospel preaching?

WHAT THE PURPOSE OF PREACHING IS NOT

NOT MERELY TO MAKE A SPEECH. Although preaching involves speaking (Titus 2:1,15; 1 Thess. 2:2,4; Acts 2:29; 11:15; 16:32; 20:7,9, et al), it is more than just making a speech. Brother Hardeman used to say, "It is one thing to say something; It is another thing to have something to say." A lot of so-called "preaching" today (within and without the church) is nothing more than public speaking, speech making.

NOT TO ENTERTAIN. Cornelius said, "Now therefore, we are all present before God, to hear all the things commanded you by God" (Acts 10:33). They were not there to be entertained. They were there to hear the word of God. Thus, the preacher is a proclaimer not a performer. One denominational seminary requires its ministerial students to take classes in drama, because they believe preaching is much like acting. They misunderstand the nature of gospel preaching. Paul charged Timothy to "Preach the word" (2 Tim. 4:2). He did not say dramatize the word. Some hearers expect to be entertained when they hear a preacher. G. K. Wallace once observed that those who look at preaching as a performance are putting the preacher in the category of a baseball player who is expected to hit a home run everytime. He said, "One can always preach the truth, but not hit a 'home run' everytime."

NOT TO IMPRESS AN AUDIENCE WITH A SPEAKER. Paul wrote, "And I, brethren, when I came to you, did not come with excellence of speech or of wisdom declaring to you the testimony of God" (1 Cor. 2:1), and "my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God" (1 Cor. 2:4-5). Although this does not mean the gospel preacher is unconcerned with how he says what he says (cf. Col. 4:6; Isa. 50:4), it implies that the aim of preaching is not to impress the hearers with a man (or men) but the power of God - the gospel (Rom. 1:16-17). "For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord . . ." (2 Cor. 4:5). This is one reason why, in the judgment of this writer, preachers should not be applauded. The purpose of gospel preaching is such that hand-clapping seems to be entirely inappropriate [NOTE: For an

excellent study of this topic see: Stevens, David P., "Don't Applaud Me!", Therefore Stand, 10 (October, 1994), 74-75].

NOT TO PLEASE MEN. In one of the great New Testament passages on preaching Paul declared, "But as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, even so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God who tests our hearts" (1 Thess. 2:4). To the churches at Galatia he wrote, "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 servant of Christ" (Gal. 1:10). The prophet Micaiah is a great example of how the purpose of preaching is not to please men (1 Kings 22:1-14). When Jehoshaphat asked Ahab whether there was a prophet of the Lord who could tell them if they should go against Ramothgilead in battle, Ahab said, "There is yet one man, Micaiah the son of Imlah by whom we may enquire of the Lord: but I hate him; for he doth not prophesy good concerning me, but evil" (1 Kings 22:8). The messenger of King Ahab went to Micaiah and preached with him to speak like the false prophets. He said ". . . I pray thee, be like the word of one of them, and speak that which is good. And Micaiah said, "As the Lord liveth, what the Lord saith unto me, that will I speak" (1 Kings 22:13-14). Preachers who preach in harmony with the true purpose of preaching do not preach "as pleasing men but God" (1 Thess. 2:4).

THE TRUE PURPOSE OF PREACHING

TO PRESENT AND EXPLAIN THE SCRIPTURES. Jesus "opened the book" and "found the place where it was written" (Lk. 4:17). The apostle Paul "reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and demonstrating . . ." (Acts 17:2-3). The purpose of preaching involves telling people what the Bible says and what it means. "For what does the Scripture say . . . ?" (Rom. 4:3).

TO PROCLAIM JESUS. "Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning at this Scripture, preached Jesus to him" (Acts 8:35). Paul reasoned from the Scriptures and explained and demonstrated "that the Christ had to suffer and rise again . . . saying, 'This Jesus whom I preach to you is the Christ'" (Acts 17:3).

TO COMFORT THE AFFLICTED. Jesus stated that His purpose in preaching involved healing the brokenhearted (Lk. 4:18). Gospel preachers should aim to help people see that "the Lord is near to those who have a broken heart" (Ps. 34:18). Richard Baxter in the Yale Lectures on Preaching many years ago said, "Boys, preach to broken hearts and you will always be up to date".

TO AFFLICT THE COMFORTABLE. "Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart . . ." (Acts 2:37). The word cut (NKJ) or pricked (KJV) comes from a word which means "pain the mind sharply" (Thayer, Greek - English Lexicon, p. 334) and "pierced, stabbed, the feeling of sharp pain connected with anxiety, remorse" (Arndt-Gingrich, p. 416). To accomplish this noble purpose, preaching must be clear and understandable. "Now when the chief priests and Pharisees heard His parables, they perceived that He was speaking of them" (Matt. 21:45). However, the trouble with too many preachers is their hearers will go to hell trying to figure out what they mean. Remember: "Preaching over their head does not mean you are intellectual. It may just mean that you are a bad shot!"

TO INFORM ONE WHAT TO DO TO BE SAVED AND KEEP SAVED. Peter "with many other words testified and exhorted them, saying, Be saved from this perverse generation" (Acts 2:40).

The purpose of preaching is to preach the Man and the Plan so people will know what to do to be saved (Mk. 16:15-16; Acts 2:37-38; Acts 8:12,35-39; 16:30-34; 22:12-16, et al) and what to do to remain saved (Acts 11:22-23; 14:21-22; 1 Cor. 15:58; Col. 1:23; Rev. 2:10, et al).

TO PERSUADE. "Knowing, therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men . . ." (2 Cor. 5:11). It is not the purpose of preaching to make people respond but to rationally (cf. Acts 24:25) impress upon a person the reasons why he should be persuaded to become a Christian and remain such all the days of his life (Acts 26:25-29). The decision then must intelligently be made by the hearer. As it was then, so shall it always be that "some were persuaded by things which were spoken, and some disbelieved" (Acts 28:24).

CONCLUSION

The purpose of preaching is NOT to merely make a speech, entertain, impress an audience with a speaker, nor to please men. The grand and glorious purpose of gospel preaching involves the presentation and explanation of the sacred Scriptures, the proclamation of Jesus Christ, the comforting of broken hearts, the pricking of guilty hearts, informing lost souls what to do to be saved and saved souls what to do to keep saved, and persuading all to live in such a way as to be ready to meet God in judgment. Thus, the ultimate purpose of preaching is to be approved of God (1 Thess. 2:4).

IN TIMES LIKE THESE PREACH THE WORD WITH PURPOSE! And we should, we can, and we must. But it must be the true purpose of preaching with which we preach. Then, and only then, does preaching have any real purpose. When we preach the word with the true purpose of preaching, in times like these, or in any times, then we can truly say as the one who said, "But you have carefully followed my doctrine, manner of life, purpose . . .", that:

"Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus. To this end I also labor striving according to His working which works in me mightily" (Col. 1:28-29).

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GROUND THE CHURCH IN GRACE

Robert Johnson

It is commonly reported by some of our brethren that the churches of Christ have not been preaching the Grace of God (An omniscient and omnipresent assumption?). Some have concluded that the denominations are doing a much better job of preaching Grace. More than a few are reaching out to human denominations with apologetic arms, embarrassed that they could have neglected the true meaning of God's Grace. These brethren seem to be ashamed to speak of the conditions of receiving grace as taught in the Bible or to admit that there is anything a person must "do" to receive salvation (especially baptism). There are those who see this movement toward the denominations as progress and warn that we must not "...return to the days when we were oblivious to the place grace plays in our individual relationship to God." (Church in Transition, p. 19). It is not uncommon today to hear some of our brethren speak of salvation "by grace only." The fact is that few, if any of the denominations are preaching Biblical Grace at all. Most are simply preaching a watered down version of Calvinism, but some brethren judge it to be better than what the church has been teaching.

Since the church has been "oblivious" to the place of grace in our salvation (sarcasm, rj), we should pay careful attention to the subject of this hour. In times like these the church needs to be grounded in the Biblical Truth about God's Grace. To be grounded is to be "instructed in the fundamentals" (Webster). Of course, if you stand faithful in the Lord's church you could not be any closer to the Grace of God than you are right now. But in times like these, when many are admiring Calvin's grace or looking for a grace which will give them a license to sin and remain in error, the church must be reminded of the fundamentals of Biblical Grace and Truth.

It is the purpose of this lecture to give a definition of what Biblical Grace is and what it is not. Often contrasting truth with error makes the truth shine more clearly. We will see that the Bible teaches we are saved by Grace, but not by Grace alone. Finally, we will discuss the false doctrine that grace and law cannot co-exist for the presence of one must exclude the presence of the other. In times like these we must be sure that the Church is...

Grounded In The Amazing Grace Of God!

The Greek word "charis" is translated "grace" 130 of the 156 times it is used in the New Testament. It means favor, kindness or liberality. One of the most common definitions of grace, especially when it is used of God's kindness toward man, is "unmerited favor." God's grace is the favor and kindness which he bestows on those who do not merit or deserve such favor. To fully understand this grace, one must first understand why man is so undeserving of God's favor, in other words we must understand the problem of sin.

Calvinists blame our sin problem on Adam (original sin) and teach that every person born after Adam is "totally depraved", guilty of inherited sin, separated from God and completely unable to make any move toward God. Calvinism teaches that man is separated from God at birth. While we may be affected and influenced by the sins of others, God will judge individuals only on the basis of their own sins (Ezek 18:20; 2 Cor. 5:10). The Bible clearly teaches that every accountable person has rejected God's will at some time and thus they have committed sin (1 John 3:4; James 4:17). "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;" (Rom 3:23). The consequences of being in rebellion to God's word is death (Gen 2:17) which is being spiritually separated from God's favor and life (note. Eph 2:1). "For the wages

of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." (Rom 6:23). Those who are found in unbelief at the point of physical death will be resurrected to face the "second death", the lake of fire and brimstone. (Rev. 21:8).

It is central to the understanding of Grace that every sinner realize that their sin has condemned them and there is nothing they may do to **merit** or **deserve** to be back in God's good favor. Isaiah describes the deeds of man's righteousness as "filthy rags." The old song says, "nothing in my hand I bring, simply to thy cross I cling." There is nothing worthy of merit or boasting that a man may do to restore himself to a right relationship with God. "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God. 9 Not of works, lest any man should boast." (Eph 2:8-9). Man has a problem with sin which he cannot remedy on his own. I have heard this preached all my life in the Lord's church!

Now we come to the amazing part of God's Grace. In spite of sinful rebellion, our merciful God has chosen to provide the cure for man's problem of sin and death through Jesus Christ. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." (John 3:16). Note that God's provision was for the "world" (so much for Calvin's "limited atonement") so they would not have to "perish." "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." (Rom 5:8). God sent Jesus to take the blame for our sins and to become a ransom for many (2 Cor 5:21; Matt:20:28). Speaking to Christians, Paul reminds, "But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, 5 Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) 6 And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." (Eph 2:4-6). Only in Jesus can I find forgiveness of sins and be restored to a right relationship with God the Father. "Jesus saith ..., I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." (John 14:6). Again, in all my years in the church I have never for a moment thought that anything I did "merited" my salvation or that there was any way of being saved other than depending on Jesus!

Some have explained Grace as "God doing for man, what man could not do for himself." In the right context this statement is absolutely true. But, because of the false teaching of "irresistible grace" it might be more Biblically expedient to think of Grace as God "providing" man with something he could not "provide" for himself, i.e. a "way" (John 14:6; Acts 16:17;18:25,26; 24:14, etc) to receive remission of sins and to be restored to fellowship with God. Once the church understands the amazing unmerited favor which God has provided man in Jesus, another matter must be addressed. We must be sure the church is...

Grounded In How To Receive The Grace Of God

There is no question that we are saved by Grace. But, some are quick to add "by grace only." This would be a logical conclusion for one who believed in the false doctrine of total hereditary depravity, but not for a New Testament Christian. Calvinism may appear to be a noble humility, self-abasement and dependence on God, but it is in reality a false human heresy. The Bible clearly teaches that God has made the complete provision for the salvation of man. God's provision of Jesus was all of Grace, undeserved and unmerited. But the Bible also clearly teaches that God has made access to His amazing grace conditioned on FAITH. Remember John 3:16, "whosoever believeth...should not perish...but have eternal life." It might be said that our salvation is divided into two parts. God's part (Grace) and Man's part (Faith). God's part in man's salvation is to provide His Grace through Jesus Christ, but God has decreed that each individual must respond in a certain way in order to receive that salvation. Responding is not a work of merit. To put it simply, obeying the gospel is sending a message to God which He will recognize as "faith."

The inspired Paul said, "For by grace are ye saved **through faith**; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: 9 Not of works, lest any man should boast." (Eph 2:8-9). Paul is pointing out that faith is what connects us to the grace of God. It is through faith that we receive the grace and salvation which God has made available. After identifying "faith" as a key part of God's plan of salvation, he is quick to point out that any work which would give us reason to boast is not a part of the plan. Since Paul has identified faith as essential to receiving grace, he by implication has exempted any necessary part of Biblical faith from being a "work" of which one might boast. Some would have Paul saying, "we are saved by grace through faith...but faith cannot involve any response on man's part, even if God required it."

Calvinists have God doing His part and man's part. The doctrine of "irresistible grace" claims that God compels, in spite of any resistance, certain elect souls so that they must come to faith. Charles Spurgeon in a sermon defending Calvinism spoke of his encounter with the strong arm of God's grace. "...At last, by the power of His effectual grace, He said, 'I must, I will come in;' and then He turned my heart, and made me love Him." (A Defense of Calvinism, from Hall of Church History, <http://www.gty.org/~phil/hall.htm>, Aug. 1997, .p. 3). God's Grace does not force or compel anyone to come to faith, but this does not mean that God is not actively working to bring about faith in unbelievers. God's grace does go beyond the mere sacrifice of His Son. God does actively seek to draw souls to salvation and it is essential that the church understand how God does this.

The scriptures reveal that the Grace of God calls and draws mankind through the preaching of the Gospel (John 6:44; 2 Thes 2:13,14). It is God's plan that preaching the Word be the means by which lost souls are to come to faith. "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. 16 He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." (Mark 16:15-16). "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." (Rom 10:17). The Gospel is God's power in this world to reach whoever will hear and come to faith. "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek." (Rom 1:16) God's grace has appeared to all, not to force them into submission, but to teach and show the way to life. (Tit 2:11,12). It is through the living and powerful Word of Truth, that men can be sanctified, set apart to receive salvation (John 17:19,20). But this salvation is only given to those with faith.

Furthermore, the faith that saves is not "faith alone." It is a faith which is made alive through submitting to the will of God (Jas. 2:22, 24, 26). The question is not "are we saved by grace." At issue is what has God ordained that a sinner do to receive salvation by grace. The Bible answer is clear. Salvation is conditioned on belief, a "work" God requires of man (John 6:28,29). Salvation is conditioned on the believer coming to repentance (Lk. 13:5; Acts 2:38). In the state of belief and repentance a sinner must then submit to being baptized in water for the purpose of remission of sins (Mk. 16:15,16; Matt. 28:19,20; Acts 22:16, etc.). Baptism is God's official way of requesting the salvation provided in Jesus Christ (1 Pet 3:21). This act of humble submission is not a work of merit, but God's ordained means of expressing real faith. In baptism we are put into Christ and connected to His death and the power of His blood to save (Rom. 6:3,4, Gal. 3:27). God teaches us through His Word to believe on Jesus, to repent of our sins and to be baptized for the remission of sins. But, God does not do these things for us. Man must accept what Jesus did for him by obeying the gospel. Obedient faith is essential to salvation, but cannot be thought of as a work of merit.

God's favor is and has always been offered to those who were not worthy of it. But, God's desire and promise to give a thing are often dependent on the obedient faith of the those who are to receive the promise. For example, consider Noah who, "found grace in the eyes of the Lord." (Gen. 6:8). In response to God's offer of a way to be saved, "thus did Noah, according to all that God commanded him..." (6:22).

The writer of Hebrews explains Noah's God given part in his salvation as faith. "By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith." (Heb 11:7). Who would argue that Noah could have been saved without faithfully building the ark?

Those who teach "faith only" salvation, contend that if God give you something there is nothing that you must do to receive it or it is no longer a gift. It is a good thing the Israelites were not Calvinists or Jericho would still be standing. In Joshua 6:2, "the Lord said unto Joshua, See, I have given into thine hand Jericho, and the king thereof and the mighty men of valour." God then proceeded to give Joshua instructions on how to receive this promised victory. God's instruction involved some marching, some shouting, some horn blowing and 7 days. Everyone knows that God made the walls fall. But, the Bible says, "By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days." (Heb 11:30). The walls fell by grace through faith. Without obedience their faith would have been "dead", not really faith at all (Jas. 2:20).

God's gracious gift of salvation is meant for all with one condition. That condition is a faith that expresses itself in obeying the Gospel. Salvation of an individual involves more than faith only and more than grace only. Grace must be received and appropriated through faith made alive through obedience.

Finally, let us consider the churches need to be sober and alert to a false teaching about grace which is growing in times like these. Let us be sure the church is...

Grounded In The Fact That We Live Under The Law Of Grace

Let us take a practical look at the problem. In Christ we "...are not under the law, but under grace" (Rom. 6:14). The context of Romans six and most of the other "proof texts" used to deny the presence of law under grace are pointing out that Moses' system of law was no longer in effect nor was it effective in securing our salvation. The false conclusion twisted from being, "not under the law" is that in Christ we need not be overly concerned with the specifics of God's Word, especially those issues which divide us. Some say there is no pattern of doctrine which is necessary to follow, only a "core" of principles we must share. Besides, who can say for sure that their understanding is better than the next person's? But, the ultimate twist is that some are saying it does not matter anyway, for all misunderstandings and error will be covered by grace. In other words since there is no clearly marked pattern (law) to guide Christians, there must be acceptance and fellowship with all differing opinions. Sin and error are thus taken out of our "dialogue" so that "grace may abound." Under this heresy, grace takes away the need to repent and remove one's self from certain sin (i.e. adultery, instrumental music, baptism). There is no law, for grace more that takes care of all sin and error if there is still some belief in Jesus.

Law is a "rule established by authority" or a "body or system of such rules." (American Heritage Dictionary, 3rd edition, 1993). Simply put, law is a standard of right and wrong behavior. The law of Moses fits this description perfectly. The law was given to point out sin and the terrible consequences of sin. "Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good. 13 Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful." (Rom 7:12-13). The word "law" is not some mortal enemy of grace. Law specifically identifies a standard of behavior, which in the case of Moses' law is "holy", "just" and "good." Grace is not incompatible with that which is holy, just and good. Having a God given standard is the only possible way that man may know how to live by faith as God wills (Rom. 7:7, Rom 10:17). The problem with Moses' law was not that it revealed sin, its penalty

(death) and how God desired to be worshipped. The problem was in the law's lack of provision for the justification of man. To be righteous under the law, one had to be perfect (Jas. 2:10). Moses system of religion included God's will for man's behavior, but no possible means of justification. Even the animal sacrifices provided only a reminder of sin, not the removal of it (Heb. 10:1-4).

Sinful man needed a new system which made provision for the removal of sins. That new way is the Gospel, the New Testament of Jesus Christ. "For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." (John 1:17). Justification is the significant difference between Moses' law and the New Testament faith. "Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified." (Gal 2:16).

Grace did not come preaching there is no longer any standard or law. "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, 12 Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world;" (Titus 2:11-12).

Grace is in no way a license or permission to sin though it is foretold that some would turn the grace of God into lawlessness. "For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ." (Jude 1:4). By using "grace" as an excuse to sin they were denying the "LORD." That is they were rejecting the right of God and His doctrines to have rule or jurisdiction over them. Shall we continue in sin so that Grace may abound? God Forbid! (Rom. 5:20-6:2).

There are many other ways to confirm that grace and law can coexist. The new covenant is often referred to as a "law." "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death." (Rom 8:2). "Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith." (Rom 3:27).

This system of grace has "commandments" which must be obeyed. "And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. 4 He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. 5 But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him." (1 John 2:3-5).

Grace is not the absence of law "... for where no law is, there is no transgression." (Rom 4:15). If there is no law, there can be no sin for sin is a transgression of the law (1 John 3:4). Sin exists, thus law exists, even for those under grace. But, under the system of grace, there ever abides forgiveness of sin for those who are willing to confess their sin (repentance is implied). Our ongoing fellowship with the grace of God involves walking in the light and a willingness to recognize our sin when we go away from that standard. To wander from this light is to have no grace or truth in us. "If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: 7 But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. 8 If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. 9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 10 If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us." (1 John 1:6-10).

Grace is God's Provision of salvation through Jesus Christ with the absence of any merit or possibility of boasting on our part. Grace is not salvation with the absence of law or obedient faith on man's part. Grace is not the freedom to deny the Lord nor any of His Words given to us by His Holy Spirit. Grace provides us with the forgiveness we need, when we are willing to repent and confess our sins. The church must understand the fundamentals. God does by Grace what only He can do. We must respond to what God has provided in faith that is made alive by obedience.

Robert Johnson

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Robert received an Associate of Arts from Ohio Valley College (79) and a Bachelor of Arts from Harding University (81). He has also done graduate work at Harding Graduate School of Religion and Cincinnati Bible Seminary. Robert has spoken at various lectureships, Gospel meetings and youth retreats in Illinois, Ohio, Tennessee, West Virginia and Pennsylvania.

Preach The Word Like Ezekiel

Dave Miller

Our times are not unlike Ezekiel's day. America has been in a state of moral and spiritual decline for three decades. We, as a people, are moving further and further away from the principles of the Bible. The condition of our society is one in which most people are rejecting the foundational principles upon which our nation was built--the "traditional American values" that were extracted by the Founding Fathers from the Bible.¹

Circumstances Surrounding Ezekiel's Preaching

So it was in Ezekiel's day. The nation had been growing steadily more corrupt. The defiant entrenchment against God's will had been gradually deepening. God sent His prophets to warn them of the impending disaster of Babylonian Captivity. But people then, like now, would not listen. They would not come to grips with spiritual reality. The first phase occurred in 606 B.C. when Nebuchadnezzar, fresh from his victory over the Egyptian forces at Carchemish, invaded Judah. Capturing Jerusalem and King Jehoiakim, Nebuchadnezzar went easy on his victims, deporting only a few hostages from among the youths of noble birth--including young Daniel.²

Despite this harbinger of hard times, the people continued to resist the inevitable by listening to false prophets who reassured them that all would be well. King Jehoiakim revolted against his Babylonian oppressors and thereby elicited a second invasion in 597 B.C. This time members of the royal court were taken into captivity, along with priests, military personnel and the working class. Some Temple treasures were plundered. A puppet king, Zedekiah, was placed upon the throne. Ezekiel was among the 10,000 captives deported to Babylon in this second invasion. Although God's people had suffered from these assaults of their land and lives, they still refused to humble themselves and bow submissively before the God of Heaven.

Five years after Ezekiel was carried into Babylon, he was commissioned by God to preach to the captives. Jerusalem was still standing and portions of Jewish society and culture were still operational. The Jewish population that remained in Palestine, as well as the exiled Jews in Babylon, continued to entertain a strong optimism that Babylonian tyranny would be short-lived. This sentiment was buttressed by the declarations of false prophets like Hananiah, who announced to the people that the Babylonian yoke would be broken within two years and that all deportees would be returned to their homeland (Jer. 28).

The widespread sympathy with this viewpoint among the people amounted to defiance toward the decree of God. It demonstrated the people's unwillingness to perceive the captivity as just and God-ordained. It failed to come to grips with the fact that the captivity would last seventy years. This stubborn resistance created an unfavorable atmosphere with which Ezekiel had to contend for the first six years of his preaching ministry. For six years, he worked hard to tear down false hopes of an impending release from captivity. He strove to prepare the people for the even greater tragedy of Jerusalem's coming destruction.

This work was not easy. He was dealing with people who had been thrust into the most beautiful city of the ancient world, with its gardens and palaces, temples, and fortifications. Though stripped of their possessions and businesses and reduced to poverty,

these exiles were still resistant to God's will. They are described as "impudent and stubborn" (2:4), "briers and thorns," "scorpions," and "rebellious" (2:6). Their spirits were prideful and their hearts were hard. Their refusal to face spiritual reality created a negative, unpleasant atmosphere for Ezekiel's preaching.

When, in 586 B.C., Nebuchadnezzar orchestrated his final invasion of southern Palestine, destroying the capital city and temple, the Jews began to face the fact that their optimism had been unjustified. The false prophets had lied to them and the destruction of the kingdom of Judah as a political entity had been made a final reality. God's prophets, like Ezekiel and Jeremiah, had been vindicated as correct and now needed to be heard. Now the people were in a more receptive mood and prepared to give serious attention to Ezekiel's preaching. Having pronounced judgments upon the nation and her heathen neighbors, Ezekiel could now turn to the job of evoking repentance, rebuilding national morale, and providing comfort in the hope of future restoration and salvation.

Attributes of Ezekiel's Preaching

Before launching his preaching career, Ezekiel observed the customary period of mourning (3:15; Gen. 50:10; Job 2:13). A preacher must begin by getting his own attitude in line. He must come to grips with the gravity of the situation and his role in the midst of that situation. Ezekiel found himself preaching to a company of exiles--fragments of a shattered nation. They were what was left of broken homes--having lost loved ones, possessions, and their homeland. Some had even lost their God. They had seen their dreams dashed and their hopes fade. They had experienced suffering. They were now acquainted with grief and blinded with tears. Now they were sitting in misery in an unfriendly foreign country. Despite these adversities and hardships, they were still obstinate and unpliant before God. He began by going in among the captives and, in his own words, "I sat where they sat" (3:15).

Ezekiel's primary mission was to hammer the populace with the fact that the fall of Jerusalem and the Babylonian captivity were orchestrated by God. This drastic measure was necessary to correct the disobedient nation and bring them to repentance. Ezekiel was God's watchman (3:17), charged with warning the people. They desperately needed to comprehend the meaning and purpose of the exile. Having been shocked out of their false sense of security, they needed to learn from this national tragedy and then get on with submission to God and penitent living.

He performed his duties in dynamic fashion. At times he was harsh and blunt. He certainly remained uncompromising. He portrayed fearless determination amid deep convictions. He was a strict moralist. Yet Ezekiel was a preacher who was deeply sympathetic and filled with love for the people. He understood the need to bring the people to their knees in humility in view of the judgment from God for their sins. But he also provided them with the reassurance that they were still God's people and that future blessings would be forthcoming.

Ezekiel's prediction of restoration was characterized by profound assurance and jubilant anticipation. In the midst of depressing incarceration, this hope and joy was no doubt bolstered by that fantastic vision of God which he received at the beginning of his ministry (ch. 1). He was brought face to face with God's attributes of supremacy and sacrificial service, affiliation with man, yet infinite deity. He encountered the Supreme King of the

universe who was willing to stoop in service to save.

In speaking to the exiles, Ezekiel spoke through them to the entire Israelite nation. In speaking to the nation, he spoke through them to all nationalities and to all times. People and nations face ruin today. Obstinacy and rebellion are ripe and rampant. We, too, need the kind of preaching that Ezekiel offered to his generation. We need preachers whose preaching is from God not man. Ezekiel's preaching was riddled with references to the divine origin of his message: "thus says the Lord God" (3:27); "Then they shall know that I am Lord" (7:4); "the hand of the Lord was upon me" (8:1); "the word of the Lord came to me" (12:1). We have everything we need in the Bible to provide people with the complete will of God (2 Pet. 1:3; Acts 20:27).

Ezekiel's preaching essentially had two points. We need these same two points in our preaching today. His first point was that when people refuse to obey God, when they live their lives indulging themselves and doing as they please, they will suffer the consequences one way or the other, sooner or later. America is proceeding down the primrose path to moral and spiritual corruption. Many Christians are doing the same. As watchmen, we need to sound a warning (3:17; 33:7). We need to let people know in no uncertain terms that all of us will be held accountable for the biblical standard of approved conduct. Either people love God or they do not. If they love Him, they will live their lives in light of His will (John 14:23-24).

After Ezekiel's commission (chs. 1-3), he described in relentless detail the judgment that was due upon Judah and Jerusalem for their sin (chs. 4-24). The same judgment was due upon the rest of the world (chs. 25-32). Before people are in a frame of mind to hear God, they need to be forced to face up to their sinful condition. Ezekiel's approach would certainly not be popular today and it would be viewed as "negative preaching." Yet, the entire first half of the book issues condemnation after condemnation, judgment after judgment upon the people. We need to face the fact that our sin against God will naturally evoke His displeasure. God cannot allow human disobedience to occur without incurring His wrath. He will not tolerate it from the world and He will not tolerate it from the church.

Ezekiel's second sermon point was that once people face up to their sin and humble themselves so that they might repent and seek God's forgiveness, God will redeem. His punishment will be followed by His salvation and restoration. People may experience a great deal of heartache and misery brought on them by their departure from God's will. They may then have to live with the scars and permanent consequences of their sin. But God can still accept them and offer them a bright future. Life cannot help but be better once an individual turns from a life of sin and embraces righteous living.

Additional Sermon Points

In addition to these two central concepts, Ezekiel's preaching conveys many other important teachings that we must preach like Ezekiel. His preaching certainly impresses us with the fact that God is the absolute ruler of the universe. He is transcendent and self-existent. All humans must ultimately look to Him as the Creator and sole power.

We must preach that God is the key to life. As our relationship with God goes, so goes life. Adversity and suffering will come when people disobey Him. But life can be turned around and people can experience redemption and hope if they will repent and obey.

We must preach that God acts and reveals Himself through the events of history and

in the lives of people. The goal of His activities is that people come to know that He is the Lord (12:16). All human beings will accept that fact sooner or later.

We must preach that God is an international God. He is the God of all nations. All men are accountable to Him. He rules in the universe impartially over the affairs of men. His concern is manifested for the entire world of humanity.

We must preach that every person is individually responsible to God (18:4,20; 33:10-20). No one can blame his/her spiritual condition upon anyone else. We will all give account for our own behavior. We cannot blame our parents, our mates, our children, our genes, society or our environment. We will give account for our own behavior and our own decisions.

We must preach that God is gracious and good. He is genuinely concerned over the status of people. He wants all men to be saved. He is willing to accept repentance. He is a God of hope--even in the midst of judgment.

We must also preach, as Ezekiel preached, that the ultimate expression of God's love for humanity, and the ultimate antidote to the sin problem of the human race is Jesus Christ. Ezekiel's preaching foreshadowed the coming Messiah (17:22-24; 21:26-27; 34:23-24). He is the ultimate solution. Our preaching must inevitably and consistently reflect Him.

Conclusion

Now is not the time to abandon the preaching of the prophets--like Ezekiel. Now is not the time to fall for the advice of the modern homileticians to soften the message and sneak up on people's back side. Now is the time to pinpoint the truths of God's word that the world around us so desperately needs to hear. Now is the time to preach the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. Now is the time to not shrink from declaring the whole counsel of God. Now is the time to preach like Ezekiel!

²¹ For a discussion of the role of the Bible and the Christian religion in the formation of American civilization, see

David Barton, **The Myth of Separation** (Aledo, TX: WallBuilder Press, 1992); Nancy DeMoss, ed., **The Rebirth of America** (Philadelphia, PA: Arthur DeMoss Foundation, 1986); David Barton, **America: To Pray or Not To Pray** (Aledo, TX: WallBuilder Press, 1991); David Barton, **The Foundations of American Government**, Video tape (Aledo, TX: WallBuilder Press, 1992); Robert Bork, **Slouching Towards Gomorrah** (New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers, Inc., 1996), pp. 272ff.

²² Much of this material is taken from the author's lecture in B. J. Clarke, ed., **Major Lessons From The Major Prophets** (Southaven, MS: Power Publications, 1995), pp. 140ff.

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GROUND THE CHURCH IN BENEVOLENCE

Bob Kessinger

Introduction: What is the meaning of the word "benevolence"?

Webster says the primary meaning of the word is simply: "promoting the happiness of others." However, the word as used in the scriptures -- it is only found in the Bible one time, 1Cor. 7:3 --denotes "showing kindness or good will toward those that are destitute." (James 1:27).

I. Why should we be interested in grounding the church in benevolence?

A. Because in doing benevolent work, the church is accomplishing one of its three functions. (Eph. 3:10, 11; Eph. 2:20).

1. The church is to preach and teach the gospel. (Isa. 2:2-4; 1Tim. 3:15).
2. The church is to do benevolent work. (Mt 25:31-46; Lk. 10:25-27; Acts 2:44,45; James 1:27).
3. The church is to edify itself. (Eph. 4:16).

B. Because it is lawful or authorized by the scriptures. (Gal. 6:10).

II. At the present time benevolence is lacking among many congregations for at least three reasons!

A. Anti - Doctrine

1. Is it sinful to support the destitute who are not Christians from the church treasury? (2Cor. 9:13; James 1:17).
2. Can the individual Christian do anything of a religious nature that the church cannot do? (Acts 20:28; 2Tim. 4:1,2; 1Cor. 12:25-27).

B. Liberal churches who teach that we as a church have an obligation to provide recreation for the youth; and this they do, while usually do nothing toward mission work or supporting widows and orphans! (Col. 3:17).

1. The Christian has liberty to participate in and allowing his children to participate in secular activities that are not wrong within themselves. (Eph. 5:19).

C. Some congregations refuse to do benevolent work because of their helping individuals or families in the past who were really not destitute!

1. But what about the needy children? (James 1:27).
2. A lazy father or one who is wasteful and is therefore neglecting the family. (2Thess. 3:10; 1Tim. 5:8; Rom. 16:17,18).

Conclusion: Brethren we as the church of the Lord need to ground the church in benevolence as a part of all speaking the same thing; thus being united in Christ! (1Cor. 1:10-13)

Bob Kessinger was born May 26, 1926 in Cabin Creek WV. He married the former Doris Higgins May 3 1947, and they are the parents of 5 children. Linda Rhoades of Peoria Il, June Moore of Pt. Pleasant WV, Robin of St. Albans WV, Alice Jordan of Spencer WV, and Dan of St. Marys WV.

Bob graduated from South Charleston High School and attended Augusta College in Augusta Ga.

He obeyed the gospel February 3 1952, and preached his first sermon in November 1953. He began full time preaching in August 1955 at Henderson WV. He has been in located work in West Virginia, South Carolina, Georgia, Michigan and Kentucky. He has conducted a local TV program and 40 years of experience on radio programs. He has debated and also moderated 3 debates for the late Clifton Inman. He has held meetings in 13 states.

Ground The Church In The Word

Dave Miller

If you were asked to identify the number one need of churches of Christ today, what would you say? Someone might say we are most in need of being evangelistic. Someone else might say feeding the poor. Or fighting liberalism. Or combatting apathy and indifference. Certainly, these and many other matters are of utmost importance. But the underlying need out of which all of these items grow and which is logically prior to all other needs is a *thorough knowledge of the word of God*.

Churches of Christ are currently facing perilous times. A large segment of the church has been endangered by a progressive element that is attempting to restructure the church. The primary reason why so many are vulnerable to these subversive trends is that they are woefully unfamiliar with the Bible. They have not saturated their minds with God's mind. They have not meditated upon the rich, life-changing truths of God's word. They have become proficient and skilled in many other activities in life but have neglected applying themselves to the Bible in order to attain even minimal proficiency.

There was a time in American society when every public school student's education included Bible instruction.¹ But now we live in a nation that is well down the road toward complete ignorance of the Bible. The increased moral corruption and spiritual decline we see around us are a direct reflection of the widespread drift away from God's word. Since the Bible is gradually being eliminated from the attention of the average American, we can mark it down and set it in concrete--the downward spiral into the abyss of moral and spiritual degeneration will continue, plunging us deeper into the quagmire of wickedness.

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 (John 3:19-20).

How will the church of our Lord fare amid these conditions? That depends on how desperately Christians desire to have God, Christ and their inspired word. It depends on how badly we want to commune with the mind of God--bathing our spirits with His thoughts.

For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God. These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches (1 Cor. 2:11-13).

How do you **know** someone? Do you come to know a person by becoming fully familiar with their physical body? No! You only know someone to the extent that you become familiar with the spirit, the mind, the actual person that inhabits the body. But how do you get to know that person? Through his or her **words**. We can only know a person by

means of a prolonged, sustained contact with that person's thoughts as they are expressed in words. So it is with God. People do not know God because they have not spent time with His words.

It should not be surprising that when the Israelites were encamped on the plains of Moab just prior to their entrance into the promised land, Moses recapitulated the laws of God to the entire nation. He emphasized repeatedly that the people were going to have to keep articulating the law of God over and over again. Constant reminders of God's will would be the only way they would be able to survive in the new land. They would have to keep God's words on their minds everyday (Deut. 4:1-10). This repetitious rehearsal of Bible teaching on a daily basis would have to include a constant saturation of the children and grandchildren (Deut. 6:1-9).

Unfortunately, most people in our day are far from a thorough familiarity with the God of Heaven via His words. Ignorance truly reigns supreme. Notice, however, that the ignorance that blankets American civilization and even the church is not an innocent ignorance. The ignorance of which the Bible speaks and warns is willful ignorance (2 Pet. 3:5). When God announced through Hosea, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge" (Hos. 4:6), He was referring to their deliberate rejection of His will. They simply did not want to hear and learn. Their lives were too preoccupied with fulfilling their own desires than being interested in cultivating their spiritual appetites and investigating their Bibles.

Jesus applied Isaiah's prophecy to many during His life on earth:

For the heart of this people has grown dull. Their ears are hard of hearing, and their eyes they have closed, lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, lest they should understand with their heart and turn, so that I should heal them (Matt. 13:15).

Their problem was that they simply did not want God's interference in their lives. They did not hunger for God's input. When those of Jeremiah's day were encouraged to search for the "old paths" and to listen to God's warnings, they responded, "We will not walk in it" and "We will not listen" (Jer. 6:16-17). The simple observation of the inspired Chronicler is all too true of even our own generation: "And the Lord spoke to Manasseh and his people, but they would not listen" (2 Chron. 33:10).

In stark contrast, may each one of us "hunger and thirst for righteousness" (Matt. 5:6). May we "look intently into the perfect law of liberty" (James 1:25--NASV) and "desire the pure milk of the word" (1 Pet. 2:2). May we possess "the love of the truth" (2 Thess. 2:10). May we "love" God's laws, commandments, and precepts (Ps. 119:97,127, 159). May we consider them to be wonderful (Ps. 119:129). May we desire them more than a large quantity of gold (Ps. 19:10; 119:127).

May our orientation and direction and emphasis in life be like the one depicted in Christ's interaction with the crowd and His apostles in John chapter six. He expressed Himself in figurative terms by admonishing them to eat His flesh and drink His blood and to feed on Him (John 6:53-58). By this cryptic language He meant that they must embrace Him as the only source of eternal life. But how is one to embrace or accept Jesus? He said, "The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life" (John 6:63). In other words, by urging

the crowds to "eat" Him, Jesus meant that people would have to come to an understanding of His teachings and obey them.

Peter certainly got the point. When many of Christ's disciples abandoned Him after hearing this disconcerting terminology, He turned to the twelve and asked them if they, too, would part company with Him. Peter's response was a definitive, penetrating analysis of the situation. His remarks go right to the heart of our subject in this lecture. He responded to Jesus: "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life" (John 6:68). I say to you, if the church of Christ is to survive, if the Lord's people are to survive the incredible onslaught of worldliness, religious error, and sin, **we must ground the church in the word of God!**

¹¹ See, for example, David Barton, **Education and the Founding Fathers**, Video tape (Aledo, TX: WallBuilder Press, 1991) and David Barton, **America: To Pray or Not To Pray** (Aledo, TX: WallBuilder Press, 1988), pp. 53-84.

SOLIDIFY THE HOME WITH GODLY CHILDREN

Emanuel Daugherty

Introduction

The overall theme of this Third Annual West Virginia School of Preaching Lectureship is "In Times Like These." The lessons are centered around the church, the home and preaching. My specific topic is "In Times Like These Solidify the Home With Godly Children." As has been pointed out by other lectureship speakers, the homes of our nation are in great trouble. Every age has had its difficulties in raising children. Adam and Eve's first child murdered his brother! Amos said "the prudent shall keep silence in that time; for it is an evil time" (Amos 5:13). Paul said we are to "walk circumspectly (carefully), not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time for the days are evil" (Eph 5:14-15).

But we are to labor in faith and not in fear! The meek still inherit the earth! While it is a fearful thing to bring children into this world it is still the desire of God that we multiply and replenish the earth. As parents we are charged with making godly children in a godless world. This is certainly one way in which we replenish the "salt of the earth."

THE BLESSING OF CHILDREN

Obviously, there are millions in our society that do not see children as a blessing, but a curse. Rather than bring a child into the world they have it aborted. This happens over 4,000 times a day in our country. In India they have had a practice of killing female babies when they are born. There are some countries that place a limit on the number of children a husband and wife may have because of the density of population. Others fear to bring children into a world of terrorists, warfare, and cruelty.

Rather than being fearful of bringing children into a time such as this, we need to be bold and strong in faith. Godly parents must trust in God that His blessings will favor their attempts to raise godly children. With faith in God we may raise up an Esther, a Joseph, a Samuel, a Dorcas for times like these. Or a Paul, a Timothy or a Gus Nichols, an N.B. Hardeman, or a Jess Nutter. If we will "be not fearful but believing," God can use us for his glory.

Someone has said "One that never marries lives only one third of life, one that marries lives two thirds of life, and one that marries and has children lives all of life." Judy and I have raised four children to adulthood and we have eight grandchildren. I am happy to say that they are all Christians, married, living a happy, successful life with Christ as the centerpiece of their homes. Our children have been a source of great happiness, comfort, and encouragement to us. We would not ever want to be without them. It is sad indeed that there are parents whose relationships with their children has deteriorated to such an extent that they cannot stand to be with one another. Drugs, alcohol, and abuse are often contributors to this kind of situation.

The words children and child are used 1531 times in the Bible. David said, "Behold, children are a heritage from the LORD, The fruit of the womb is His reward. Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, So are the children of one's youth. Happy is the man who has his quiver full of them" (Psa 127:3-5).

Peter reminds us that husbands and wives are "heirs together of the grace of life" (1 Pet

3:7). The home, husbands and wives, parents and children are an integral part of the overall scheme of redemption. In his **debate with Truman Scott, Wayne Jackson** aptly pointed out:

"Everything God did from the creation of man onward, ultimately had in view the coming of Christ and the redemption of man, his salvation from hell. When therefore, God...when He designed the home, it was ultimately with the view of man's salvation. The home... gives a sense of cohesiveness to society and thus creates the kind of environment which facilitates the spread of the Lord's plan...Any attack upon the home, or any doctrine which compromises the teaching of God about the home, or any concept which weakens the stability of the home, or its permanency, is, in the final analysis, an attack upon the scheme of redemption, an attack upon God's plan to save man" (Divorce and Remarriage, pp.12-13).

PRINCIPLES FOR RAISING GODLY CHILDREN

A Right Spiritual Foundation. A correct spiritual foundation begins when both parents are Christians having obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine delivered unto them (Rom 6:16-17; 6:3-5). The task of raising godly children increases exceedingly when one of the parents is not a Christian. But in a home where father and mother love God and one another, and God's will for their lives is being practiced there is power to accomplish great good.

A right spiritual foundation means that both parents have assumed the God ordained responsibilities proscribed on the pages of Inspiration. A home is builded upon the sand when husbands are not being the head of the home and wives are not fulfilling their God-given roles--the husband is the head of the household, with the wife and children submissive to him and recognize his position over them in the Lord. Abraham was such a man. "For I have known him, to the end that he may command his children and his household after him, that they may keep the way of Jehovah, to do righteousness and justice. To the end that Jehovah may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him" (Gen 18:19). Eph 5:22-33; Titus 2:1-10).

A home with a good spiritual foundation is one where family worship consisting of prayer, Bible reading, study and devotions is a common practice. In this home spiritual values will be taught--love for God and one's fellowman (Matt 22:37-40), honesty, truth, goodness, faith, trust, righteousness, kindness, and godliness will be taught (Eph 4:25-32), evil thoughts, words, and actions will be warned against and corrected (Rom 1; Gal 5:18ff). The fruit of the Spirit will be manifested generously in a godly home (Gal 5:22-23; 2 Pet 1:5-11). The Bible will be exalted, Christ will be glorified, God will be honored.

Genuine Love. Genuine love is true love! It is positive and negative. It hates evil and loves good (Amos 5:15). A home with genuine love is the most powerful force imaginable! Nothing can stop their service and zeal for God and His Son. The church will grow and prosper where its families have genuine love working in them.

Godly Examples. Homes with a proper spiritual foundation will find men being men and women being women. There will not be a mixing of genders or role reversals of duty and responsibility. Sons will have their proper role models and girls their's.

Parents must set the example for right behavior for their children. It's difficult to raise

godly children with ungodly parents. Profanity, vulgarity, crudeness, beer in the refrigerator, bad attitudes, quarreling, bickering, and fighting, hap-hazard church attendance, carping and criticizing the church--these things will quickly drive children away from the Lord and into the arms of the Devil.

Consistent Discipline. A lack of discipline is society's greatest problem--government, military, industry, labor, schools, home the church and individuals are suffering due to a dearth in discipline. The source of the problem is the failure of the home to train, teach and practice discipline. Discipline is all that one does to train up a child in the way he should go. It includes both preventive and corrective. Discipline starts in the home. "A wise son heareth his father's instruction, but a scorner heareth not rebuke" (Prov 13:1). If discipline is not there it will be found lacking in all other segments of society. Eli, the judge in the Old Testament was chastised by the Lord for he "knew his son's iniquity...but restrained them not (1 Sam 3:13).

Genuine love has discipline built into it. "For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth...All chastening seemeth for the present to be not joyous but grievous; yet afterward it yieldeth peaceable fruit unto them that have been exercised thereby, even the fruit of righteousness" (Heb 12:6,11). "He that spareth his rod hateth his son; But he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes" (Prov 13:24). "Correct thy son, and he will give thee rest; Yea, he will give delight unto thy soul" (Prov 29:17).

Great Expectations. My wife and I have always had great expectations for our children. One's expectations must be in harmony with our goals in life. What do we want of our children? What kind of men and women do we desire them to be? What kind of life will they lead? If we have great expectations of our children and work toward that end the chances of them being god fearing men and women are profoundly greater.

Some of our expectations for our children (in no particular order):

Be healthy and happy.

Teach them to love, respect and trust the Bible more than anything or anyone in this world.

Help them to know that Jesus is their best and truest friend.

Teach them the Bible standard for right and wrong.

To have a peaceful, harmonious home life with love and respect for all members of the family.

Teach them self discipline so that society will not have to correct them.

Save them from sin by obedience to the gospel of Christ.

Teach them how to function in, and contribute toward a civilized society.

Cause them to be active productive members of the body of Christ.

Prepare them for a world hostile to righteousness and godliness.

Help them learn to live at peace with all men, as much as they are able and yet be true to God.

Enable them to be good parents, providing a happy home life for their own children.

Bring them home to God at the end of their sojourn on this earth.

CHILDREN HAVE A RESPONSIBILITY IN THIS MATTER

When children reach the age of knowing right from wrong, and as they grow to fuller maturity, they have a great responsibility in their own spirituality. They are to "obey their parents in the Lord" (Eph 6:1). Why? Because it is right! It is right because fathers and mothers have had experiences and learning in life that enables them to be the proper guides to the young, it is right because logic demands that the elder is to be the teacher of the younger, it is right because of the needs of children that parents can supply. But it is infinitely right because God said it is right! God created us and designed the structure of the home. He knows just what we need. It is incumbent upon children that they obey their parents! In any age it is a mark of moral decay when children are disobedient to parents (Rom 1:30, 2 Tim 3:2). Jesus as a youth was subject to his parents (Luke 2:51).

Children have the responsibility to honor their parents (Eph 6:2). This is a quotation from the 10 Commandments (Ex 20:12, Deut 5:16). Some one has said "Obedience is the DUTY; Honor is the DISPOSITION of which obedience is born." Honor is to be given to both father and mother. Mother's place is that of honor and not a servile one. (Boy at Alkire Rd. Years ago, obeyed the gospel, thought he did not have to submit to mother any more). A child's obedience, honor and respect as long as the child is a part of the family unit and beyond (See Mark 7:9-13).

Biographical Sketch of Emanuel B. Daugherty

Born: Philippi, WV January 12, 1939

Baptized: February, 5, 1950 by Miris Wright in Warren, OH

Married: Judith R. Null, July 16, 1958

Children: Bruce, preaches Beville Rd church of Christ Daytona Beach, FL; Ramona Haynes, Alkire Rd, Grove City, OH; Rachel Cornell, Alkire Road, Grove City, OH; Rebecca Poe, husband preaches Northridge church of Christ, Dayton, OH

Grandchildren: Eight

Education: Graduated from Braceville HS, Trumbull County, Ohio 1956, Memphis School of Preaching 1968, Alabama Christian School of Religion (Southern Christian University) 1982

Preaching: Alkire Road Grove City, OH 1968-1989 Dewey Avenue St Marys, WV 1989-1994

School of Preaching: Taught nine years at Central Ohio School for Preachers and Teachers, Columbus, OH; Currently serving as Director, West Virginia School of Preaching since February 1994

Gospel Meetings: West Virginia, Ohio, Illinois, Kentucky, Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Virginia, North Carolina, Tennessee

SOLIDIFYING THE HOME AGAINST IMMORALITY

Burt Jones

Introduction

I held a meeting in Colorado Springs the day before I left. I had the great opportunity to speak during the morning devotional at the United States Air Force Academy. As I listened to those young Cadets sing an acapella rendering of "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God", I looked into the faces of these men and women, most of whom would be charged with communicating that for which America stands during the 21st Century and defending our great country. Communicating it! From what kind of homes did these fresh, intelligent souls come? How many were Christian? What will they communicate? What were they taught in those homes?

Were those homes good and decent and moral places in which to grow in wisdom and stature?

How do we cleave to those Christian principles so necessary in preserving marriages and families?

1. There is a way in which we should go and from which we should never depart.

- A. True religion is not mere theory, but it is a practical manner of life.
 - 1. We have a journey to take, a journey through this world to a better, to a heavenly country. (Heb. 11:13-16).
 - 2. This journey is marked out for us in the word of God to keep us in the strait way and away from the perverse and immoral nature of this crooked generation. (Luke 9:41).
 - 3. Can this be said of any other path (Prov. 13:5)?

II. In this way the home should be organized as God would have it, not as we desire it.

This organization in a Godly home begins in childhood, so that even the newest member knows what is immoral, as well as what is moral.

- A. "Train" -- This verb generally means "to put something in the mouth." The metaphor suggests that of feeding an infant.
 - 1. Every parent knows the absolute necessity of giving suitable nourishment to helpless children.
 - 2. Youth and babes in Christ must be trained as a tender plant
- B. This training can be done:
 - 1. By instruction.
 - 2. By example.
 - a. The best way to train the child and the babe in Christ to cope with this immoral world is to train yourself.
 - b. If your hands are morally dirty (lying, stealing, drinking, covetousness, etc.) his life will be made dirty by what he has seen in you.
 - c. Precept points the way, but it is silent, CONTINUOUS example conveyed through action.
 - d. More people learn of immorality and a worldly lifestyle through the eye than through the ear.

3. By proper childhood and church discipline (Prov. 13:24; Eph. 6:4; Col. 3:21; Heb. 12:5-11).
- C. While engaging in this solidifying process we should be much in prayer. "He that hath the ear of God hath the arm of God."

III. The home is pre-eminently the favorable place in which to do this strengthening.

- A. If you leave those most vulnerable alone without solid Christian foundation within the home, they will soon be occupied and crowded with wrong ideas.
- B. A good heart is open and receptive.
 1. As a tender young plant.
 2. There are many wrong sources from which the wrong kind of training may be received.

IV. The consequences of proper grounding against immorality.

- A. "When he is old he will not depart from it."
- B. Why is this rule true?
 1. Man is an intellectual and moral being, capable of progressive advancement according to teaching.
- C. What happens if those who have thus been trained take a step onto the "broad way" of immorality and worldliness?
 1. Is there no hope?
 2. (Luke 15:24).
- D. What responsibility lies at the feet of those who have done the best that they can and those whom they taught still abandon the good way? (Ezekiel 18:20).

Conclusion:

- A. Suppose God placed in your hand a massive inestimable diamond and asked you to inscribe some brief sentence upon it which would be read aloud upon the day of judgment as you stand naked and open before your Righteous Judge. What caution and care you would exercise in the form and inscription of that sentence.
If the home, here before the church, solidifies itself against immorality, and the things of this world then there would be no need for the law enforcement system, the courts system or the welfare system.

Burt Jones - Burt is a native of Gadsden, Al. After having spent most of his life as Episcopalian, and having a military and business background, he obeyed the gospel, and one week later began his preacher training. He is the father of three children, Dinah, Geoffrey, and Clayton. Burt holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Music Education from Jacksonville University and a Masters of Arts degree in Middle Eastern History from Youngstown State University. He is a former combat officer during the Vietnam era. He is a graduate of the Memphis School of Preaching. He is also the composer of the hymn, "Safe In His Arms". Jones additionally is the instructor in the popular four part video series on music fundamentals "Singing with Grace", and the author of the Music Fundamentals pamphlet published by Proclamation Press, Memphis, TN. Burt presently conducts gospel meetings and singing workshops throughout the brotherhood. He teaches Bible and English at the **West Virginia School of Preaching**.

SOLIDIFY THE HOME BY GODLY GRANDPARENTS

Denver E. Cooper

The term grandfather is not found in the scriptures. The term grandmother is found only one time. 2 Timothy 1:5, declares, "When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and in thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also." Obviously, the Holy Spirit considered grandmother very important in some way to Timothy. Even if grandfather isn't mentioned, we are able to see in the Bible the great influence wielded both for good and for bad by grandfathers.

GODLY GRANDPARENTS SHOW GODLY LOVE

Godly grandparents do not show partiality in their devotion to the grandchildren. Often an only child may become an obsession to some. The first born may be the favorite. Some may favor the girls, because there has never been one in the family before, or they may favor the grandson for the same or other reasons. Solomon says, "Better is a dinner of herbs where love is than a fatted ox and hatred without." Lavishing material things is by no means a substitute for love one to another. Genuine love cannot be purchased. Nor can it be commanded.

GODLY GRANDPARENTS --GODLY DISCIPLINE GO HAND IN HAND

Permissiveness will not be correctly credited to the grandparents. Most everybody enjoys seeing children act courteously, submissively, and obediently. Grandparents can best show their love for grandchildren by supporting a good discipline program of the parents. Don't take the side of the child against the parents. (At least in the presence of the children). "If mommy and daddy get too hard on you, you call grammy and she will turn them into the authorities and they will go to jail," is hardly the godly way to solidify a home, let alone promote good character. Imagine the ill feelings that must be created by grandparents in this case. While one doesn't enjoy witnessing a child receive correction, discipline is certainly necessary to the welfare of the child, whether son or daughter, grandson or granddaughter. It is a gross injustice to children to allow them to grow up without proper guidance and correction. Rather, we ought to thank God when our children recognize the need to properly and successfully discipline their children.

Loving encouragement should be a part of showing our love for grandchildren. Paul reminded the church in I Thess. 2:11,12, "how we exhorted and comforted and charged everyone of you, as a father doth his children, that ye should walk worthy of God, who hath called you his children, that ye should walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory." Whether it is Bible Study, school work, chores at home or submissiveness to their parents, grandchildren should be encouraged to do the godly thing. **OBEY THEIR PARENTS!**

GODLY GRANDPARENTS KNOW THAT NO WALL CAN ISOLATE ANY GRANDCHILD FROM SIN

Eager to capture the love of grandchildren often causes grandpa and grandma to discount the heinousness of sin. "You only go around once," is a famous plea of Satan. Grandparents must not forget the great need of teaching mortals, which build good character in the grandchild. Satan is powerful with his promises of the "pleasures of sin." "Just this once" is just as appealing to the grandchild as it was to the child. "Everybody is doing it" is not true as many times as children lead us to believe when truly Christian children are involved. Grandparents must teach and expect good morals from their grandchildren. Just as the parents must not be guilty of saying, "don't do as I do, but do as I say," so must it be with the grandparents. Set good examples. Yes, tell them too, of the awfulness of sin, or the soul doesn't stand a chance. Don't deceive the parents by allowing the grandchildren to engage secretly in that which is displeasing to the parents.

GODLY WORSHIP DEMANDS GODLY RESPECT OF GRANDCHILDREN

A very common complaint concerning small children during worship is that parents (sometimes grandparents) don't discipline their child when worship is in progress. The child is sometimes allowed to run in the aisles, crawl under the seats, scream, cry and otherwise disrupt the worship, without restraint. Help teach them to sing, bow their heads in time of prayer, and sit quietly and respectfully during the balance of the worship period. It is good training. Certainly grandparents should by no means condone such undisciplined behavior, but at an appropriate time and place speak to the parents, BUT never in the presence of the children.

Over the years I've seen children climb the cupboards, slap mother in the face, lie in the middle of the floor at home, church, on the street, in the super market and scream to the acute annoyance of all who were in hearing range, only to be ignored by the mother or father. Sometimes, they even appeared to think it was cute, funny, or to be expected as a normal action of the offspring. Some say, "I can't do a thing with him."

SOME PERSONAL EXPERIENCES WITH GRANDPARENTS

First of all, most of our grandparents on both sides of the family were Christians. Grandparents on my mother's side were farmers and literally dug their living from the ground. During the Great Depression there was little, or no public work from which to earn a living. I learned many valuable lessons from my grandparents and so did Florence, my wife, from her grandparents. I learned to gather the fruits and vegetables. I learned to drive the cattle from the meadows to the milk stalls. I learned to cut trees and chop wood. I learned to sharpen the ax on the foot peddled whet stone. I rode the wagon to the grist mill where corn and wheat, which had been raised on the farm, was ground for the next several months food supply. All of it was carefully stored to assure safe keeping for the winter and spring. Barrels of flour were placed in the attic because grandpa knew that God was not talking to him when he said through Elijah, "the barrel of meal shall not waste." (I Kings 17:6)

Though grandma was not quite as strict with grandson as with son, I soon learned that even at grandma's house was no place to "allow your eyes to be bigger than your stomach." We were not restricted on the quantity, but were expected to "clean up our

plates." Grandpa must have known, "A faithful man will abound with blessings, but he who follows frivolity will have poverty enough." (Prov. 28:19) Parents and grandparents had all learned, "He also that is slothful in his work is brother to him that is a great waster." (Prov. 18:9) They all considered it "great waste" to leave food on the plate.

My grandparents were supportive of my parents disciplinary solutions. I knew they were. I was warned in the presence of the grandparents to behave myself, or I would answer to them when I arrived home and might never be allowed to go to grandpas for an extended visit again. Mother and dad would settle for actions which showed no less than respect for authority in the home, school, at church services or anywhere else. The need for discipline away from home meant more of the same on arriving home.

The following poem best expresses favored supportiveness of our grandparents.

Junior bit the meter man,
Junior hit the cook,
Junior's anti-social now
According to the book.

Junior smashed the clock and laughed,
Junior hacked the tree,
Destructive trends are treated
in chapters two and three.

Junior tossed his shoes and socks out in the rain,
Mischiev! That's normal--
Disregard the stains.

Junior set dad's shirt on fire,
He whittled Grandpa's pipe,
That's no gain attention;
See page 89

Grandpa seized the slipper and
yanked Junior across his knee,
He's read nothing but the Bible since 1893.

Florence and I remember good grandparents, most of whom were God fearing people. Most knew the BOOK. How thankful we are for them and the godly influence wielded in our lives.

THE REAL VALUE OF A GODLY HERITAGE

The scriptures emphasize the value of a godly heritage. In Deut. 6:6-9 we find, "And these words, which I command you this day, shall be in thine heart; and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house,

and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the post of the house, and on thy gates." If the children of Israel needed to be saturated with and dedicated to the Law of Moses, should we be less saturated with the teaching of God's Word?

When the late brother H.W. Bankes was asked, "When should I begin to train my child?," his reply was, "Two hundred years before he is born." Of course, he was trying to emphasize the effects of godly training in the life of the child and the care which should be exercised in the selection of a mate.

What grandchild would not want to boast of godly grandfather Abraham? David and Timothy showed the immeasurable value of godly grandmothers. David most certainly is one of the greatest Old Testament characters. God himself recognized him as a "man after mine own heart." (Acts 13:22) To the contrary, it would be quite embarrassing to have the very wicked king, Ahab, and the most wicked queen, Jezebel, for a grandfather and grandmother. Naomi is one of the most noble of women to have her life recorded in the scriptures. What a grandmother to remember!

"And Naomi took the child, and laid it in her bosom, and became nurse unto it. And the women her neighbors gave it a name, saying there is a son born to Naomi; and they called his name Obed; he is the father of Jesse, the father of David." (Ruth 4:16,17)

Paul spoke of Timothy as "my own son in the faith." (I Tim. 1:2) Such is certainly a tribute to his greatness. The great faith so admired by Paul "dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois..." (2 Tim. 1:5) Who can question the great influence of his grandmother?

Jacob could have, with a great deal of pride, spoken of his grandfather Abraham. Whether he knew God's reason for choosing Abraham, he most certainly was the product of God's choice to gather a great nation. God had said, "For I know him, to the end that he may command his children and his household after him, that they may keep the way of Jehovah, to do righteousness and justice." (Gen. 18:19)

Joel 1:2-4 reads, "tell ye your children of it (the plague of locust sent by Jehovah because the people were rending their garments, but were not rending their hearts) and let your children tell their children, and their children another generation." Grandparents and parents were to use the locust plague punishment to promote complete dedication to God.

GODLY GRANDPARENTS ARE AN ENCOURAGEMENT

Grandparents are to be an encouragement to the grandchildren. They should set godly examples for all of the grandchildren. I heard many Bible discussions on Sunday afternoon as Grandpa Cooper, my father and uncle concerned themselves with the preaching of the A.M. worship. Of course, one cup, no classes, baptistry, located preachers, etc. constituted the bulk of the conversation.

I knew my grandparents would be at every service during a gospel meeting. I knew they would attend the hundreds of baptisms which took place at the creek or river.

When visiting with my mother's parents it was necessary to walk eight miles after breakfast, before lunch, in order to attend worship in a little one room school house.

A MOBILE SOCIETY IS A PROBLEM

We are living in a mobile society. It seems to me that the disadvantages often outweigh the advantages. Often the grandparents can't wait to retire so that they can move away and thus be free of the responsibility in helping with their grandchildren and, more importantly, the Lord's work. Retirement age should release men and women from the busy cares of this world and provide a wonderful time for them to busy themselves with God's work at home. It often does not happen that way. Such, I believe, often indicates a great degree of selfishness. Grandparents should delight in their children and grandchildren; show concern for their achievements and losses. Humiliating as it may be to have the six year old grandson show that he knows how to turn the computer off when grandpa has spent several minutes at it without success, it is still wonderful to know that they may have even greater opportunities to do good than we have had in our day.

It may also be true that most grandparents will admit that they just can't wait to get the little angels on Friday evening after school and take the little devils home on Sunday evening. Perhaps lack of permanent responsibility is a cause of so much joy as we assist in the rearing of the grandchildren.

GODLY GRANDPARENTS SET GODLY EXAMPLES

I never heard my grandparents use bad language or knew them to mistreat any of their neighbors. All of them that I knew were liberal and kind to the poor, "giving good measure, pressed down, heaped up and running over." They were all men and women of integrity. They never committed adultery or fornication. You could count on their word. None of them were divorced. They abhorred it. Very few of the next generation discarded their mates. Of course, such cannot be said of the next generation from my parents.

Good grandparents are careful to encourage modest dress, wholesome companionships and recreation for their grandchildren. They most certainly want them to be Christians and will do nothing to undermine the training and teaching of the parents. I well remember that I was very much in a hurry to get to my grandparents to let them know that I had become a Christian and later to tell them that I intended to be a preacher.

I received great encouragement in both cases from them. It was a dismal day when I saw them laid to rest in the "silent city of the dead."

Grandparents, you are needed to help raise the grandchildren, if it is only to show support for the parents as they endeavor to "bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." What a thrill and joy it is to see and assist the grandchildren in their obedience to the glorious gospel of our Lord!

Denver E. Cooper was born in Cairo, WV April 2, 1923, reared in Parkersburg and graduated from Parkersburg High School in 1941. He was baptized in 1937 by bro. Charlie Taylor who encouraged him to attend Free-Hardeman College which he entered in August 1942 and preached his first full-length sermon in September 1941. He married Florence E. Smith of Sistersville, WV in March 1945 and they celebrated 50 years together March 1995. To this union was born 8 children and they adopted one daughter. His located work include Ironton, OH; Harrisville, WV; Chester, WV; Philippi, WV; West St., Weirton, WV; Toronto, OH; Ravenswood, WV; Dewey Ave., St. Marys,

WV; Weirton Heights, WV; Weirton, WV; Timberville, VA and Hillview Terrace Moundsville, WV (present). He has been a Bible instructor in **West Virginia School of Preaching** beginning in 1994.

PREACH THE WORD WITH PERSUASION

John Shannon

INTRODUCTION

I'm delighted to have this great privilege to be a part of this lectureship and to be one of the speakers. To the Hillview Terrace congregation, its great elders for such a great lectureship, Emanuel Daugherty the able director, and the faculty of The West Virginia School Of Preaching, thanks for having me. With the overall theme in mind "**In Times Like These...**". Generally speaking the world doesn't care to hear the preaching of God's Word, because they think it's foolish (I Cor. 1:18), and because of wickedness (I John 5:19), but we must preach God's Word! For my assigned topic, Preach The Word With Persuasion, first we shall identify our subject. **Preach** is from the greek word (*kurusso*) a verb meaning to proclaim aloud, herald, to declare, to preach. The greek (*Logos*) means, **God's Word** and it means two things: (1) The gospel message, the Word of the cross (I. Cor. 1:18) and Christ Himself (John 1:1-18). We should preach, **but preach the Word with persuasion.** To **persuade** means, to induce (a person) to believe something or to do something, to influence or gain over by argument, advice, to draw or incline to a determination by presenting sufficient motives: **to convince.** Paul was persuasive in his preaching to Agrippa, "Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian" (Acts 26:28). Paul said, "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things [done] in [his] body, according to that he hath done, whether [it be] good or bad. **Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men;** but we are made manifest unto God; and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences" (II Cor. 5:10-11). In Paul's second letter to Timothy he charges him to preach the Word, and we will use second Timothy chapter four as we discuss the topic under consideration. We will use four major points in our lesson, (1) Presence of Preaching, (2) Problems of Preaching, (3) Price of Preaching, (4) Purpose of Preaching.

I. PRESENCE OF PREACHING

*"I charge [thee] therefore **before** God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; **Preach the word;** be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine" (II Timothy 4:1-2).*

Paul closes the previous chapter by exhorting Timoty to continue in the Word in his personal life; (I Tim. 3:14-16), now he exhort him to preach that same Word to others, Paul also said, to Timothy "Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt **both save thyself, and them that hear thee**" (I Tim. 4:16). I'm persuaded because I know that God is with us and that we are in His presence at all times and that He is pleased with His preachers who are proclaiming His Power (Rom. 1:16), to a perishing people (I Cor. 1:18). In our persuasion we need to be persistence and practical in the proclamation of the Truth. So important was preaching the Word that Paul gave Timonty a charge, a "*military command*" to keep on preaching the Word. "Preach the Word" implies knowing the Word (I Tim. 4:13), rightly dividing Truth (II Tim. 2:15), and making it understandable and applicable to the lives of the people. Too many preachers, preach about the Word, or preach from the Word, but do not preach the Word and allow the Word to do its own work (Heb. 4:12). We need to have the greatest respect for God and His Word, by standing in awe in both. David said, "*Stand in awe, and sin not: commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still*" (Psalm 4:4). *Princes have persecuted me without a cause: but my heart standeth in awe of thy word" (Psalm 119:161).*

The gospel preacher must present, not book reviews, not politics, not economics, not current topics of the day, not a philosophy of life denying the Bible and based upon unproven theories of science, but the Word! The gospel preacher as a herald cannot choose his message, he is given a message to preach (Jonah 3:2; Jude 3; I Pet. 4:11; Acts 20:27). Paul said, "*For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel*" (I Cor. 9:16)!

Being in God's presence and preaching with persuasion we must be *instant in season, out of season*. The word "*instant*" (epistethi) means to "take a stand, to stand upon it or up to it, to carry on, to stick to it". The preacher is to proclaim the Word when the time is auspicious or promising, or favorable, and also when the circumstances seem unfavorable. So few times are still available for preaching that the preacher must take every chance he has to preach the Word. There is no closed season for preaching the gospel of Christ.

The word "*reprove*" (elegxon) means to stir a person to prove himself; to put a person under conviction; to lead a person to see his/her sins and feel guilty over them.

The word "*rebuke*" (epitimeson). This is a very strong word, it carries the idea of a sharp, severe rebuke with possibly a suggestion in some cases, of impending penalty. A word of warning and rebuke would often save a brother from many a sin and many a shipwreck. Paul wrote, "*Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear*" (I Tim. 5:20). There is the time when we as gospel preachers must reprove and rebuke, but we must also "*exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine*".

The word "*exhort*" (parakaleo) has the idea of "*please, I beg of you, I urge you*". We should encourage and comfort, trying to persuade people to come or come back to Christ. This exhorting should be with all "*longsuffering*" (makrothumia), this means we as preachers must be patient with people, no matter what the circumstances, we have to suffer a long time with people, without resentment or anger, and never give up, for we know the power of God and His Word (Acts 20:32). Gospel preachers, "*exhort with all doctrine*", A good *minister* does not teach just bits and pieces of the doctrine of Christ, he does not focus upon subjects that are popular or some favorite that arouses curiosity. Paul said to the elders at Ephesus, "*Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I [am] pure from the blood of all [men]. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God*" (Acts 20:26-27). Notice what Paul said to Timothy, "*If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine, whereunto thou hast attained*" (I Tim. 4:6). Let us preach with persuasion as we stand in the presence of God and the people!

II. PROBLEMS OF PREACHING

"For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away [their] ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables" (II Tim. 4:3-4).

Why must gospel preachers proclaim the power of God to this world? "Because the time will come..." when men will not want the Word of God and the time is upon us! Many of the members of the body of Christ, do not want "*healthy*" (hugiaion) sound doctrine; they want instead, some sort of religious entertainment from some performers who will tickle their ears. The preacher who simply opens the *Bible* is sometimes rejected, while the shallow religious entertainer become a celebrity! Preach the Word, for the the great apostasy is coming. Even as Paul was writing these words some false teachings had already entered into the church, and the future was not too bright. This is a prediction of Scripture; Paul was prophesying that the false teaching was to spread. The idea that the apostasy would be great and many would follow after the false teachings and the whole church would be affected. We know from church history that this is exactly what happened to the churches in Asia. The Asian churches were the very churches who were warned in the Book of Revelation (Rev.1:11-3:22).

There were seven churches, and out of the seven only one remained faithful to the preaching of the Word--the Philadelphian church (Rev.3:7-13). The other six became apostate; many of the people turned away from the pure preaching and teaching of God's Word. In the book of Isaiah there were many problems that the people had with the preaching of the Law of The Lord. Let us notice, "Now go, write it before them in a table, and note it in a book, that it may be for the time to come for ever and ever: That this [is] a rebellious people, lying children, children [that] will not hear the law of the LORD: Which say to the seers, See not; and to the prophets, Prophecy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits: Get you out of the way, turn aside out of the path, cause the Holy One of Israel to cease from before us" (Isa. 30:8-11). There were also problems with paying a preacher for his kind of preaching, as we notice recorded in the book of Amos. "Amos 7:10 Then Amaziah the priest of Beth-el sent to Jeroboam king of Israel, saying, Amos hath conspired against thee in the midst of the house of Israel: **the land is not able to bear all his words.** For thus Amos saith, Jeroboam shall die by the sword, and Israel shall surely be led away captive out of their own land. Also Amaziah said unto Amos, O thou seer, go, flee thee away into the land of Judah, and there eat bread, and prophesy there: Many today do not want the plan Truth, therefore "after there own lusts shall they heap to themselves teaches having itching ears". People will want preachers who will allow them to live like they desire. The Greek actually says that the people will be *dominated* "by thier own lusts" (epthumia). Such lusts and cravings will so dominate people's lives that they will seek ministers and teachers will tickle their ears with the message of personal and self devolpement and self-image. The point is this: men do not want to be honest. They want the right to live like they want and to do their own thing. They want the right to be comfortable, at ease, recognized, honored, esteemed, and to secure postion, authority, wealth, and power. They want pleasure and stimulation and the gratification of their lusts when they want them gratified. Notice Jeremiah, "A wonderful and horrible thing is committed in the land; The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and my people love [to have it] so: and what will ye do in the end thereof(Jer. 5:30-31)? Gospel preachers, that will preach the Truth, will have **major problems, with people, pastors, and will not be payed for preaching the Word!** Many preachers will have to get jobs other than preaching for support! Many are persausaded to continue preaching the Word, although they are not supported, they will work in order to make things work. The apostle Paul said to the Corinthians "I robbed other churches, taking wages [of them], to do you service" (I Cor. 11:8). I believe that congregations should know that a gospel preacher should be payed, matter of a fact it is ordained of the Lord, the Holy Spirit said, "Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel" (I Cor. 9:14). There is another **problem** that gospel preachers will incounter, **danger of all sorts.** Paul said, "Of the Jews five times received I forty [stripes] save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; [In] journeyings often, [in] perils of waters, [in] perils of robbers, [in] perils by [mine own] countrymen, [in] perils by the heathen, [in] perils in the city, [in] perils in the wilderness, [in] perils in the sea, [in] perils among false brethren; In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches" (II Cor. 11:24-28). We are thankful to God for man today like the apostle Paul who are preaching the Word with persausion in spite of the many difficulties! Sure we are going to have problems, but we need to know that the **biggest problem** that we will have will be at the judgment, if we have not done what God said, to do!!

III. PRICE OF PREACHING

"But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry. For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished [my] course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing" (II Tim. 4:5-8).

There is a price that a gospel preacher must pay in order to be pleasing to God, and that is to watch himself. The word "watch" (nephe) means to be sober, calm and alert: to keep a cool, calm, and collected mind; to maintain a controlled and disciplined life and spirit. Paul said to Timothy that he should take "**heed unto thyself**" (I Tim. 4:16). A gospel preacher should have his life in order, Paul wrote, "*Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.*" (I Tim. 4:12).

The gospel preacher is to "*endure afflictions*" (kakopatheo), the word means to suffer hardships, troubles, difficulties, and evils. If you are planning on preaching but you don't have to, don't preach! But if you have to, preach! Notice what Jeremiah said, "*O LORD, thou hast deceived me, and I was deceived: thou art stronger than I, and hast prevailed: I am in derision daily, every one mocketh me. For since I spake, I cried out, I cried violence and spoil; because the word of the LORD was made a reproach unto me, and a derision, daily. Then I said, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name. But [his word] was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay*" (Jer. 20:7-9).

There is the price to pay of doing the **work of an evangelist**. One is not an evangelist just because he makes the statement. Please notice some of the things that Paul said to Timothy concerning preparation: "*Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also. Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of [this] life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier*" (II Tim. 2:1-4). and he said, "*Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine*" (I Tim. 4:13). and he said, "*Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee*" (I Tim. 4:16), and he said, "*Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth*" (II Tim. 2:15).

Paul said to Titus "*For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee* (Tit. 1:5): and he said, "*These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no man despise thee*" (Tit. 2:15). To make full proof of thy ministry means, to complete your work, fulfill your work.

The man that intends to be an evangelist must take heed: To The Savior, The Scripture, To Self, The Saints, The Sinners And The Savior Will Be Satisfied!!

IV. PURPOSE OF PREACHING

"Alexander the coppersmith did me much evil: the Lord reward him according to his works: Of whom be thou ware also; for he hath greatly withstood our words. At my first answer no man stood with me, but all [men] forsook me: [I pray God] that it may not be laid to their charge. Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me; that by me the preaching might be fully known, and [that] all the Gentiles might hear: and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion. And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve [me] unto his heavenly kingdom: to whom [be] glory for ever and ever. Amen" (II. Tim. 4 14-18).

Listen to me, we must never forget our purpose as gospel preachers. We are not to glorify our own selves but God Almighty and His cause, and we should know that God will use us to help save this dying and perishing world, if we let Him. Let us notice what our Lord said unto Paul, "*But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; Delivering thee from the people, and [from] the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, To open their eyes, [and] to turn [them] from darkness to light, and [from] the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me" (Acts 26:16-18). What's more important than a person hearing the Word of Truth, so that one can see or understand the Truth, so that person can have a **pure heart**, and be saved. Jesus said, "*Blessed [are] the pure in heart: for they shall see God*" (Matt. 5:8). The **pure heart** is the enlighten heart according to Paul, "*The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints*" (Eph. 1:18). Gospel preachers have a **Big Purpose**, that is to make men see (understand) (Eph. 3:8), so that they can turn from darkness to the Light and from the power of Satan to the power God (II Cor. 4:3-4; Rom. 1:16), that they may receive forgiveness of sins!*

We must preach God's power (Rom. 1:16). I like the way Peter put it, "And when there had been much disputing, Peter rose up, and said unto them, Men [and] brethren, ye know how that a good while ago God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel, and believe" (Acts 15:7). Paul was so persuaded of his purpose and the power of the Gospel of Christ, notice what he said to King Agrippa, "Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision" (Acts 26:19). The king was touched by Paul's preaching. "Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian" (Acts 26:28).

V. CONCLUSION

Paul said, "Whereunto I am appointed a preacher, and an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles. For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day. Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. That good thing which was committed unto thee keep by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us" (II Tim. 1:11-14).

Preaching the Word with Persuasion we must remember that we are in the Presence of God and His People and we will have all kinds of Problems and there is a great Price to be payed and we must fulfill our Purpose in order to be pleasing to our Savior!

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Preach The Word Like Jesus

Dave Miller

Most people have in their minds a sense of what they think Jesus was like. Probably most people feel He was a gentle, unobtrusive soul who avoided controversy. They likely feel certain that He refrained from being “judgmental” toward others. They think Jesus just went around offering wise sayings and sage wisdom for anyone who cared to listen. But He certainly did not come across in His preaching as restrictive or demanding.

Is this view of our Lord accurate? What was Jesus really like? What would it have been like to be in His presence and to observe His interaction with people? Did He use identifiable techniques or tactics? How did He relate to people? How did they perceive Him? While we have no tape recordings to study His tone of voice or His volume, the gospel writers report sufficient detail for us to answer these questions. We can discern what Jesus was really like in His preaching and teaching. We can learn to preach the word like Jesus. Consider the following attributes that characterize for us the preaching of Jesus.

Jesus Was Logical, Rational, Analytical, Studious

The first recorded conscious activity of Jesus was His interaction with the doctors of the law in the temple when He was twelve years old. He was obviously very cognitive, analytical, and focused upon ascertaining God’s truth. Luke informs us very simply that “all who heard Him were astonished at His understanding and answers” (Luke 2:47). Even at this early age, we see that Jesus was very Scripture-oriented. His underlying thrust in life was to know and understand the Bible. Whatever else may be said about Jesus and His day-to-day behavior, we must recognize that He placed a priority upon being informed and fully acquainted with God’s word. If we are to preach like Jesus, we must do the same.

His second recorded activity was His baptism. He approached John the Immerser and requested baptism. John resisted the request, insisting that, if anything, Jesus needed to baptize him. Jesus immediately countered this line of thought by offering a logical reason why John’s rationale did not apply in this case (Matt. 3:15). This incident is immediately followed by His temptation. Though in a physically depleted condition, He handled the attacks of Satan everytime by quoting Scripture. His quotations functioned as logical refutations of each of Satan’s points. His verbal responses were so penetrating and devastating that Satan gave up and left Him (Matt. 4:1-11).

This basic commitment to impeccable rationality and logical precision was demonstrated over and over again. It ensured that He could withstand the incessant challenges posed by His opponents. Though He was frequently assailed and cross-examined, His use of logic kept Him from being ensnared (Luke 11:53-54). He showed Himself to be the Master Logician who created the human mind to function rationally. His logic was so powerful and precise that when He was accused of being demon-possessed and mad, people observed commented: “These are not the words of one who has a demon” (John 10:21). Many instances of Jesus’ constant and profound use of logic could be cited.¹

Jesus Quoted Scripture

Another attribute of Jesus’ preaching was His frequent quotation of Scripture.

Beginning with His temptation, where all three times He quoted Bible to deflect Satan's attacks (Matt. 4:1-11), Jesus constantly referred to the Scriptures in His discourse. He was, in fact, a "book, chapter and verse man."² His frequent allusion to Scripture is seen over and over again. For example, on the occasion of Jesus' teaching of John's disciples and the multitudes He alluded to Isaiah, Malachi, Genesis and Jeremiah as well as making a sweeping statement about "all the prophets and the law" (Matt. 11:5,10,13,14,24,29). When the Pharisees challenged His disciples' behavior regarding eating grain, Jesus referred them to 1 Samuel 21; Leviticus 24; Numbers 28; and Hosea 6 (Matt. 12:3-7).

When quizzed about the legality of His Sabbath activity, He pointed His accusers back to Exodus 23:4-5 and Deuteronomy 22:4 (Matt. 12:10-13). When confronted again later in the same chapter, He directed their attention to Jonah as well as the account of Solomon and Sheba in 1 Kings 10 (Matt. 12:38-42). When faced with the controversy concerning the disciples' unwashed hands, Jesus appealed to Exodus 20:12; 21:17; and Isaiah 29:13 (Matt. 15:1-9). When tested about His views on divorce, He appealed to Genesis 1:27 and 2:24 (Matt. 19:4-5).

In cleansing the temple, He quoted Isaiah 56:7 (Matt. 21:13). When the chief priests and scribes were indignant at the people's response to Jesus' healing power, He asked them if they had never read Psalm 8:2 (Matt. 21:16). In the parable of the householder, He quoted Psalm 118:22 (Matt. 21:42). In His exchange with the Sadducees, He quoted from Exodus 3:6 (Matt. 22:32). To the Pharisees He quoted Deuteronomy 6:5; Leviticus 19:18; and Psalm 110:1 (Matt. 22:37,39,44).

These few examples are just from the book of Matthew. One need only sit down and peruse the other gospel writers to see the same practice. Notice also the repetitive recourse to Scripture as manifested by the following expressions: "have you not read?" (Matt. 12:3,5; 19:4; 22:31); "have you never read?" (Matt. 21:16,42); "What did Moses command you?" (Mark 10:3); "What then is this that is written?" (Luke 20:17); "It is also written in your law" (John 8:17); "Is it not written in your law?" (John 10:34). In addition, numerous other expressions show Jesus' constant reliance upon Scripture, including "You are mistaken, not knowing the Scriptures" (Matt. 22:29) and "Scripture cannot be broken" (John 10:35).

Jesus' preaching and daily discourse were literally saturated with allusions to Scripture. When one realizes that everything Jesus said was Scripture in the making, it is all the more remarkable that so much of His speech merely echoed the Old Testament.³ Accordingly, our preaching should rely even more heavily upon the Bible. Indeed, **Jesus even quoted Scripture as He was dying!** "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" (Ps. 22:1); "I thirst" (Ps. 69:21); and "Into Your hands I commend My spirit" (Ps. 31:5). Those who criticize the older preachers for their constant quotation of the Bible in their preaching are, in reality, criticizing the Christ of the Bible who had Scripture constantly at the tip of His tongue.

Jesus Was Loving

Jesus unquestionably loved every single individual He encountered. His love for people displayed itself not only through His willingness to tell people the truth, but also through the way He told people the truth. His attitude and manner were caring. The

cleansing of the temple and the shakeup of the Pharisees with His severe pronouncements of woe are clearly the exception--not the rule--in the approach of Jesus. We simply must not allow these rare instances to dominate our own approach to preaching. Some preachers seem to enjoy letting out their frustrations and insecurities by unloading on the brethren from the pulpit. Some preachers think they have not preached if they do not blast and cut and slash till the brethren are bleeding and feel like they have been beaten and bruised.

But think about how Jesus treated the Gentile woman who interceded on behalf of her demon-possessed daughter. She begged Him for help and He extended it (Matt. 15:22-28). Think of the occasion when little children were brought to Him for prayer and the disciples rebuked them (Matt. 19:13-15; Luke 18:15-17). Mark gives us two details that Matthew and Luke do not mention. First, the scolding by the disciples "greatly displeased" Him. Second, He took them up in His arms (Mark 10:14,16). Think of the two blind men sitting by the road who, as He was passing by, began to beg for Him to have mercy on them. The crowd tried to shush them up, but that only caused them to cry out all the more. The text says that Jesus came to a stop and insisted that they be allowed to come into His presence. He then said, "What do you want Me to do for you?" When the men said they wanted to be able to see, the text says that Jesus had compassion and touched their eyes (Matt. 20:29-34).

When Jesus met Mary and her associates bereaving over the death of her brother, He was moved and wept Himself (John 11:33-35). The woman who had suffered from a chronic hemorrhage for twelve years, upon being healed by touching Jesus' clothing from behind, became terrified when He stopped in His tracks and looked around for her. Yet, when she "told Him the whole truth," He gently reassured her that she could depart in peace (Mark 5:25-34). He showed the same tenderness toward the parents of a twelve year old girl. He reassured them of her impending resurrection and took her by the hand (Mark 5:22-24,35-41). Even His denunciation of Jerusalem rose out of deep anguish that resembled the concern of a hen for her chicks (Matt. 23:37).

Too many preachers think they can stand before people and "let them have it." They do not possess the love, compassion and concern that Jesus possessed in His preaching. Their preaching is more of an ego trip wherein they get to be authoritative and feel superior to others. It's a way to make them feel they are acceptable to God since they are the ones presenting the word. Paul described this same problem in the church at Philippi: "Some indeed preach Christ even from envy and strife, and some also from good will. The former preach Christ from selfish ambition, not sincerely...but the latter out of love" (Phil. 1:15-17). Paul was glad that either way the truth was being preached. But you can be assured that those who present the truth in an unkind, discourteous, brutal manner will not be acceptable to God in eternity.

Our preaching ought to emulate Christ and Paul in this regard. Christ's words were "gracious words" (Luke 4:22). Paul described his preaching in Thessalonica in these words:

"But we were gentle among you, just as a nursing mother cherishes her own children. So, affectionately longing for you, we were well pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God, but also our own lives, because you had become dear to us" (1 Thess. 2:7-8).

How many preachers can honestly say that they share these sentiments for the congregation

where they preach? Paul approached the Corinthians in a similar manner:

“Open your hearts to us. We have wronged no one, we have corrupted no one, we have defrauded no one. I do not say this to condemn; for I have said before that you are in our hearts, to die together and to live together. ...Therefore although I wrote to you, I did not do it for the sake of him who had done the wrong, nor for the sake of him who suffered wrong, but that our care for you in the sight of God might appear to you” (2 Cor. 7:2-3,12).

I fear we have missed this dimension of preaching and have failed to emphasize the importance of tact and tenderness. Listen to these verses: “Let your speech always be *with grace, seasoned with salt*, that you may know how you ought to answer each one” (Col. 4:6). “Brethren, if someone is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one *in a spirit of gentleness*, considering yourself lest you also be tempted” (Gal. 6:1). “...walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and *gentleness*, with *longsuffering, bearing with one another in love*” (Eph. 4:1-2). “A servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be *gentle to all, ...patient, in humility* correcting those who are in opposition” (2 Tim. 2:24-25). “...be *peaceable, gentle, showing all humility to all men*” (Tit. 3:2). “But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, *with meekness and fear*” (1 Pet. 3:15). “Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, *with all longsuffering*” (2 Tim. 4:2).

Jesus Downplayed Emotion

Jesus’ overall tone and manner seem to have been generally calm and dispassionate, unless the uniqueness of the situation called for a more intense response. Though He must have become excited and passionate in His clash with the moneychangers (John 2:13-17) and in His denunciation of the Pharisees (Matt. 23), for the most part, He seems to have remained “calm, cool and collected” as He articulated the simple but profound truths of God. Such a tone would have coincided with His emphasis on rational, sensible discourse (cf., Acts 26:25).

Notice, for example, Jesus’ calm disposal of the accusing, angry mob who dragged the adulterous woman before Him (John 8:1-11). He nonchalantly stooped down and wrote on the ground, rose to utter one simple penetrating sentence, only to stoop down and write some more—completely diffusing the situation. In the synagogue at Nazareth, after reading a Scripture selection, He sat down and said very simply, “This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears” (Luke 4:21). Simple, direct, to-the-point. The people “wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth” (Luke 4:22).

The preaching of Jesus was powerful and influential, not because it was packed with **emotion**, but because it was packed with **meaning**. Preaching among churches of Christ in recent years has shifted away from solid, scriptural substance.⁴ In its place has arisen a new breed of preachers with pleasing personalities who are proficient at endearing themselves to the congregation rather than endearing the congregation to Jesus and the word. Biblical substance has been replaced by emotional stimulation under the guise of “spirituality” and “love.” Preachers become the centerpiece toward which the congregation gravitates. Consequently, they become emotionally dependent upon him rather than being genuinely

strengthened in the faith.

Many preachers today have bought into an approach to preaching that entails showmanship, entertainment, and hype. Their sermons are filled with anecdotes, stories, and references to their personal life. They attempt to stimulate the audience in terms of "felt needs," i.e., the misperceived needs of people who are emotionally needy but who do not really know what they truly need (e.g., James 4:3). They lack the spiritual perspective and depth to understand that they desperately need large doses of the Bible (Heb. 5:12-14). One cannot envision a more direct application of Paul's warning to Timothy than to our own day:

"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; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables" (2 Tim. 4:3-4).

Jesus simply did not attain to the popularity that many skilled preachers have today. He was not known for dynamic delivery or clever oratory (cf., 1 Cor. 2:4; 2 Cor. 10:10). He was not a flamboyant showman oozing with charisma. Rather, people were awed by His authoritative message (Matt. 7:28-29; cf., Luke 4:32; John 7:46). Like the Roman proconsul, Sergius Paulus who, though he had just seen a miracle, was nevertheless "astonished at the doctrine of the Lord" (Acts 13:12). Unlike the "high-powered" preachers of today who are skilled at evoking an emotional response from the audience through their sophisticated speaking skills, Jesus relied upon the penetrating potency of His words. That's where the true power resides (John 6:68; Rom. 1:16; Heb. 4:12).

Jesus Was Penetrating

The preaching and teaching of Jesus cut through the surface appearance and went straight to the heart of an issue and the heart of the individual. He wasn't interested in discussing religious matters merely for curiosity's sake or in order to have a stimulating discussion (like the Athenians--Acts 17:21). He "played for keeps." He "meant business." He understood that people's souls were at stake.

When the Pharisees were critical of Jesus' disciples for picking grain on the Sabbath, He quickly dispensed with their quibble by alluding to 1 Samuel 21 and Numbers 28. Then He cut through the surface issue and laid bare their underlying motivation and the condition of their heart. He exposed them for possessing critical, unmerciful spirits (Matt. 12:7). Likewise, when the Sadducees posed a scenario which they believed would prove their viewpoint on the resurrection, Jesus answered the quibble in short order and then turned immediately to the real crux of the matter. He devastated their core doctrine by referring to just one verse (Exodus 3:6), thereby destroying Sadduceeism.

He was piercing in the way He brought problems to the surface and pinpointed them so succinctly. Of course, He knew the thoughts of those to whom He preached (Matt. 9:4; 12:25). When pounced upon by the scribes and Pharisees with the direct question, "Why do your disciples transgress the tradition of the elders?" He quickly brought the real issue into focus with the penetrating rejoinder, "Why do you transgress the commandment of God because of your tradition?" (Matt. 15:2-3). When the chief priests and elders confronted Him--right in the middle of His preaching--with the questions, "By what authority are You

doing these things? And who gave you this authority?" He again brought the underlying issue out in the open by turning the question back on them. "I also will ask you one thing, which if you tell Me, I likewise will tell you by what authority I do these things" (Matt. 21:23-24). His question was designed to convict them with the fact that they were unwilling to admit that both Jesus and John derived their authority from the same source. If they would not admit to John's authority, neither would they admit to the authority of Jesus.

Conclusion

The preaching of Jesus manifested many other characteristics that we ought to emulate. For example, His preaching exposed and corrected misconception and error (Matt. 15:3-9). He was fearless and courageous (Matt. 10:28; 21:12). He disarmed His opponents, forcing them to conclude the truth on their own (Matt. 21:25-27,45; 22:42-46; Luke 20:19). He accepted rejection, even anticipating it (Matt. 13:10-15; 15:13-14; John 6:66-67).

Instead of allowing the world around us to give us a sense of who Jesus was and what His preaching was like, we would do well to go back to the Bible. We must pour over the text and allow the text to paint for us the portrait of what Jesus was like. Then we will truly be in a position to preach the word like Jesus.

¹¹ For further information, see the author's **Piloting the Strait** (Bedford, TX: Brown Trail School of Preaching, 1996), pp. 114ff, 166ff, 172, and "Logic?" **The Restorer** 8 (Oct., 1988):6-7. Also Thomas B. Warren, **Logic and the Bible** (Jonesboro, AR: National Christian Press, 1982).

²² See the author's **Piloting**, pp. 197-200 for a discussion of "book, chapter & verse" preaching.

³³ One estimate says that one tenth of Jesus' words were taken from the Old Testament. In the four gospel accounts, "180 of 1,800 verses which report His discourses are either quotations of the written revelation or else direct allusions to it"--Rene Pache, **The Inspiration and Authority of Scripture** (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1969), p. 221).

⁴⁴ For a more complete discussion of the new preaching style, see the author's **Piloting**, pp. 192-203.

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