

RUNNING THE RACE WITH PATIENCE

INTRODUCTION:

- A. A Journey with God is a Distance Race and Not a Sprint.
 - I. Church rolls are crowded with people who “dropped out” because they didn’t understand that the Christian race is a long-distance run. Failed to “count the cost.”
 - a. Matt. 10:22: “And you will be hated by all for My name’s sake. But he who endures to the end will be saved.”

I. THE CHRISTIAN LIFE IS DEPICTED WITH MANY METAPHORS AS RUNNING A RACE.

- A. Gal. 2:2: “And I went up by revelation, and communicated to them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to those who were of reputation, lest by any means I might run, or had run, in vain.”
- B. Phil. 2:16: “Holding fast the word of life, so that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain or labored in vain.”
 - 1. There are tremendous hurdles in running the race.
 - a. The Hurdle of Conformity.
 - (1) Everything is Different:
 - (i) Values.
 - (ii) Attitudes.
 - (iii) Priorities.
 - (iv) Activities.
 - (v) Relationships.
 - (2) The Master wants sweeping changes in our lives:

Gerald Mann has well written: “The Sermon on the Mount makes us nervous because its teachings are X-rated - in the sense that the Christian world has never dared to take them

seriously. Christians have constantly pawned them off as dated, impractical, and idealistic. Instead of using them to change culture, we have allowed culture to change them. And the result is that we have yet to catch up with the world-transforming power which Jesus proclaimed.”

- (3) God has a unique adventure for every runner. No one else will ever have exactly your relationship with the Father. Your experiences, struggles, thoughts, and personal relationships will be uniquely your own. God never uses a copier to make saints, and He never gives birth to spiritual twins. Each of us has a special race to run.

b. The Hurdle of Insensitivity.

- (1) Must see the hurts and hopes in people’s eyes.

- (i) To rejoice with the parents of new baby and comfort the friend with cancer.
- (ii) Our Master was the epitome of sensitivity.

Our frenzied pace keeps us from being sensitive to the needs of those whom we love the most.

- (iii) We shall have to do more than attend church or quote Bible passages.

c. The Hurdle of Overfamiliarity.

- (1) Overfamiliarity does breed indifference. If that hurdle is not cleared, the runner falls headlong into boredom.

Judson Edwards writes with keen perception:

“There eventually develops a ‘here-we-go-again’ mentality in the Christian faith. After all, we reach the point where we’ve heard nearly all of the biblical stories and memorized most of the songs in the hymnal. The preacher passionately tells us about the prodigal son lost

in a far country, but we already know the ending to that one, and it doesn't move us anymore. We read "God is Love" from the First Epistle of John, but we've heard that so much it's "old hat." The evangelist urges us to repent, but isn't that what they all say? Because we are familiar with the ways of the church and the message of the Bible, we are lulled to indifference. We know the right answers, and our theology is definitely orthodox, but there is no life in us."

✓ We have many names on the church rolls but little fire in the pews. ✓

CRUX (i) Our problem is not that the good news is no longer "good" to us. Our problem is that it's no longer "news" to us! We're not surprised by God anymore!

(2) We run here and there doing our "spiritual" things - reading the Bible, praying, attending church, teaching Sunday school, going to meetings - but somehow the black crust of familiarity begins to choke out our vitality. Meaning eludes us, and faith slowly disintegrates.

(i) The Master's Way is Simple:

Seek God's Kingdom first.

Deny self.

Love others.

Give Freely.

Pray confidently.

Trust God.

2. WE MUST RUN TO WIN.

- a. 1 Cor. 9:24: "Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it."

Paul shouted flaming words to the Corinthians:
"Get up, you can do it! Keep running!"

James Fixx in his book *The Complete Book of Running* wrote:

“As a race continues, it’s also easy to find reasons to slow down: the pain is unbearable, you tell yourself; an old injury is acting up; blisters are coming on; it isn’t an important race anyway. Such arguments can sound beguilingly persuasive in the heat of a race. Only later, after you’ve yielded to their spurious plausibility, are you disappointed in yourself. If you’re going to race at all, it’s only sensible to make a maximum effort.”

b. The Corinthians were familiar with races since the Isthmian Games were held every few years in Corinth. The Corinthians had watched many races and had thrilled to the exploits of numerous runners. It is no surprise, then, that Paul used their knowledge of running in his motivational plea to them.

c. Running to Win requires:

(1) Discipline.

(i) 1 Cor. 9:25: “And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown.”

(ii) Ours is the age of Superficiality - Easy Living. No discipline.

“Television commercials extoll the virtues of ‘light’ beer, ‘light’ cola, ‘light’ music. ‘Light’ is definitely ‘in’ these days and is far more alluring than ‘heavy.’ Everything from our cola to our commitment is ‘light.’ But I fear we are also becoming ‘light,’ people with no depth. The antidote is DISCIPLINE.”

(2) Must Run in the Right Direction.

(i) 1 Cor. 9:26: “Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air.”

(ii) **PAUL,** He wasn’t shadowboxing his way through life, futilely flailing at the wind.

There was purpose in how he spent his days.

Listen to Judson Edwards:

“The Greek word for sin in the New Testament literally means ‘to miss the mark.’ If sin is ‘missing the mark,’ surely the ultimate sin must be having no mark to aim for! ... Anyone who will really make a difference for Christ **must** have discipline hitched to definite direction ... Many people seem to lack this direction. There is no target for their time, no discernible path for their lives.

(iii) Paul found his life-consuming passion in Christ.

(iv) Phil. 1:21: “For me to live is Christ... .”

Note: When Paul penned these words, Nero was the Roman Emperor, Seneca the great philosopher, Paul, the prisoner for Christ. Ironically, it is the solitary voice from the Roman prison that we hear best. The emperor and philosopher have faded into time, their influence almost non-existent.

(v) The Corinthian Christians:

Were not flighty wanderers, nibbling at the world’s enticements.

They were runners pressing resolutely.

Boxers taking dead aim at the opponent.

(3) Willing to be a Pacemaker.

(1) I Cor. 9:27: “But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.”

(i) His discipline and direction were to enable him to practice what he preached.

(2) J. Wallace Hamilton well wrote:

“Whether it’s in the little church at the crossroads or the mission field in Africa or the downtown church in the great secular city, here is the key to the human heart: a touch of God in the human life that makes it radiant; until other people want what the Christian has found.”

(4) Move to the Front and Blaze a Trail.

“However humble a place I may hold
Or lowly the paths I trod,
There’s a child who bases his faith on me,
There’s a dog who thinks I am God.

Lord, keep me worthy, Lord, keep me clean,
And fearless and unbeguiled.
Lest I lose caste in the sight of the dog,
And the wide clear eyes of the child.

Let there come in the years to be
The blight of a withering grief,
And a little dog mourn for a fallen god,
And a child for his lost belief.

C.F. Davis

The Christian race is fraught with hazards. No one breezes through the course trouble-free.

(5) Eugene Peterson tells of visiting an unhappy member of his congregation:

“As I entered a home to make a pastoral visit, the person I came to see was sitting at a window embroidering a piece of cloth held taut over an oval hoop. She said, ‘Preacher, while

waiting for you to come, I realized what's wrong with me -- I don't have a frame. My feelings, my thoughts, my activities - everything is loose and sloppy. There is no border to my life. I never know where I am. I need a frame for my life like this one I have for my embroidery."

3. RUNNING AGAINST TIME:

a. Greeks had two words for time:

- (i) Chronos: It is time for the party. (Quantity)
- (ii) Kairos: I had the time of my life. (Quality)

George Sheehan captured this: "The fight, then, is never with age; it is with boredom, with routing, with the danger of not living at all. Then life will stop, growth will cease, learning will come to an end. You no longer become who you are. You begin to kill time or live it without thought or purpose."

II. IF WE ARE TO WIN THE RACE, WE MUST STRIP DOWN TO THE ESSENTIALS:

A. Hebrews 12:1-2: "Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God."

1. Don't Take on the Trappings of the World:

"Show me a runner who looks fancy - new shoes, expensive garb, complicated watch - and I will show you a runner I can probably beat. Show me a runner who looks like a garage-sale refugee - dilapidated shoes, faded shorts, gaunt as a buzzard - and I will show you a runner who will be through and sipping a soft drink when I finish."

- a. Gal. 5:7: "You ran well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth?"

- (1) Millions have fallen out of the race. Falling out of the race can come from traumatic experiences: a divorce, a death, or a betrayal by a Christian friend. It can be prompted by the gnawing fingers of doubt that threaten to squeeze our certitude. It can come upon us as the depression of old age or loneliness.”

The Christian life is not for settlers, but for pioneers.

2. We Must Lay Aside the Sins Which Have Weighted Us Down.

- a. We cannot run well with the large swaying garment of sin which enmeshes us and causes us to fall.

Besetting Sins: Omission
Lust for another woman or man
Lying
Social drinking at the lounge
Weighted by sins of yesteryears.

- b. Remember that our Master finished the race as well as Old Testament Worthies and they are now on the sidelines urging us to persevere - not to give up - not to quit.

III. KEEP RUNNING EVEN WHEN LIFE HAS BACKED YOU INTO A CORNER.

- A. Phil 3:12-14: “Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”

1. (When the Race to Heaven Gets Tough - You Get Tough With It.)

- a. Paul is an example:

“When Paul wrote the book of Philippians, life had backed him into a corner - literally. He was in prison - probably in Rome - and facing persecution. He was not a young man and had already been knocked

HOUSE ARREST
Acts 28:

around by life ... It was late in the race, the pressure was on, and it was time to press on to the finish line. He was living with stress, uncertainty, and having to cope with less than ideal circumstances.”

- (i) He writes: I haven't yet reached the goal line.

I haven't yet gotten the victor's wreath.

I am not looking back on past failures.

I am pressing for the mark.

I am going to receive the prize of the high calling for which I am giving my life.

- b. He wasn't about to give up the race:

Heb. 10:23: “Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful.”

2 Cor. 4:1: “Therefore, having this ministry by the mercy of God, we do not lose heart.”

“A person with no future will invariably see the race as ‘forced labor’.”

2. Sheehan in his book *Running and Being* writes:

“Once in the lead, I never look back. There is no greater spur to a tired runner who is about to give up and coast in than seeing this over-the-shoulder distress signal. So I never look back. - I reach for the man in front of me no matter how impossible it seems for me to catch him.”

- CRUX: 3. Forgetting What Lies Behind Is Crucial:

- a. Forget past sins.
b. Forget past hurts. (See 2 Cor. 11:24-27)
c. Forget past achievements.

- Past sins have been forgiven.
- Remembering past hurts will lead to resentment.
- Forget your achievements - they will destroy your incentive.

“If you would conquer today’s challenges, drop yesterday’s baggage and travel light.”

IV. THE END OF LIFE IS TO FINISH THE RACE AND STAND IN THE WINNER’S CIRCLE.

- A. 2 Tim. 4:7-8: “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that Day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved His appearing.”

Philip Yancey in his book *Where Is God When It Hurts*:

“When I am old, I hope I do not die between sterile sheets, hooked up to a respirator in a germ-free environment. I hope I’m on a tennis court, straining my heart with one last septuagenarian overhead smash, or perhaps huffing and puffing along a trail to Lower Yosemite Falls for one last feel of the spray against my wrinkled cheek.”

Note: Paul didn’t want to “die between sterile sheets” either, and all the way to the end, he was running to win. NOR I. rth

1. The Race Is For An Imperishable Crown.
 - a. 1 Cor. 9:25: “Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable.”

2. Paul could say at the end of the way:

I fought for and defended the Christian faith.

I never dropped out of the race in spite of obstacles.

I have been faithful to the charge of the Master.

“And what greater sorrow could there be than to “die between sterile sheets,” knowing our lives have been

invested in the insignificant? To die knowing that we have missed our calling and the true purpose of our lives. Our tragedy may be an unused soul, an unfulfilled design.”

CONCLUSION:

1. Run to win.
2. Run against the odds.
3. Run with perseverance.
4. Keep on running until the end of life, finish the course.

SOWING AND REAPING

Gal. 6:7-9: "Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life. And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart."

INTRODUCTION:

- A. Nowhere does the Bible lay down the matter of personal responsibility for our personal actions more than in the principle of sowing and reaping. This is an immutable law of God and it has been liberally demonstrated throughout the whole Bible.

- B. Listen to the Scriptures:
 - 1. Job 4:7-8: "Remember now, who ever perished being innocent? Or where were the upright ever cut off? Even as I have seen, those who plow iniquity and sow trouble reap the same."
 - 2. Prov. 6:16,19: "These six things the Lord hates ... A false witness who speaks lies, and one who sows discord among brethren."
 - 3. Prov. 11:18: "The wicked man does deceptive work, but he who sows righteousness will have a sure reward."
 - 4. Prov. 22:8: "He who sows iniquity will reap sorrow, and the rod of his anger will fail."
 - 5. Hosea 8:7: "They sow the wind, and reap the whirlwind ..."
 - 6. 1 Cor. 9:11,14: "If we have sown spiritual things for you, is it a great thing if we reap your material things? ... Even so the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should live from the gospel."
 - 7. 2 Cor. 9:6: "But this I say: 'He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.'"

- I. PAUL WARNS US NOT TO DECEIVE OURSELVES ABOUT GOD'S LAW OF SOWING AND REAPING.
 - A. Gal. 6:7-8: "Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh

will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life."

B. Do Not Be Deceived *μη̄ πλανασθε*

1. By balancing our sins over against our pseudo-virtues.
 - (a) We try to square our account in sin by doing a little "extra" for the church; whereas, if we were really doing what we ought to do, we would have no extra time to try such.
 - (i) In fact, not all the extra time in the world can atone for sins.
2. By assuming virtues not really our own.
 - (a) Some men take credit for a wonderful family which he did not help.
 - (b) Church member taking credit for work in the church which he did not support.
3. By looking at the sins of others and forgetting our own.
4. By trying to disguise our vices by calling them other names.
 - (a) Changes covetousness - to Thrift.
 - (b) Changes poker - to Bridge.
 - (c) Changes Whiskey - to Mouthwash.
 - (d) Changes dancing - to Foot Disease

(In this, we are merely changing the form of our sins.)

C. "God is not Mocked."

1. *θὸς οὐδὲ μὲκτιπιζέται* literally means to turn up the nose to God.
 - (a) The application: "God's laws cannot be treated with contempt or successfully evaded. We can deceive ourselves - we can deceive our Fellowman - But we cannot flaunt God's laws with impunity."

D. "Whatever a man sows - that he will also reap."

1. The implications of Galatians 6:7-8 are:

First - Man is a free creature of what he desires to sow.

Secondly - He can choose to invest in the good things in life.

Thirdly - Or he can waste his life by sowing to the things of the world.

Fourthly - He is warned about deceiving himself about God's law of sowing and reaping.

Fifthly - He is certainly not going to make a mockery of God.

Sixthly - Whatever he sows, THAT is what he is going to reap.

II. GOD HAS ORDAINED GOVERNMENT, THE CHURCH, AND THE HOME.

A. GOVERNMENTS which forget God shall someday be destroyed.

1. "The wicked shall be turned into Hell, and all the nations that forget God. Ps. 9:17.

(a) Look what happened to Sodom and Gomorrah.
to Niniveh and Babylon.
to Greece and Rome.

(b) Now look at our own nation!

(i) NO GOD in our schools, our oaths, our Chaplain's sermons.

(ii) We are sowing the highest crime rate the world has ever seen. The most illegitimate children in our nation's history, the largest alcohol consuming nations in history. We have sown prejudice against the blacks, yellow, and red. We have sown the wind and we are reaping the whirlwind.

B. CHURCHES will certainly lose their candlestick.

1. Rev. 3:14-16: "And to the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write, 'These things says the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God: I

know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew you out of My mouth.”

2. BRETHREN, HEAR IT. THIS APPLIES TO MOST OF THE CONGREGATIONS IN THE BROTHERHOOD. THEY HAVE SOWN COMPLACENCY AND SELF-SATISFIEDNESS AND THEY HAVE LOST THEIR WORLD.

(a) For every church you can find on fire for God, I'll find you a few hundred who are lukewarm. They have deceived themselves.

- (i) And then we wonder why our children don't get excited about the study of the Bible, the discussion of things of God - and the salvation of the lost.

C. FAMILIES will certainly lose their children and future generations.

1. In our apathy in serving God, none of us know where the consequences will end.

(a) Millions of Parents will reap tears of remorse over children who will be lost because they sowed the seeds of indifference.

- (i) A boat, car, date, school, money, job, etc., were more important than God.

III. THERE IS ABSOLUTELY NO WAY ONE CAN ESCAPE REAPING WHAT HE HAS SOWN!

- A. If you sow to wholesome, worthwhile things, you will reap more than you sow.
- B. If we waste our lives in serving Satan, we reap THAT AND MORE than we sow.

THE TORCH IS PASSED

INTRODUCTION:

1. The Torch of Leadership is Passed in Every Generation.
 - A. A new generation of elders.
 - B. A new generation of preachers.
 - C. A new generation of missionaries and their families.
 - D. A new generation of Bible teachers.
 - E. A new generation of song leaders.

2. All Leave Unfinished Tasks for Others to Complete.
 - A. Moses to Joshua.
 - (1) Deut. 31:20-23: “When I have brought them to the land flowing with milk and honey, of which I swore to their fathers, and they have eaten and filled themselves and grown fat, then they will turn to other gods and serve them; and they will provoke Me and break My covenant. Then it shall be, when many evils and troubles have come upon them, that this song will testify against them as a witness; for it will not be forgotten in the mouths of their descendants, for I know the inclination of their behavior today, even before I have brought them to the land of which I swore to give them.’ Therefore Moses wrote this song the same day, and taught it to the children of Israel. Then He inaugurated Joshua the son of Nun, and said, “Be strong and of good courage; for you shall bring the children of Israel into the land of which I swore to them, and I will be with you.”

 - B. Joshua to Israel:
 - (1) Joshua 23:14: “Behold, this day I am going the way of all the earth. And you know in all your hearts and in all your souls that not one thing has failed of all the good things which the Lord your God spoke concerning you. All have come to pass for you, and not one word of them has failed.”

 - C. David to Solomon:

- (1) 1 Kings 2:1-3: "Then the days of David drew near that he should die, and he charged Solomon his son, saying: "I go the way of all the earth; be strong, therefore, and prove yourself a man. And keep the charge of the Lord your God; to walk in His ways, to keep His statutes, His commandments, His judgments, and His testimonies, as it is written in the Law of Moses, that you may prosper in all that you do and wherever your turn."

3. Present Church Leaders Dare Not Fail the Next Generation.

I. SOME RELEVANT QUESTIONS FOR TODAY'S YOUNG AND TOMORROW'S LEADERS.

A. What Type Environment Are They Being Brought Up In?

1. The World.
2. The Church Community.

B. What Kind of Habits Are They Forming?

1. Eecl. 11:9-10: "Rejoice, O young man, in your youth, and let your heart cheer you in the days of your youth; walk in the ways of your heart, and in the sight of your eyes; But know that for all these God will bring you into judgment. Therefore remove sorrow from your heart, and put away evil from your flesh, for childhood and youth are vanity."

a. We have to account to God for our habits.

C. What Kind of Language Are They Hearing?

D. What Kind of Training Are They Receiving?

1. Psalm 127:4-: "Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, so are the children of one's youth."

a. "As the twig is bent, so grows the tree."

We need some tall oaks and cedars for tomorrow's leadership.

2. Deut. 32:46-47: "And He said to them: "Set your hearts on all the words which I testify among you today, which you shall command your children to be careful to observe -- all

the words of this law. For it is not a futile thing for you, because it is your life, and by this word you shall prolong your days in the land which you cross over the Jordan to possess.”

“Last night my little boy confessed to me,
Some childish wrong;
And kneeling at my knee,
He prayed with tears:
‘Dear God make me a man,
Like daddy - wise and strong
I know You can.’

FATHERS
TAKE
HEED

Then while he slept,
I knelt beside his bed,
Confessed my sins,
And prayed with low bowed head:
‘O God, make me a child,
Like my child, here -
Pure, Guileless,
Trusting Thee with faith sincere.’”
Unknown.

II. THERE ARE SOME THINGS WE ARE OBLIGATED TO OUR YOUNG PEOPLE.

- A. A Better View - Perspective of Life.
- B. A World Fit to Live In.
- C. A Goal Fit to Life For.
- D. A Self Fit to Live With.
- E. An Example Fit to Live By.
 - 1. Maintaining the INFLUENCE to accomplish this lies:
 - a. The PARENTS of all the children.
 - b. The EXTENDED FAMILY - Grandparents, aunts, uncles.
 - c. The CHURCH FAMILY:
 - (1) Elders.
 - (2) Preachers.

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(3) Class Teachers.

(4) Every Adult Member.

“We cannot live our lives alone
For other lives we touch
Are either strengthened by our own
Or weakened just as much.”

F. We Must Inspire Our Youth to Noble Service to God and Man.

“A man is as great as the dreams he dreams,
As great as the love he bears;
As great as the values he redeems,
And the happiness he shares.
A man is as great as the thoughts he thinks,
As the worth he has attained.”

III. THE TORCH MUST BE PASSED TO ABLE AND TESTED MEN AND WOMEN.

A. They Must be Reared with Strong Expectations:

1. Eccl. 12:1:- “Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth, before the difficult days come, and the years draw near when you say, ‘I have no pleasure in them.’”
2. Prov. 1:10: “My son, if sinners entice you, do not consent.”
3. 2 Chron. 15:2: “... The Lord is with you while you are with Him. If you seek Him, He will be found by you; but if you forsake Him, He will forsake you.”
4. 1 Tim. 4:12: “Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity.”
5. 2 Tim. 2:22: “Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.”
6. 1 Cor. 16:13: “Watch, stand fast in the faith, be brave, be strong.”

CONCLUSION:

A. Awesome Implications Face Us If We Fail Our Youth:

1. A Family Heritage - Legacy Will Be Destroyed.
2. The Church of Our Lord Will Be Destroyed in Places.
3. Our World Will Continue to Sink to Its Lowest Level.
4. A World Will Be Lost.

ILLUSTRATION: Old man with farm house and TVA

“My great-grandfather built that fire,
My grandfather and father kept it going.
The last words of my father to me were,

‘Son, don’t let the fire go out.’”

B. We Must Pass the Torch of God’s Word to Stalwart Men and Women.

1. Let us not leave God out of our plans:

“God is in every tomorrow,
Therefore I live for today,
Certain of finding at sunrise,
Guidance and strength for the way;
Power for each moment of weakness,
Hope for each moment of pain,
Comfort for every sorrow,
Sunshine and joy after rain.”

**WHY DO YOU CALL ME 'LORD, LORD,' AND
DO NOT DO THE THINGS WHICH I SAY?**

Luke 6:46-49: “And why do you call Me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do the things which I say? Whoever comes to Me, and hears My sayings and does them, I will show you whom he is like: he is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock. And when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently against that house, and could not shake it, for it was founded on the rock. But he who heard and did nothing is like a man who built a house on the earth without a foundation, against which the stream beat vehemently; and immediately it fell. And the ruin of that house was great.”

INTRODUCTION:

A. **THIS QUESTION IS DIRECTED TO A DIVIDED ALLEGIANCE.**

1. It is not addressed to the out and out enemies of Christ.
2. Nor, is it directed to those wholeheartedly serving Christ.
3. It is directed to the Doubleminded, the Halfhearted - Those paying lip-service.
 - (a) Matt. 12:30: “He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters abroad.”
 - (b) Matt. 6:33: “But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.”
 - (c) Matt. 15:8: “These people draw near to Me with their mouth, and honor Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me.”
 - (d) Matt. 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.’”
 - (e) Rev. 3:15-16: “I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew you out of My mouth.”

I. WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS OF THIS GREAT QUESTION ASKED BY THE MASTER LONG AGO?

A. In the First Place: That we have embraced as our Lord and King the Very Christ of God.

1. We have no other King - No other authority under the sun.

2. We have no other Master to serve.

3. We have no other Teacher or example to follow.

(a) We have chosen Him before, and in place of, All other choices.

B. Secondly: To acknowledge Him as King and refuse to serve Him and obey Him is Treason.

1. We become a Traitor to the Cause.

2. The Commander gives the orders and we refuse to obey.

(a) In real armies, the soldiers are shot.

(b) Some of us are really modern-day Judas-ses.

“Though my cross may be hard to bear,
Though my life may be filled with care,
Though misfortune be mine to bear,
I’ll never forsake my Lord.”

C. In the Third Place: That Allegiance to Christ and Obedience to His commands are inseparable.

1. John 14:15, 21, 23-24, 31: “If you love Me, keep My commandments. . . . He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him. . . . Jesus answered and said to him, ‘If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him. He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine but the Father’s who sent Me.’ . . . But that the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father gave Me commandment, so I do.”

2. John 15:9-10: "As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love. If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love."
 3. 1 John 2:3-5: "Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He who says, 'I know Him,' and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him."
 4. 2 John 6: "This is love, that we walk according to His commandments. This is the commandment, that as you have heard from the beginning, you should walk in it."
 5. Rev. 22:14: "Blessed are those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city."
 6. John 12:48: "He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him -- the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day."
- D. Fourthly: This question implies that embracing Christ requires Total Commitment.
1. To change Ourselves - our Perspectives - our Direction.
 - (a) "Love not the world"
 - (b) "Come ye out and be ye therefore separate"
 - (c) "Present your bodies a living sacrifice"
 2. To change our World.
 - (a) The Church is Christ's Army to Conquer the World.
 - (i) We are rent asunder by division by following the wrong battle plan.
 - (ii) We are heading in the opposite direction from the Field Commander.
 - (b) The Church is the Company of the Committed.
 - (i) Committed to Christ;

(ii) Committed to Noble Ideals;

(iii) Committed to Action.

II. OUR PRESENT PROBLEMS HAVE ARISEN BECAUSE WE HAVE GIVEN ONLY LIP SERVICE TO CHRIST.

- A. By a Refusal to Love God's Word.
- B. By a Refusal to Share the Gospel with the Lost.
- C. By refusing to Develop our Talent for the Master.
- D. By Robbing God of our Money.
(Yardstick: Sense of Debt - Our love for God - Our love for Lost - The need.)
- E. By refusing to Help the Poor or to Provide for the Sick and Needy.
(See Matt. 25:)
- F. By Missing Service Indiscriminately. (Elders, Deacons, Members)
- G. By Failing to Stand Foresquare Against Corruption in Politics, Literature, Movies, TV, etc.

III. THE ONLY ANSWER IS TOTAL COMMITMENT TO CHRIST AND HIS WORDS.

- A. They are not to be treated as Idealism.
- B. They are to be accepted as the only True Basis of Life.
 - 1. The Answers to Life's meaning.
 - 2. The Answer to our Problems.
 - 3. The End of Being - A Home with God.

CONCLUSION: THE COMPANY OF THE UNCOMMITTED IS MISERABLE.

- A. There is No Place for the Undecided. The most miserable hours of our lives are those hours when we are unable to make a decision. *

Chappell Has Well Said:

“A wholehearted decision to follow Christ brings peace because so many lesser questions are decided by it. There are those for whom no moral issue is finally decided. Every morning they must decide whether they will pray or not pray, whether they will look into God’s Word or neglect it. Every Sunday church attendance is an open question. These people are therefore in constant conflict. They remind one of that old story of the man who possessed a dog whose tail was far too long, but desiring to give the dog the least possible pain, he decided to cut it off an inch a day rather than all at once. If you take Jesus seriously, a thousand lesser decisions will then be made in advance.”

- B. Some People are Dead Spiritually Because They Were Undecided to Follow Christ.

Story of the Donkey:

There is a fable that a donkey once stood between two delicious bundles of hay. The donkey was hungry. Both bundles offered just the satisfaction he needed. But when he would turn toward the one, the other would seem to call to him. Thus he could never make up his mind just which bundle he would eat first. Therefore he hesitated between the two until he starved to death. His death was not the result of a decision to commit suicide. It was rather the result of his failure to eat.”

- C. Elijah: “How Long Halt Ye Between Two Opinions?”
- D. Matt. 7:21: “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven.”

SING: “I Am Not Ashamed To Own My Lord.”

CAN YOU RECOMMEND YOUR RELIGION?

INTRODUCTION

Before you can convince others of the right path to Heaven, you must convince them of what your religion has done for you, your family, your business.

A. We must have a healthy regard for the Scriptures.

1. 1 Peter 3:15: "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."
2. 1 Thess. 5:21: "Test all things; hold fast what is good."
3. 2 Tim. 2:15: "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."

I. CAN WE RECOMMEND OUR RELIGION BY THE WAY WE LIVE?

A. Phil. 1:27: "Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or are absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel."

B. Matt. 7:16-20: "You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thorn bushes or figs from thistles. Even so every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Therefore, by their fruit, you will know them."

1. What kind of fruit are we bearing in our daily lives?

(a) The world can look at us and see.

C.: Phil. 4:8-9: "Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy - meditate on these things...The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me - these do, and the God of peace will be with you."

II. CAN YOU RECOMMEND YOUR RELIGION BY THE WAY YOU SUPPORT IT?

- A. Acts 9:36: "At Joppa there was a certain disciple named Tabitha, which is translated Dorcas. This woman was full of good works and charitable deeds which she did."
- B. Col. 1:10: "That you may have a walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God."
- C. Titus 3:1,8: "Remind them to be subject to rulers and authorities, to obey, to be ready for every good work ... This is a faithful saying, and these things I want you to affirm constantly, that those who have believed in God should be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable to men."

III. CAN YOU RECOMMEND SUPPORTING YOUR RELIGION BECAUSE OF WHAT IT DOES FOR YOU?

- A. Psalm 37:25: "I have been young, and now am old, yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his descendants begging bread."
- B. Heb. 13:5-6: "Let your conduct be without covetousness, and be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, 'I will never leave you nor forsake you.' So we may boldly say: 'The Lord is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me.'"
- C. Rom. 8:37-39: "Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created things, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."
- D. Matt. 6:31-34: "Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. 'But seek first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.'"
 - 1. Are we willing to take these promises of God at face value. That kind of faith will convince the world.

IV. CAN YOU RECOMMEND YOUR RELIGION BY YOUR TENACITY OF PURPOSE?

- A. "Tenacity of purpose is defined as the state of quality of being able or inclined to hold fast to a purpose or aim. 'Stick-to-it-iveness' or tenacity of purpose, is quality which enables us to finish every task begun."
- B. Luke 9:62: Jesus speaking, "No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God."
- C. James 1:2-4: "My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing."
- D. 1 Cor. 15:58: "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord."
- E. Acts 21:13: "Then Paul answered, 'What do you mean by weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.'"
 - 1. (We must have the tenacity of Paul, that singleness of purpose - that determination to pay any cost to be found faithful in our faith.)
 - (a) That kind of example will convince the world of what your religion has done for you.

V. CAN YOU RECOMMEND YOUR RELIGION BY YOUR PERSONAL ATTRIBUTES?

- A. Self-Control:
 - 1. 1 Cor. 9:27: "But I discipline my body and bring it into bondage (subjection), lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should be disqualified."
 - 2. Rudyard Kipling wrote, "If you can keep your head when all about you are losing theirs and blaming you .. you'll be a man, my son."
 - 3. James 1:26: "If anyone among you thinks he is religious, and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this one's religion is useless."

4. Titus 2:6: "Likewise exhort the younger men to be sober-minded."
5. Titus 1:7-8: "For a bishop must be blameless, as a steward of God, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, but hospitable, a lover of what is good, sober-minded, just, holy, self-controlled."

B. How about your tact?

1. Col. 4:6: "Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one."
2. 1 Cor. 15:4-5: "Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil;"
3. 1 Thess. 2:7: "But we were gentle among you, just as a nursing mother cherishes her own children."
4. Eph. 4:32: "And be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ also forgave you."

C. How about your faithfulness:

1. The apostle Paul in speaking of Timothy could say:
Phil. 2:20-21: "For I have no one like-minded, who will sincerely care for your state. For all seek their own, not the things which are of Christ Jesus."
2. 1 Cor. 9:24: "Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it."
3. Phil. 1:6: "Being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ."
4. Rev. 2:2-4: To the church at Ephesus:
"I know your works, your labor, your patience, and that you cannot bear those who are evil. And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them

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liars; and you have persevered and have patience, and have labored for My name's sake and have not become weary. Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love."

VI. CAN YOU RECOMMEND YOUR RELIGION BY BEING VERY RESPONSIBLE?

A. Paul points out how responsible Greek Christians were: '

Rom. 15:26-27: "For it pleased those from Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor among the saints who are in Jerusalem. It pleased them indeed, and they are their debtors. For if the Gentiles have been partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister to them in material things."

Henry Ward Beecher captures the idea of responsibility:

"All higher motives, ideals, conceptions, sentiments in a man are of no account if they do not come forward to strengthen him for better discharge of the duties which devolve upon him in the ordinary affairs of life."

B. 1 Tim. 5:8: "But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever."

C. Isaiah 6:8: "Here am I! Send me."

Note: This is the attitude we must have. Suppose Moses had said, Here am I, Lord, send Aaron."

All must say, SEND ME, SEND ME NOW AND SEND ME TOMORROW.

D. The kind of Christians we need in the fields is well summed up by Gifford Pinchot:

"There is no more valuable subordinate than the man to whom you can give a piece of work and then forget it, in the confident expectation that the next time it is brought to your attention it will come in the form of a report that the thing has been done."

"T'd rather see a sermon than hear one any day,
I'd rather one would walk with me than merely show the way.

The eye's a better pupil and more willing than the ear,
For counsel is confusing, but examples always clear.

For to see the good in action is what everybody needs,
I can soon learn how to do it if you'll let me see it done.

I can watch your hand in action, but your tongue too fast will run.

CONCLUSION: We must recommend our religion by:

1. Our faith in action.
2. By our sincere caring for others.
3. By personal uprightness in our own lives.
4. By a willingness to faithfulness in saving the lost.
5. By having getting to Heaven as a center reference point around which to build all of our lives.

WHERE ARE THE NINE?

Luke 17:11-19: “Now it happened as He went to Jerusalem that He passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee. Then as He entered a certain village, there met Him ten men who were lepers, who stood afar off. And they lifted up their voices and said, ‘Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!’ So when He saw them, He said to them, ‘Go, show yourselves to the priests.’ And so it was that as they went, they were cleansed. Now one of them, when he saw that he was healed, returned, and with a loud voice glorified God, and fell down on his face at His feet, giving Him thanks. And he was a Samaritan. So Jesus answered and said, ‘Were there not ten cleansed? But where are the nine?’ Were there not any found who returned to give glory to God except this foreigner?’ And He said to him, ‘Arise, go your way. Your faith has made you well.’”

INTRODUCTION:

1. In All of Human History, No Disease is More Loathsome or More Dreaded Than Leprosy.

A. Brownlow has well said:

“It has produced years of indescribable misery. The disease advances slowly but surely. The hair is bleached white. The body becomes a mass of scales and sores. The bones and marrow are pervaded. The joints separate; the fingers, toes, and other members fall off one by one, leaving a body hideous and awful. Life lingers amidst desolation, dooming the wretched victim to die piecemeal. Everywhere the doomed goes, the crowd pulls back and yells, ‘Unclean, unclean.’”

B. It was necessary that a healed leper go to the priest to confirm his healing.

(1) Lev. 14:1-57; Also Lev. 13:13-59,

(2) Lev. 13:13-17: “Then the priest shall consider; and indeed if the leprosy has covered all his body, he shall pronounce him clean who has the sore. It has all turned white. He is clean. But when raw flesh appears on him, he shall be unclean. And the priest shall look at the raw flesh and pronounce him to be unclean; for the raw flesh is unclean. It is leprosy. Or if the raw flesh changes and turns white again, he shall come to the priest, and the priest shall look at him; and indeed if the sore has turned white, then the priest shall pronounce him clean who has the sore. He is clean.

- C. Of all that were healed by Jesus, the lepers should have been the most grateful.

I. WHERE ARE THE NINE? THERE IS NO SIN MORE DESPICABLE IN THE SIGHT OF GOD AND MAN THAN INGRATITUDE.

A. The Old Testament is Full of Examples of Ingratitude:

1. Laban had no appreciation for Jacob's long years of service. (Gen. 31:6-7)
2. The Butler soon forgot Joseph after he had been restored to his place.
3. Israel turned its back on Moses who had delivered them and later upon God.
4. Saul was ungrateful for all the mighty deeds David had performed for him.
5. Absalom tried to steal his father's kingdom.
6. David could say in Psalms 55: For it is not an enemy who reproaches me; then I could bear it. Nor is it one who hates me who has magnified himself against me; then I could hide from him. But it was you, a man my equal, my companion and my acquaintance. We took sweet counsel together, and walked to the house of God in the throng."

B. Secular Writers Have Had Much to Say About the Sin of Ingratitude.

1. Shakespeare could say in As You Like It, II, 7:

"Blow, blow, thou winter wind,
Thou art not so unkind
As man's ingratitude;
Thy toot is not so keen,
Because thou art not seen,
Although thy breath be rude."

2. Jonathan Swift wrote in his Gulliver's Travels concerning the laws of the Lilliputians that:

"Ingratitude is among them a capital crime, ... for they reason thus, that whoever makes ill returns to his

benefactor, must needs be a common enemy to the rest of mankind, from whom he hath received no obligation, and therefore such a man is not fit to live.”

3. Shakespeare could say in his Julius Caesar, III, 2 that it was not the dagger of Brutus, but the changed heart of Brutus which slew Caesar.

“For when the noble Caesar saw him stab,
Ingratitude, more strong than traitor’s arms,
Quite vanquished him: then burst his mighty heart;
And, in his mantle muffling up his face,
Even at the base of Pompey’s statue,
Which all the while ran blood, great Caesar fell.”

II. WHERE ARE THE NINE IN OUR RELATIONSHIP TO GOD?

A. When We Are Recipients of God’s Great Blessings?

1. One Woman Tells the Story of Why She is Thankful:

“They huddled inside the storm door - two children in ragged outgrown coats. ‘Any old papers, lady?’ I wanted to say no ... until I looked down at their feet, little sandals slopped with sleet. ‘Come in and I’ll make you a cup of hot cocoa.’ Their soggy sandals made marks upon the hearthstone. Cocoa, toast and jam to fortify against the chill outside. The girl held up her cup, looking at it. The boy asked in a flat voice, ‘Lady, are you rich?’ Am I Rich? My no! The girl put her cup back in the saucer carefully and said, ‘Your cups match your saucers.’ Then they left, holding their papers against the wind. Plain blue pottery cups, but they MATCHED. Potatoes and brown gravy, a roof over our heads, my husband with a good steady job. THESE THINGS MATCHED, TOO. The muddy prints of small sandals were still wet upon my hearth. I let them be. I wanted them there in case I ever forget again how very rich I really am.”

Brownlow, *Great Question*, p. 95.

B. Where Are the Nine When We are Raised From OUR Beds of Dreaded Sickness?

C. Where Are the Nine When We have Been Saved From Danger: Sear, War, Accidents, Etc.?

D. Where Are the Nine When It Comes Time to Worship and Serve God?

1. A Chinese Preacher Once Preached:

“It came to pass that a man went to market, having a string of seven large coins. Seeing a beggar crying for alms, he gave the poor man six of his seven coins. Then the beggar, instead of being grateful, crept up behind his benefactor and stole the seventh also. What an abominable wretch! Yes, but in saying this you condemn yourselves. You receive from the hand of the gracious God six days, yet you are not content. The seventh you also steal.”

- (a) When the disciples meet together to break bread, Where Are the Nine?
- (b) When the collection plate is passed, Where are the Nine?
- (c) Where there is work to be done, Where are the Nine?

2. Paul realized that he was a debtor:

- (a) To the Preacher who taught him.
- (b) To the Christ that saved him.

III. THERE ARE MANY RELATIONSHIPS IN LIFE IN WHICH WE SHOW OUR INGRATITUDE.

A. Employer - Employee Relationship.

- 1. Employer's let worker go who has given him his best all his life.
- 2. Employee doesn't try to help his employer's business and respect him for having had the determination to start it so that he might have the job and doesn't realize the long hours the owner has put in through the years.

B. Husband - Wife Relationship.

- 1. Husband that deserts his wife and children.
- 2. Husband that deserts his wife for a younger woman.
- 3. A wife that never appreciates the work of her husband.

C. Parent - Children Relationship.

1. Children that have no sense of gratitude for their parents.
2. Have no sense of responsibility toward their parents.

*Homes of Unwanted Parents

D. Preacher - Church.

1. Members have no sense of appreciation for the preacher's work.
2. Preacher who doesn't appreciate what the church does for him.

Q (a) I can well be grateful for wonderful brethren who have stood by me in my labors for the Master down through the years.

E. Pupil - Teacher Relationship.

1. Students neither grateful for the public school teachers nor willing to show respect and appreciation for the Bible teachers.

IV. WE NEED TO EXPRESS OUR GRATITUDE WHILE PEOPLE ARE STILL LIVING.

A. Too many times we wait until people are gone and try to make up for our ingratitude by expensive funerals and lots of flowers.

B. David expressed his gratitude for Jonathan by preserving his son.

1. "Is there any yet left of the House of Saul, that I may show him the kindness, for Jonathan his son's sake?"
2. When David learned that Mephibosheth was alive, he sent for him and said, "Fear not: for I will surely show thee kindness for Jonathan thy father's sake."

C. The Apostle Paul is one of the greatest examples of gratitude expressed.

1. "Whether he was writing to the Corinthians, or the Philippians, or the Colossians, or the Romans, there is always someone whom Paul remembers with gratitude and affection. The Christians at Philippi are mentioned and remembered with particular gratitude. In the introduction to his letter to them, he says, 'I thank my God upon every
Q

remembrance of you.’ Then there is that rosary of friendship at the end of the letter to the Romans, where Paul salutes and mentions Ampliatus and Urbane and Herodian and Narcissus, and other disciples there with their beautiful Roman names, and then a man named Rufus, ‘and his mother and mine.’ Also, he could say, ‘Greet Priscilla and Aquila my helpers in Christ Jesus: who for my life laid down their own necks.’ ... But one of the most pleasing memories that Paul had was his memory of a Christian at the Church in Ephesus. His name was Onesiphorus. Paul hands him down to immortality as a man who came to visit him when he was in prison in Rome, and says of him that ‘he oft refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chains.’ He prays that God may give mercy unto the house of Onesiphorus, and that he may find mercy of the Lord ‘in that day.’ There is something about these references to Onesiphorus which suggest that perhaps that Onesiphorus was now dead.”

(Macartney, *Greatest Words of the Bible*, p. 148.

2. An Unknown Poet has Written of Paul’s Appreciation for Onesiphorus.

“Timotheus, when here and there you go
Through Ephesus upon your pastoral round,
Where every street to me is hallowed ground,
I will be bold and ask you to bestow
Kindness upon one home, where long ago
A helpmeet lived, whose like is seldom found;
And when the sweet spring flowers begin to blow,
Sometime, for me, to lay one upon his mound.”

CONCLUSION:

“Count Your Many Blessings, Name Them One By One

And It will Surprise You What the Lord Has Done.”
(Phil. 4:8)

MORE THAN CONQUERORS

Rom. 8:35-39: "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written: "For Your sake we are killed all day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter." Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

INTRODUCTION:

- I. Christianity Is Pictured in the Scriptures as a Constant Battle:
 - A. Paul pictures himself as running a race from Earth to Heaven.
 - (1) 2 Tim. 2:3-5: "You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier. And also if anyone competes in athletics, he is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules."
Weymouth, "If anyone takes part in an athletic contest, he gets no prize unless he obeys the rules."
 - (2) Heb. 12:1: "Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God."
 - (3) 1 Cor. 9:24-27: "Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it. And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown. Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air. But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified."

(4) Phil. 3:13-14: “Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”

a. Chappell has said in his *Values That Last*, p. 36:

“Paul had a fighting heart. His vocabulary is not that of the cloister. It is that of the barracks and of the athletic field. He thought of himself and of his fellow-Christians as engaged in the most exciting of all games, the most exacting of all conflicts ... (The game he was playing, the fight he was making, demanded all the high daring and courage required of the soldier and the athlete.) And Paul felt that he and his fellow-saints were not inferior in this respect.”

B. Paul pictures the battleground as our Hearts and the World, Satan as the Enemy, and Eternal Life in Heaven as the Victory.

(1) Eph. 6:10-17: “Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God,”

(2) 2 Tim. 4:7-8: “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that

Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.”

a. To win the crown, a man must:

- (I) Enter the race.
- (II) Stick to the rules.
- (III) Run his very best.
- (IV) Run to win.

I. THIS BATTLE IS CONSTANTLY BEING WAGED WITHIN EACH OF US EVERY DAY WE LIVE.

A. Rom. 7:15-25: “For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do. If, then, I do what I will not to do, I agree with the law that it is good. But now, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find. For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice. Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good. For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man. But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? I thank God -- through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin.”

B. We, too, as Paul, must wage this battle inside of us - Inside the heart.

1. We must conquer Self.

a. Sin causes one to fall out with himself.

- (1) Psalms 38:3-8: “There is no soundness in my flesh because of Your anger, nor is there any health in my bones because of my sin. For my iniquities have gone over my head; like a heavy burden they are too heavy for me. My wounds are foul and festering because of my foolishness. I am troubled, I am bowed down greatly; I go mourning all the day long, for my loins are full of inflammation, and there is no soundness in my flesh. I am feeble and

severely broken; I groan because of the turmoil of my heart.”

- (2) Gal. 5:24: “And those who are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.”
 - b) Man is a moral being, made to live in harmony with God. When he is at variance with his Maker, he is miserable and fearful. This sense of right and wrong and feeling of guilt for wrong-doing is found among all people both civilized and barbarian, even though their concept of right may be perverted..
 - c) Peace of mind is not possible until a person has conquered his Spirit and brought it under God’s control. Otherwise, the tumult of personal war rages within. He is like a ship filled with rebellious sailors who produce tumult within no matter how calm and peaceful the sea.
 - d) Self is the one person from which there is no escape. If one should go to Mars, he would still have to deal with a person from which there is no escape. In eternity, we must live with ourselves, and this is one reason a loving Father beseeches his children to keep self fit to live with.
2. We must conquer distressing circumstances and discouragement.
- a) We cannot choose what happens to us, but we can choose how it affects us.
 - (1) This conquest must be won within the mind.
 - b) Discouragement can be caused by:
 - (1) Self-pity.
 - (2) Apparent injustices in this world.
 - (3) Loneliness. (There is a difference between Aloneness and Loneliness). Some could be in a crowd and still be lonely.
 - (1) Loneliness can be caused by:

- (1) Uncontrollable circumstances such as a loss of a loved one.
- (2) That which we create ourselves - This is devastating.
- (3) The occasional loneliness common to life, experienced by everyone, for there is a part of us which can be shared by no other person.

4. Criticism. (Psalms 69:20)

b. Abraham Lincoln once said:

“If I were to try to read, much less answer, all the attacks made on me, this shop might as well be closed for any other business. I do the very best I know how, the very best I can. If the end brings me out all right, what is said against me won't amount to anything. If the end brings me out wrong, ten angels swearing I was right would make no difference.”

5. Persecution:

a. Elijah, because of the constant persecution of Ahab and Jezebel “arose and ran for his life, and went to Beersheba, which belongs to Judah, and left his servant there, but he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a broom tree. And he prayed that he might die.” (1 Kings 19:3-4). Weary of heart and soul and body, he had lost his will to live - or fight.

3. We must conquer sin.

a. There are Four Basic Considerations in doing this.

(1) It cannot be removed by the passing of time.

- (2) Sin is not erased by simply denying that it exists.
 - (3) We cannot forgive ourselves.
 - (4) Good works alone will not blot out sin.
- b. We Can Drive Sin Out of Our Lives by:
- (1) A determination to make some changes.
 - (2) By realizing that all improvements require much effort and self-discipline.
 - (3) By setting definite goals for ourselves.
 - (4) By overcoming evil with good.
4. We Must Conquer Our Fear of Death.
- a. "Death is swallowed up in victory. O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory? ... But thanks be to God, which gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." (1 Cor. 15:54-57).
 - b. Psalms 116:15: "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints."
 - (1) Those who have followed Christ through this life can follow Him through the valley of the shadow of death and into His eternal home.
 - c. Matt. 5:12: "Great is your reward in heaven."

III. IN ADDITION TO THE BATTLE WE MUST WIN WITHIN OURSELVES, WE MUST CONQUER THE WORLD.

1. We must fight the battle against religious division.
2. A battle must constantly be waged against false teachers and false doctrines.
3. We must wage war against indifference, materialism, worldliness within the Church,
4. We must fight against social and political injustices everywhere in the world.

5. Christian people must fight crime, graft, corruption in their governing bodies.

CONCLUSION:

1. We are in constant struggle:
God Against Satan
Church Against The World.
Man Against Temptation to Sin.
2. "The toils of the road will seem nothing,
When I get to the end of the way."

"JUDGE NOT THAT YOU BE NOT JUDGED"

Matt. 7:1-5: "Judge not, that you be not judged. For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the same measure you use, it will be measured back to you. And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me remove the speck from your eye'; and look, a plank is in your own eye? Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye."

INTRODUCTION:

- A. Definition: Mote καρφός Twig, splinter, chaff.
Beam δοκός Log, large timber.
- B. The word rendered "Judge" here appears frequently in the New Testament.
1. 1 Cor. 10:15: "I speak as to wise men, judge for yourselves what I say."
 2. 1 Cor. 11:13: "Judge among yourselves. Is it proper for a woman to pray to God with her head uncovered?"
 3. Luke 7:43: "Simon answered and said, 'I suppose the *one* whom he forgave more.'" And He said to him, 'You have rightly judged.'
 4. John 18:31: "Then Pilate said to them, 'You take Him and judge Him according to your law.' Therefore the Jews said to him, 'It is not lawful for us to put anyone to death.'"
 5. 1 Cor. 4:3-5: "But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by a human court. In fact, I do not even judge myself. For I know of nothing against myself, yet I am not justified by this; but He who judges me is the Lord. Therefore, judge nothing before the time, until the Lord comes, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the counsels of the hearts. Then each one's praise will come from God."
 6. Rom. 14:4, 10, 13: "Who are you to judge another's servant?" "But why do you judge your brother? Or why do you show contempt for your brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ." "Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather resolve this,

not to put a stumbling block or a cause to fall in our brother's way."

7. John 7:24: "Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment."
8. James 4:11-12: "Do not speak evil of another, brethren. He who speaks evil of a brother and judges his brother, speaks evil of the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge. There is one Lawgiver, who is able to save and destroy. Who are you to judge another?"

C. This command of "Judge Not" does not prevent:

1. Honest attempts to correct the faults in others.
2. Arriving at an estimate of the worthfulness of others.
3. Church judgments of ungodly church members.

D. Jesus is here hitting hard at the faultfinder.

1. He calls them hypocrites - They are not as good as they claim.

I. WHY IS THE PRACTICE OF FAULTFINDING WRONG?

A. The faultfinder is wrong in Motive - He is looking for a fault.

1. Chappell says in his Questions Jesus Asked, p. 31:

"Why do you see the mote in your brother's eye? It is not because it is so large and glaring that it cannot be overlooked. It is not because it shrieks at you and demands attention. When you see a thing so small that it can float in a sunbeam, it is because you are looking for it. You cannot help seeing a log. It compels your attention. But no one is likely to see a mote, an insignificant speck, unless he is a keen-eyed searcher."

B. The faultfinder hurts himself because:

1. He blinds himself to his own fault. (Luke 18:9 - Parable Publican-Pharisee).
2. He cannot see any good in his fellowman.

Brownlow, in his Greatest Questions in the New Testament, p. 24, says:

"Put a small black spot in the middle of a white sheet of paper. Ask another what he sees. The chances are he will say, 'A black spot.' He does not see all the white surrounding the black spot. How true of man. We are quick to see black spots in the life of another, but we are slow to see all the whiteness that is there, too."

3. His friendships are short because he picks his friends to pieces.
4. He is not a factfinder - He needs to consider that:
 - (a) Information may be inaccurate.
 - (b) Judgments are not infallible.
 - (c) His sins may be just as bad or worse than that he sees in others.
 - (d) Appearances are deceitful.
 - (e) Doesn't know circumstances.

C. The faultfinder hurts the one with whom he finds the fault.

"No man ever built a house by tearing down his neighbor's."

II. THIS PASSAGE OF JESUS CONDEMNS US WHEN WE JUDGE OUR FELLOWMAN:

A. Presumptuously - That is, judging his motives (Rom. 14:4).

B. Hypocritically - Being just as guilty of sin.

Romans 2:1: "Therefore you are inexcusable, O man, whoever you are who judge. For in whatever you judge another you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things."

C. Hastily - Rashly.

Prov. 18:13: "He who answers a matter before he hears it, it is folly and shame to him."

D. Unjustly or Unfairly.

James 2:13: "For judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment."

III. WHY DO WE LOOK FOR SOMETHING WRONG IN OUR FELLOWMAN?

- A. Sometimes to salve our own conscience.
- B. By tearing down the other man, we feel we are building ourselves up.

Illustration: Run other preacher down to build ourselves up in comparison.

- C. Sometimes because of envy.
 - 1. Those motivated by envy and jealousy in their faultfinding of others is one of the most tragic spectacles of all.

IV. WITH WHAT JUDGMENT YE METE IT SHALL BE METED UNTO YOU.

- A. This is a terrible saying with the Master - God will remember in His judgment.
 - 1. I have no doubt that this refers to the final judgment.
 - 2. This should be a sobering thought indeed as we try to cut our fellowman down to size.
- B. Here are ten things for which no one has ever been sorry:
 - 1. Doing good to all.
 - 2. Speaking evil to no one.
 - 3. Hearing before judging.
 - 4. Thinking before speaking.
 - 5. Holding an angry tongue.
 - 6. Being kind to the distressed.
 - 7. Asking pardon for wrongs.

8. Being patient with everybody.
9. Stopping the ear of the talebearer.
10. Disbelieving evil reports.

V. **THERE IS MORE GOOD IN MOST EVERYONE WE MEET
AND WE NEED TO LOOK FOR IT.**

- A. Illustration: Preacher's boy who had brought home the ugliest cur puppy he had ever seen. He tried to find something good about him but failed. However, the little boy said, "Daddy, he wags his tail real good."
- B. We need to realize the wickedness of this sin - and repent.

"Could we judge all deeds by motives,
See the good and bad within,
Often we would love the sinner
All the while we loathe the sin.
Could we know the powers working
To o'erthrow integrity,
We could judge each other's errors
With more patient charity."

- C. "Let us judge not that we be not judged."

"Then give to the world the best you have,
And the best will come back to you."

THE REJECTED INVITATION

Luke 14:16-24: "Then He said to him, 'A certain man gave a great supper and invited many, and sent his servant at supper time to say to those who were invited, 'Come, for all things are now ready.' But they all with one accord began to make excuses. The first said to him, 'I have bought a piece of ground, and I must go and see it. I ask you to have me excused.' And another said, 'I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to test them. I ask you to have me excused.' Still another said, 'I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.' So that servant came and reported these things to his master. Then the master of the house, being angry, said to his servant, 'Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in here the poor and the maimed and the lame and the blind.' And the servant said, 'Master, it is done as you commanded, and still there is room.' Then the master said to the servant, 'Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled. For I say to you that none of those men who were invited shall taste my supper.'"

INTRODUCTION:

- I. Jesus does not accept any excuse for rejecting his invitation.
 - A. "Let me tell my friends goodbye."
 - B. "Let me buy my father."
 - C. Jesus said, "Let the dead bury the dead. Come follow me."

I. EXAMINE THE EXCUSES OFFERED BY THE GROUPS IN THE TEXT.

- A. I have bought a piece of ground, and I must go and see it.
 - I. Dishonest: Would have looked at land before buying it.
 - (a) Valued corner lot here more than home in heaven.
- B. I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to test them.
 - I. He was dishonest: Would have proved them before buying.
 - (a) Yearling calf worth more than his soul.
- C. I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.
 - I. Anxious to take to the banquet before the marriage.
 - (a) Afterwards, a man would scarcely help his wife over a rail fence.

2. This also means to be married to the Things of the World.

(a) To the whiskey bottle and the dance hall crowd.

II. EXAMINE SOME OF THE EXCUSES WHICH ARE OFFERED BY PEOPLE NOW.

A. The boy or girl is too young to obey the Gospel now.

1. Drift away from home, marry out of Christ, finally lost.

B. I'm too mean - I'll wait until I'm fit - Until I'm good enough.

1. Are you worse than those who drove nails through Jesus.

2. Are you worse than Saul - the chief of sinners.

Illustration: Artist wanted ragged, depraved man.

(a) Didn't need him when he was cleaned up.

Illustration: Patient getting well with no medicine.

C. I'm afraid I can't hold out - Afraid I might give up.

1. Child takes many falls before it learns how to walk.

2. Illustration: Workman washes his hands even though he is going to get them dirty again the next day.

(a) Jesus will wash off the grime of Sin.

D. Do not want to associate with hypocrites in the Church.

1. Hypocrites are everywhere: Business, Clubs, etc.

(a) Illus: "Tell little boy to go get candy - then run."

(b) Illus: "Tell man that mommy is not at home."

(c) Illus: "How glad you are to see the old gossiper"

2. Generally used lowest, vilest member for measuring stick.

(a) Will spend an eternity with all of them in hell.

E. I'm waiting for a special call - "Am of the Elect."

- F. Confused over which church to join.
 - 1. I sympathize with the one who offers this excuse.
 - (a) Illus.: Father sent son "way bill" of route.
 - (i) He had ridden the train - knew best route.
- G. There is plenty of time left yet to obey the gospel.
 - 1. Men have been using this excuse for centuries.
 - (a) Most potent argument Satan has to offer.
 - (i) Dying man spurned invitation had left meeting house in early youth.

WHAT IS LIFE ANYWAY?

INTRODUCTION:

A man's life does not consist in the abundance A man's life is vapor, fleeting breath, fleeting second. A man's life is only a time of preparation for future.

I. LIFE IS A JOURNEY FOR US.

A. Prov. 3:6: "In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths."

1. All of us are making a journey.
 - a. Some are unconcerned as to direction they are going.
 - b. Some are controlling the course.
2. All of us should observe the road signs.
 - a. The detour signs are plentiful.
 - b. The warnings of danger are plentiful.

II. LIFE IS A TASK FOR US.

A. Heb. 5:9: "And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him."

1. There are numerous jobs to be done.
 - a. Shall I roll up my sleeves and get to work?
 - b. Shall I get in the harness so to speak?
2. Two attitudes to take in this work.
 - a. Do what the Lord wants done.
 - b. The other is to do what we want to do.


III. LIFE IS A MISSION FOR US.

A. Eph. 4:32: "And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ also forgave you."

1. Paul had a mission in life.

- a. Mission was to preach the gospel.
- b. His success was almost miraculous.
- 2. We should have a mission in life.
 - a. To be helpful to those around us.
 - b. To accomplish something worthwhile.

IV. LIFE IS A CONTEST FOR US.

- A. Heb. 12:1: “Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us.”
 - 1. A contest should challenge us:
 - a. To do our best to win. 
 - b. To win the crown of life.
 - 2. A contest always implies training:
 - a. Plenty of good exercise.
 - b. Plenty of wholesome food; freedom from disease.

V. LIFE IS A BATTLE FOR US.

- A. Eph. 6:11: “Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.”
 - 1. Satan’s army is on the rampage.
 - a. Forces of evil are at work.
 - b. His tactics are shrewd and cunning.
 - 2. The Army of Christ is the army we are fighting with and there is a battle to win.
 - a. We can do all things through Christ.
 - b. Christ is our Captain; thus we have a great leader.

Note: In the weeks and months which lie ahead of us, let each of us resolve that we will be personally responsible for bringing someone to obey the Gospel of Christ. And let each of us resolve to live a life closer to God and more aggressive, and active in His service.

The Christian Life is a wonderful, happy, and meaningful life, and if you are not happy, it means that somewhere, somehow you are failing to live as God would have you. It will do all of us good to take time out for some self-inspection.

A LOVELY LIFE

INTRODUCTION

- A. Matt. 12:34: "Out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks."
1. We tell ourselves. Others know what we are by what we say.
- B. Prov. 21:23: "Whoever guards his mouth and tongue, keeps his soul from troubles."
- C. James 3:2: "If anyone does not stumble in word, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle the whole body."
- D. Prov. 15:1: "A soft answer turns away wrath."
- E. Prov. 21:9, 19: "It is better to dwell in the corner of a housetop, than in a house shared with a contentious woman."

NOTE: A leaky faucet can drive one to distraction.

(One might finally get what one wants but causes both parties to be miserable.)

- F. Romans 14:19: "Therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another."
- G. Prov. 31:26: "She opens her mouth with wisdom; and on her tongue is the law of kindness."

NOTE: Remember that a lot of little digs will eventually bury love or friendship. And let's never be guilty of sarcasm for humor. A sarcastic remark is never funny, no matter how cleverly it is veiled.

- H. Prov. 25:10: "Lest he who hears it expose your shame, and your reputation be ruined."

"A careless word may kindle strife;
a cruel word may wreck a life;
a bitter word may hate instill;
a brutal word may smite and kill.

A gracious word may smooth the way;
a joyous word may light the day;
a timely word may lessen stress;
a loving word may heal and bless."

SOME SOUL-SEARCHING QUESTIONS?

1. Am I so critical that I see a person's weak points quicker than I do the good points?
2. Am I so sensitive that I make myself miserable by taking in a personal way everything that is said?
3. Am I so childish that everyone else has to handle me with caution to keep me from getting mad or causing trouble?
4. Am I adult enough to accept a disappointment and adjust myself to it without feeling mistreated and making everyone around me miserable?
5. When a discourtesy is shown me, do I brood over it and determine to get even?
6. Am I always thinking that everyone else is out of step but me and that I could be happy if everybody else would just do right?
7. Do I hurt other people with my sharp and caustic remarks?
8. Do I have bottled up inside me a feeling of hostility toward another?
9. Am I determined to have my way, regardless of what I may do to others?
10. Do I repeat that which should be kept secret and then excuse myself by saying, "But it's the truth"?
11. When the good reputation of another is being undermined, do I participate?
12. When I realize that I am wrong, am I big enough to admit it; or do I still try to justify myself by trying to blame someone else for my conduct?
13. Do I "follow after the things which make for peace" or do my words promote strife?
14. Do I attempt to white-wash my own sins by constantly pointing out the faults of others?
15. Are others lifted up and made better by their association with me?

TWO WAYS LEADING TO ETERNITY

Psalms 1- READ THE TEXT

Isa. 35:8: "A highway shall be there, and a road, and it shall be called the Highway of Holiness. The unclean shall not pass over it, but it shall be for others. Whoever walks the road, although a fool, shall not go astray."

Matt. 7:13-14: "Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it."

1. God Gives Man the Choice of Two Ways - Two Destinies.
 - A. Man must choose which way he will travel.

I. THE WAY OF THE RIGHTEOUS LEADS TO AN ETERNAL ABODE WITH GOD.

1. The Description of the Way.
 - A. It is a Plain Way. (Isa. 35:8)
 - B. It is the Way of Holiness. (Isa. 35:8-10)
 - C. It is the Way That Leads Upward. (Phil. 3:12-14)
 - D. It is a Strait and Narrow Way. (Matt. 7:13-14)
2. How to Get Into The Way. (Not enough to get in - we must stay in.)
 - A. Christ is The Way - Then How Do We Get Into Christ.
 - (1) By Believing. (Mark 16:16; Acts 16:31; Acts 8:37)
 - (2) By Repenting. (Jonah 3; Acts 2:38; Acts 17:30-31)
 - (3) By Confessing. (Matt. 10:32; Rom. 10:9-10; Acts 8:37)
 - (4) By Being Baptized. (Acts 2:38; 1 Pet. 3:21; Gal. 3:27)
3. How to Keep in That Way.

- A. By Studying the Word of God. (Acts 2:42; 2 Tim. 2:15; 1 Pet. 3)
- B. By Prayer and Communion. (Acts 2:42; Eph. 6:18; James 5)
- C. By Service. (A way to travel in and not to sleep)
- D. There is peace for those who grow old in the way. (2 Tim. 4:4-6)

II. **THE WAY OF THE UNGODLY LEADS TO ETERNAL ABODE WITH SATAN.**

- 1. The Description of the Way.
 - A. It is a Way of Sinners. (Ps. 1)
 - B. It is a Wide Gate and Broad Way. (Matt. 7:13-14).
 - (1) It is broad enough to include drinking, gambling, dancing and any kind of sin and sinner.
- 2. Who is Traveling This Way?
 - A. Those who obey not. (2 Thess. 1:7)
 - B. Erring Christians. (2 Pet. 2:14-15; 2:2-21; Heb. 6)
 - C. Devil and his Angels. (Matt. 25:41)
 - D. False Teachers and those they deceive. (Rev. 19:20)
- 3. What Lies at the End of This Way?
 - A. Fire that never shall be quenched. (Matt. 9:43-48)
 - B. Everlasting punishment. (Matt. 25:46)
 - C. A lake of fire. (Rev. 20:1-15; 21:8)
 - D. Outer darkness, weeping, gnashing of teeth. (Matt. 13)
 - E. A place of torment. (Rev. 14:11; 20:10)

III. WHY DO VERY FEW PEOPLE ENTER THE NARROW WAY IN RATIO TO THOSE IN BROAD WAY?

1. Not because it is impossible - being predestined to hell.
2. Not because they could not know - the Word of God is plain.
3. Some because we failed to tell them about the way.
4. Some because of Prejudice (forming opinion before getting the facts).
5. Some because they followed their preacher without investigating.
6. Some try to travel the narrow way with the world on their backs.
7. Some follow the majority and seek the most popular way.
8. Some because of procrastination.
 - A. Some will put off obeying just one time too many and then will reap the terrible results.
 - B. Do not let the devil tell you that you have more time, whereas we do not know what tomorrow will bring or if it will even come.
 - C. Behold, today is the day of salvation and the apostle Peter is still saying to each of us "save yourselves from this crooked generation."

THE YOKE OF THE MASTER

Matthew 11:28-30:

"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me: for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." KJV

"Come to me all of you who are weary and over-burdened and I will give you rest. Put on my yoke and learn from me. For I am gentle and humble in heart and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light." (Phillips, Trans.)

"Come to me, all whose work is hard, whose load is heavy; and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble-hearted; and your souls will find relief. For my yoke is good to bear, my load is light." (NEB)

INTRODUCTION:

1. If a man wishes to avoid the disturbing effect of paradoxes, the best advice is for him to leave the Christian faith alone.
2. In a shocking paradox, Christ offered those already burdened to share his burden also.
3. Elton Trueblood has said:

"The great yoke passage, which is found at the end of the eleventh chapter of Matthew, begins with the recognition of the validity of the demand for comfort. We see how tender Christ was with all the broken and the needy when He began the great pronouncement by saying, 'Come unto me all ye who labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest.' This appears to be the theme of comfort, pure and simple, so that we may naturally expect Christ to go on and say that the heavy-laden must lay down their burdens, but this is precisely what He does not say. In a really shocking paradox, Christ offers rest to the burdened by asking them to share His burden. His solution of the problem of those who are tired with toil is to offer them the world's greatest symbol of toil; namely, the yoke. The yoke means, in some places, that by which a man can, though a device on his shoulders, carry more than he could otherwise carry. In other places, it means the harness which animals, either oxen or asses, wear, by which they are able to pull a plow. In any case, the striking fact is that Christ's offer of peace was through the acceptance of new responsibilities and that His offer of rest was through the voluntary sharing of new

toil. He did not say that He Himself would remove burdens. What He did say was that, because His yoke was perfectly fitted, His own burden seemed light. The yoke of Christ, pp. 18-19.

I. THIS INVITATION DOES NOT OFFER US REST FROM THE COMMON BURDENS OF LIFE.

- A. Man Must Still Work, Study, Educate, Experience Pain, Physical Ailments, etc.
- B. Man Is Still Subject to Disease, War, Destruction.

Clovis Chappell in his *Values Which Last* has well said:

"Work is a privilege. It is a source of great joy. Nobody can be happy who is not in some sense a worker. Work is also a wonderful safeguard against temptation. The hours of our greatest peril are always our hours of idleness. Then work is a great healer of hurt hearts. How many have forgotten in some measure their sore wounds by hard and diligent work. But labor means work that is carried on at the price of weariness and pain. It is work that is so heavy and hard or so futile that it becomes an agony. It is work that has degenerated into toil, the toil of the treadmill, the toil of monotonous struggle that ends in lean achievement or in utter frustration."

II. THIS INVITATION IS TWO-FOLD:

- A. "Come Unto Me" is an invitation to Enlist.
- B. "Take My Yoke" is an invitation to share in the campaign.

III. THE PROMISE THAT "I WILL GIVE YOU REST" IS ONE OF THE MOST GRACIOUS OF CHRIST!

- A. Our Master Will Give Us Rest.
 - I. From the Anxiety Over Obtaining the Necessities of Life.
 - a. In Matt. 6:33: He pointed out the providential care of God over the birds and the flowers and that man was more precious to God than those. That should we but only put the kingdom of God first the things of life we need will be given.
 - 2. From A Sense of Shame and Guilt.

- a. Millions of people go to psychiatrists every year because they have guilt complexes. The doctor will generally give them some tranquilizers so they can escape the world of reality for awhile. But he is merely treating the symptoms and not the cause.
 - b. Once we take upon ourselves the "Yoke of the Master" and are walking daily we can find a sense of fulfillment and happiness which can be known no other way.
3. From the Fear of Death.
- a. "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil ..." Ps. 111.
 - b. "O grave, where is thy victory, or death where is thy sting?" I Cor. 15:

CRUX There is not a faithful, sincere, godly child of God anywhere who fears death. Why should he? At death, he gains. "For me to live is Christ and to die is gain." To go and to be with the Lord "is far better."

NOTE: Only those who have accepted the Yoke of the Master can have this feeling.

4. From the Fear of Hell.
 - a. There is a peace of mind and heart which a faithful Christian has which can carry him through every adversity of life. There is an inner serenity which helps him know that hell has no fear for him. He is a child of the King - his destiny is not destruction.
5. Then, There Is That Eternal Rest - That Home of the Soul Everlasting.

CONCLUSION:

1. Jesus Does Not Promise to Relieve Us of Our Burdens, But Asks Us to Bear His.

Paul Tillich in his The Shaking of the Foundations has said:

"Jesus cannot and does not promise more pleasure and less pain to those whom He asks to come to Him. On the contrary, sometimes He promises them more pain, more persecution, more threat of death - "the cross," as He calls it."

Trueblood says:

"We want to escape responsibility, but Christ will not let us do so. In both the yoke and the cross, He took ideas which must have been revolting to the many of His hearers, and transformed them by adding new meaning." Ibid p. 19.

2. In Comparison to the Burdens of Life - The Yoke of the Master is Light.

- a. To be sure, if we will only put on the extra burden, the others will be lightened.

"If Christ offers you his cross, you will accept it, because He always carries the heavy end Himself."

TOUCH OF THE MASTER'S HAND

'Twas battered and scarred, and the auctioneer
Thought it scarcely worth his while
To waste much time on the old violin,
But held it up with a smile;
"What am I bidden, good folks," he cried.
"Who'll start the bidding for me?"
"A dollar, a dollar"; then, "Two! Only Two?
Two dollars, and who'll make it three?
Three dollars, once; three dollars, twice;
Going for three -- "But no,
From the room, far back, a gray-haired man
Came forward and picked up the bow;
Then, wiping the dust from the old violin,
And tightening the loose strings,
He played a melody pure and sweet
As a caroling angel sings.

The music ceased, and the auctioneer,
With a voice that was quiet and low,
Said: "What am I bid for the old violin?"
And he held it up with a bow.
"A thousand dollars, and who'll make it two?
Two thousand! And who'll make it three?
Three thousand once, three thousand twice,
And going and gone," said he.
The people cheered, but some of them cried,
"We do not quite understand
What changed its worth?" Swiftly came the reply:
The touch of the master's hand."

And many a man with life out of tune,
And battered and scarred with sin,
Is auctioned cheap to the thoughtless crowd,
Much like the old violin.
A mess of pottage, a glass of wine;
A game == and he travels on.
He is going once, and going twice,
He's going and almost gone.
But the Master comes, and the foolish crowd
Never can quite understand
The worth of a soul and the change that's wrought
By the touch of the Master's hand.