

Preaching
the Whole
Counsel
of God
Volume 2

Sermon Outlines
by Louis Rushmore

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Table of Contents

ANGELS	5
GUARDIAN ANGELS	10
GOD’S ENDURING WORD	15
MOSES, A MAN AFRAID TO TRUST AND OBEY .	19
SAMUEL, A LIFE OF SERVICE	21
ASTROLOGY	24
AUTHORITY IN RELIGION	28
ELIJAH, BOLDLY FACING SIN	34
ELIJAH, A DISCOURAGED SERVANT OF GOD... 	39
BAPTISM	42
RESPECT FOR THE BIBLE	49
FIRE IS FIRE.....	57
RETURN UNTO ME.....	62
DEATH POINTS TO GOD.....	67
SPEAKING IN TONGUES.....	70
THINK ON THESE THINGS	74
THE PLACE OF THE OLD TESTAMENT TODAY	78
THE PEOPLE HAD A MIND TO WORK	84
MIRACLES OF JESUS IN MARK	89
LIFE’S BURDENS.....	102
WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A LAWBREAKER.....	105
GOD BLESS AMERICA	109
THE VALUE OF A SOUL.....	113
WHERE ARE THE DEAD?	117
DNA OF THE CHURCH	122

MARRIAGE, DIVORCE & REMARRIAGE	127
SUCCESS STORY	132
COMPANIONS IN THE KINGDOM	137
THE TABERNACLE, TYPE OF THE CHURCH....	141
BRUISED FOR OUR SINS	145
HE IS MY EVERYTHING	151
REBUILDING THE WALLS.....	153
DO YOU LOVE JESUS?	157
THE GREAT BAPTISM BATTLE	160
PRONOUNCING JUDGMENT	164
BEAUTIFUL FEET	171
DEACONS DEKE.....	175
THE FORGOTTEN COMMAND: REPENT	180
IN THE BOSOM OF ABRAHAM	183
ELDERS ELD	186
THE COST OF DISCIPLESHIP	191
HOLY COMMUNION.....	197
CONDITIONS OF ACCEPTABLE PRAYER	201
CONDITIONS OF FORGIVENESS.....	206
ACCOUNTABILITY TO GOD	210
HOW TO PREACH A MOVING SERMON.....	214

Angels

Deuteronomy 29:29

Thesis: To examine what the Bible has to say about the subject of angels.

Song: *There Is A Habitation*

Introduction:

1. The Bible is the only reliable source of knowledge about the subject of angels, since angels are not native to the physical realm.
2. However, not even the Bible treats “angels” as a topic of singular significance, but refers to them incidentally in the course of relating facts about other matters.
3. One writer (Tom Holland) notes that there are 294 references to angels throughout the Bible.
4. Consequently, one may have more questions about angels than the Bible answers, yet we can be assured that God has provided everything he wants us to know now about angels, as well as every other subject, Deut. 29:29.

Body:

I. Angels Defined.

- A. The word “angel” in the Bible is translated from the Hebrew word *malak* in the Old Testament and the Greek word *angelos* in the New Testament.
 1. Both words mean the same thing, “a messenger.”
 2. *Angelos* is derived from another Greek word, *angelo*, which means, “to deliver a message.”
- B. The Hebrew and Greek words for “angel” are variously applied in the Bible.
 1. Often the words for “angel” are translated “messenger” and are applied to mortal men: ordinary men, Job 1:14; 1 Sam. 11:3; Luke 9:52; prophets, Hag. 1:13; Mal. 3:1; priests, Mal. 2:7.
 2. Sometimes the English word “angel” is also applied to a mortal man: a king, 2 Sam. 19:27;

preachers, Rev. 1:20.

3. Sometimes the word “angel” in Scripture refers to impersonal agents, such as the wind, Psa. 104:4 ASV.
4. Usually, though, “angel” in the Bible refers to created spiritual beings or heavenly messengers who are subject to God and mightier than men, Neh. 9:6; Col. 1:16.

II. The Origin and Nature of Angels (Heavenly Messengers).

- A. First, angels are created beings.
 1. There is no indication that angels always existed.
 2. Jesus Christ is attributed with having created everything in heaven and earth, John 1:3; Col. 1:16.
 3. Heaven and earth were populated at and by creation, Gen. 2:1.
- B. Angels are subject to the Godhead and above mortal men.
 1. Jesus Christ is said in Scripture to be made better than the angels and to have a more excellent ministry, Heb. 1:4; the theme of Hebrews One is that Jesus is superior to the angels.
 2. Angels are “subject” to Jesus Christ, 1 Pet. 3:22.
 3. Angels possess power greater than mortals, Gen. 19:1-11; Matt. 26:53.
- C. Angels have heavenly characteristics.
 1. They are immortal (they do not die), Luke 20:36.
 2. There is no distinction in sex in heaven (Matt. 22:30) and there are no references to female angels in the Bible.
 3. Angels appear youthful, Mark 16:5. There are no references in the Bible to angels that appear aged.
 4. Angels have bodies that appear human, though their bodies are not composed of matter, Luke 24:4, 23; Acts 10:3, 30.
 5. White and brightness are associated with the appearance of angels, Dan. 10:6; Acts 1:10; Luke 24:4.
 6. Angels are “spirits,” Heb. 1:13-14.

7. Angels comprise the “host” of heaven, which include subclasses of angels: cherubims, seraphims and archangels, Matt. 18:10; Luke 15:7, 10; Exod. 25:18-22; Isa. 6:1-8; Jude 9.
8. Angels are concerned about the spiritual welfare of mankind, Luke 15:7, 10.
9. They are also worshipful creatures, Psa. 103:20; 148:2; Rev. 22:8-9.
10. Angels do have some limitations; they do not know all things, Matt. 24:36.
11. Angels have freewill and can sin (2 Pet. 2:4) for which they will be punished, Matt. 25:41.
12. Angels are also powerful or mighty, 2 Thess. 1:7.
13. Faithful angels are described as “holy” or “elect,” Luke 9:26; 1 Tim. 5:21.

III. The Function of Angels.

- A. A primary function of angels was to serve as messengers from God to mankind.
 1. Angels were mediums of revelation from God to man, Acts 8:26; Dan. 8:15-19; 9:21-22; 10:10-20; Rev. 1:1.
 2. Angels also made several announcements: births of Samson, Jud. 13:1-21; John the Baptist, Luke 1:11-20; Jesus, Matt. 1:20; Luke 1:26-38; 2:7-15.
 3. An angel warned Joseph to flee with Jesus and Mary to Egypt, Matt. 2:19.
- B. Angels are described in the Bible as ministering spirits.
 1. Angels are fellow servants with the children of God, Rev. 22:8-9.
 2. Angels minister to dead saints, Luke 16:22.
 3. Angels ministered to Jesus during his ministry, Matt. 4:11; Mark 1:13; John 1:51.
 4. Angels have ministered to the righteous by protecting and delivering them from perils, Dan. 6:22; Acts 12:7-10; 27:23; Psa. 91:11-12; 34:7.
- C. Angels were responsible for the giving of the Law of Moses or the Old Testament.
 1. Angels participated in the deliverance of the Law, Acts 7:53.

2. Angels appointed or “ordained” the Law, Gal. 3:19; Heb. 1:13-14; 2:2.
- D. Sometimes angels executed judgments upon men.
1. One of the Herods was killed by an angel because he accepted the praise of men as though he were God, Acts 12:23.
 2. Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed by angels, Gen. 19:1-14.
 3. An angel or destroyer killed the firstborn in Egypt except the Israelites who observed the Passover, Exod. 12:23.

Conclusion:

1. Angels were sent during miraculous ages to man chiefly as heavenly messengers with revelations from God.
 - a. Angels were not frequently employed by God when prophets or other mediums of revealing God’s Word were available.
 - b. Angels appeared often during the periods of the Judges and the captivity.
 - c. However, angels hardly appeared at all during the lives of Moses, Joshua and the prophets, except when the prophets themselves needed special guidance, 1 Kings 19:5.
2. Sometimes, also during miraculous times, angels were sent on special missions to execute God’s judgment, Gen. 19:1-4; Acts 12:23.
3. When angels did come, for whatever reason, they came in bodily or human form and did not act in mysterious ways apart from the messages they delivered from God.
4. Since miraculous ages have ceased, the visible work of angels among men has also ended for now.
 - a. The work of angels will be apparent at the end of time when they shall return with the lord, 2 Thess. 1:7.
 - b. Then, they will separate the wicked from the just, Matt. 13:41, 49.
 - c. Next, they shall gather the righteous unto the Lord, Matt. 24:31.
5. Last, the Bible does not necessarily reveal everything one might want to know about angels to satisfy his curiosity.

- a. The Bible simply refers to angels incidentally while presenting other facts.
- b. However, the Bible does reveal all that men need to know and the rest belongs to God, Deut. 29:29.

Invitation:

1. The Bible also records all man needs to know about the salvation of lost souls.
 - a. All one can know about this subject, too, is limited to what the Bible had to say.
 - b. Idle speculations about salvation are meaningless.
2. Non-Christians, Rom. 10:17; Mark 16:16; Acts 17:30; Rom. 10:9-10; Acts 22:16; Rev. 2:10.
3. Erring Christians, Acts 8:22.
4. Apparently, God deals differently with angels than with mankind.
 - a. It appears that men may yet repent, but that angels are not afforded an opportunity to repent! Are men, then, not wonderfully blessed?
 - b. Every accountable soul ought to seize the opportunity to be saved while it is still possible to do so!

Guardian Angels

Matthew 18:10

Thesis: To determine if the Bible teaches anything about Guardian Angels, and if so, what.

Introduction:

1. Guardian Angel defined: "...that every individual is under the care of a particular angel, who is assigned to him as a guardian." (*McClintock and Strong Encyclopedia*, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 2000 by Biblesoft) or "an angel believed to have special care of a particular individual" (*Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, (Springfield, Massachusetts: Merriam-Webster, Incorporated) 1993.)
2. Some second and third century religious writers wrote about two angels attending each individual, one good and one devilish.
3. Today, cartoons on occasion portray a little angel advising his charge to do good deeds, while a little devil angel tempts him to do evil. Some movies have guardian angels as their themes.
4. A widely circulated picture of two little children crossing a rickety footbridge over a deep chasm depicts an angel directing them.
5. Many denominational theologians and some brethren (B.W. Johnson and J.W. McGarvey) have confidently affirmed the existence and ministry of guardian angels on earth, even in modern times.
6. In view of these popular claims for the existence and ministry of guardian angels on earth, it is important to determine what the Bible teaches about guardian angels, if anything, and what their duties might be if they were to exist.

Body:

I. *Proof texts for guardian angels examined.*

A. Daniel 6:22 Acts 12:7-10, 15.

1. In both Dan. 6:22 and Acts 12:7-10 angels admittedly ministered in a physical way to Daniel

- and Peter, respectively.
2. These incidents only prove that an angel in each of these two occasions, during miraculous ages, was charged in those cited events with the protection of Daniel and Peter.
 3. Unproved by these references is:
 - a) That either Daniel or Peter had an angel that at all times was responsible for their protection.
 - b) That every child of God has such an angel responsible for his protection.
 - c) Angels in non-miraculous ages are ever charged with the protection of anybody.
 4. Acts 12:15 properly refers to Peter himself, who appearing at that time was mistaken at first for the departed spirit or *ghost* of Peter.
- B. Acts 27:23-24.
1. The angel in this context did not do anything directly, but merely served as a medium of revelation in a miraculous age, Acts 27:24-26, 31, 34.
 2. An angel appearing to an apostle in a miraculous age with a heavenly message does not prove nor does it imply that angels appear to or direct anyone in a non-miraculous age.
- C. Hebrews 1:13-14.
1. The area in which angels were in this context ministering spirits pertained to the Old Law and the ones to whom the ministration of angels was addressed were people living under the Old Testament, Acts 7:53; Gal. 3:19.
 2. The Hebrews writer argued the supremacy of Christ by establishing that the New Testament ministry of Christ is superior to the Old Testament ministries of:
 - a) The prophets, Heb. 1:1-3.
 - b) The angels, Heb. 1: 4-14.
 - c) Moses, Heb. 3:1-6.
 - d) Joshua, Heb. 4:3-13.

- e) Aaron, Heb. 4:14-10:18.
- 3. The angels in Hebrews 1:13-14 were not protecting anyone from anything; rather, the ministry of angels, inclusive of delivering the Law, is contrasted with the ministry of our Lord.
- D. Psalm 91:11-12; 34:7.
 - 1. The first reference is quoted by the devil in Matthew 4:6 and applied to Jesus Christ; Jesus did not accuse Satan of misapplying the passage.
 - 2. Psalm 34:7 promises a perseverance that may be either or both of a spiritual and of a physical nature. Compare Matt. 10:28; Rev. 2:10; Psa. 37:28; Prov. 2:8.
 - 3. Passages such as Psalm 91:11-12 that have a special reference to Jesus Christ do not necessarily have any application to other souls.
 - 4. That God presently, through angels or otherwise, preserves any or all of his saints from physical peril or adversity does not conform to demonstrable facts to the contrary!
- E. Matthew 18:10.
 - 1. This is a figurative expression in which the souls of “little ones,” (believers, Mark 9:42) are highly valued, if nowhere else and by on one else, in heaven and by the angels, Luke 15:7, 10.
 - 2. The passage further warns against the respect of persons and the danger of teaching falsely, Jam. 3:1, or otherwise causing a brother to stumble from the faith, Mark 9:42; Luke 7:1-2.
 - 3. Furthermore, the angels addressed in Matthew 18:10 **are located in heaven**, not on earth per the concept of guardian angels.

II. Objections to guardian angels today.

- A. The Bible nowhere says that angels are charged with the physical welfare of all saints or even any saints all of the time.
 - 1. All that can be shown successfully is that in given instances during miraculous periods men such as Daniel and Peter were rescued on occasion by

- angels.
2. Contrariwise, the children of God have been warned repeatedly to expect **more, not less**, physical suffering because they do serve God, Matt. 10:22; 2 Tim. 3:12; 1 Pet. 3:12-14; 4:16; Rev. 2:10.
- B. From what physical perils could angels be thought to protect the Christian today?
1. Are Christians, through the agency of guardian angels, immune to sickness, injury and death?
 2. The facts demonstrate that angels **do not** today protect Christians from physical calamity!
- C. If guardian angels are supposed to advise, counsel or otherwise direct the child of God today, how do they do it?
1. What could angels today tell man apart from the Word of God that he needs to know and that is not already revealed in the Bible? Gal. 1:6-8; Jude 3; Rev. 22:18-19.
 2. How could men confidently distinguish between angelic instruction and devilish instruction or an appeal to human emotions?
 3. If angels were to exert an influence upon souls, would that influence be irresistible, and if so, in the event the soul sinned, who would be responsible, the sinning saint or the angel?
 4. Most of the same passages that would put to rest claims for the direct operation of the Holy Spirit apart from the Bible would likewise affect *guardian angels*.
- D. If angels were to directly alter events and people's lives, how would they do it?
1. Would angels use supernatural powers or miracles on earth now that miracles have ceased, 1 Cor. 13:8-13; Eph. 4:13?
 2. The ministries of angels about which one can read throughout the Bible did involve the use of miracles!
- E. For what purpose would God assign each Christian a

guardian angel?

1. The primary mission of angels, as the Hebrew word *malak* and the Greek word *angelos* indicate, was to serve as heavenly messengers, bearing revelation from God, Acts 8:26; Dan. 10:10-20; Rev. 1:1. However, men are not now to expect or accept any new revelations, Gal. 1:6-9; Jude 3; Rev. 22:18-19.
2. Angels sometimes executed judgments of God, Gen. 19:1-14; Acts 12:23, but men now await the final judgment, 2 Cor. 5:10-11; 2 Pet. 3:7-15.
3. Angels on earth today would serve no purpose.

Conclusion:

1. The Bible nowhere says that each soul has a guardian angel.
2. It is evident that there are no guardian angels since not even the saints are preserved from illness, injury and death.
3. The absence of miraculous power on earth today precludes the operation of guardian angels.
4. The fact that Christians are forbidden to receive any new revelations would undermine the function of guardian angels.
5. The existence of guardian angels on earth would serve no purpose today.
6. There is nothing that God mandates man to perform that requires the intervention of angels, and if there is anything that angels do for man providentially, it is neither specified nor of any concern of man, Deut. 29:29.

Invitation:

1. Angels are concerned about lost souls, Luke 15:7, 10, though not angels, but each soul is responsible for his own salvation, Phil. 2:12.
2. Non-Christians can work out their salvation by obeying the Gospel, Heb. 5:8-9; Rom. 10:17; John 8:24; Acts 17:30; Rom. 10:9-10; Acts 22:16; Rev. 2:10.
3. Erring Christians need to repent and pray as publicly or as privately as the sins are known, Acts 8:22; 1 John 1:9.

God's Enduring Word

Jeremiah 36:22-32

Thesis: To show that God's Word will endure all things, whether it is neglected, misused or abused.

Song: *Give Me the Bible*

Introduction:

1. Long ago, a king of Judah named Jehoiakim didn't like what God's Word said, Jer. 36:22-32.
 - a. Consequently, he cut the scroll with a penknife and cast it into a fireplace.
 - b. God, however, caused Jeremiah to reconstitute that scroll, adding to it similar words that Jehoiakim despised.
2. Like King Jehoiakim of centuries past, contemporary men often have no more regard for the authority of the Word of God.
 - a. Men throughout the centuries have neglected ignored, misused and abused the Word of God.
 - b. The Word of God, the Bible, though, will endure in spite of what man may try to do to it, 1 Pet. 1:22-25.
3. The Word of God is the 'seed of the kingdom,' Luke 8:10-11, and the "truth," John 8:32, by which men are freed from sin and saved.
 - a. However, the Word of God is ineffectual in the lives of those today who, in essence, repeat the actions of Jehoiakim.
 - b. There are several varying ways in which modern man 'cuts and burns' the Bible.

Body:

- I. **Denominational doctrine negates many Bible truths, for which cause those *offensive* passages might as well be ripped out of the Bible.**
 - A. Denominational doctrine has long overridden Jam. 2:20-26 with *faith only*.
 1. Martin Luther doubted the canonicity of the Book of James and referred to it as an epistle of straw.

2. He mistakenly presumed that the Book of James and the Book of Romans contradicted each other regarding *faith and works*.
3. If one isn't going to believe Jam. 2:24 or the Book of James, it might as well be ripped out of the Bible and thrown away!
4. **Note:** Subpoints similar to these, though not included below, pertain to each following observation.
 - B. Most denominational people deny that baptism saves or is for the remission of sins, Acts 2:38; 22:16; 1 Pet. 3:21.
 - C. For those who believe *faith only* (or any *only* doctrine) or the direction operation of the Holy Spirit in conversion, other elements to which the Bible attributes saving power are useless and their corresponding passages might as well be ripped from the Bible, Rom. 10:17; Luke 13:3; Acts 17:30; 2 Pet. 3:9; Rom. 10:9-10; Rev. 2:10.
 - D. Denominational people who do not believe that baptism is a burial or immersion have no need of Col. 2:12 and Rom. 6:3-5.
 - E. Furthermore, our denominational neighbors who use instrumental music in worship have no need of Eph. 5:19 and Col. 3:16.
 - F. Neither is there any reason not tear Acts 20:7 from the Bible for those who prefer to worship on any day other than the first day of the week or fail to observe the communion each first day.
 - G. For those who yet *tithe* instead of contributing according to their prosperity and as they purpose, 1 Cor. 16:1-2 and 2 Cor. 9:6-7 are unnecessary verses.
 - H. Since the religious community uses an abundance of religious titles, Matt. 23:8 might as well be ripped from the Bible, too.
 - I. If miracles have not ceased, 1 Cor. 13:8-13 and Eph. 4:11-13 are meaningless.
 - J. If *once saved always saved* (perseverance of the saints) is true, numerous passages that warn about apostasy are false and should be discarded, 1 Cor. 9:16, 27; 2 Pet. 2:20-22; Jam. 5:19-20; Heb. 10:26-29.

- K. Many people and some churches condone homosexuality, Gen. 19; Rom. 1:25, 27, 32; 1 Cor. 6:9.
 - L. Those who believe predestination must believe God is a respecter of persons, Acts 10:34; Rom. 2:11; Gal. 2:6; Col. 3:25; 1 Pet. 1:17.
 - M. Universalism teaches that no one will be lost, making passages about hell and eternal punishment ineffective, Rev. 20:12-15; 21:8; Matt. 25:41, 46.
 - N. Premillennialists disregard passages about going to heaven and the destruction of the earth when Jesus returns, 1 Thess. 4:13-18; 2 Pet. 3:10-12.
 - O. Denominational church organization negates the many passages that discuss the organizational structure of the Lord's church, Eph. 1:22; 5:23; Matt. 16:18; Titus 1:5; 1 Tim. 3:1-7; 1 Pet. 5:1-3; 1 Tim. 3:8-13.
 - P. ETC.
- II. The practices of many Christians also negate Bible truths, for which cause those *offensive* passages might as well be ripped out of the Bible.**
- A. Neglect of passages concerning evangelism, in effect, negates them, Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16; Luke 24:47.
 - B. Forsaking appointed assemblies by many Christians sets aside Heb. 10:25; Acts 20:7.
 - C. Christians sometimes also fail to give as they ought, 1 Cor. 16:1-2; 2 Cor. 9:6-7.
 - D. Many brethren apparently believe that the Old Testament is meaningless to Christians today and they might as well remove the entire Old Testament from their Bibles, Rom. 15:4, plus every Old Testament reference in the New Testament!
 - E. Most brethren seem to sense no compulsion to practice benevolence, either individually or congregationally, Matt. 25:31-46; Gal. 6:10; Jam. 1:27.
 - F. Passages about immodesty are unheeded regularly by Christians, 1 Tim. 2:9.
 - G. Many brethren ignore verses concerning drinking alcohol, Gal. 5:21.
 - H. Smoking and other bad habits harm the body, 1 Cor.

6:19.

- I. Brethren have rationalized marriage, divorce and remarriage so that almost no passages on the topic remain unscathed, Matt. 5:32; 19:1-9; 1 Cor. 7.
- J. Women praying in the presence of men require the removal of 1 Cor. 14:34 and 1 Tim. 2:11-12 from the Bible.
- K. Adding entertainment to the mission of the church implies that the Gospel is insufficient, Rom. 1:16, and that additions may be made to the Bible, Gal. 1:6-9; Rev. 22:18-19.
- L. Clamoring for *positive preaching* is an affront to “the whole counsel of God,” Acts 20:27 ASV, and warnings against smooth things only, Rom. 16:17-18; 2 Tim. 4:3-4.
- M. If the contemporary church does not believe in church discipline, it might as well direct its members to tear those passages from the Bible, too, 2 Thess. 3:6, 14; 1 Cor. 5:4-5.
- N. Several passages direct the child of God to be fruitful, but many are not, Matt. 7:19-20; John 15:1-6.
- O. Other passages direct the child of God to grow spiritually and mature, but, again, many do not, Heb. 5:11-6:2; 1 Pet. 2:2; 2 Tim. 2:24.
- P. ETC.

Conclusion:

1. Everyone who believes that the Bible is a *dead letter*, or believes in *new revelations* or ‘a better felt than told’ religion doesn’t need any of the Bible!
2. God is certainly not pleased when either sinners or saints ‘cut up and burn’ or otherwise ignore or abuse the Bible.
3. Jehoiakim and the non-Christian world demonstrate an acute contempt for God and his Word; what is our excuse as Christians and the churches of Christ?

Invitation:

1. The Word of God will survive whatever abuses we or others inflict upon it, 1 Pet. 1:22-25, but man cannot survive without it!
2. The Bible alone is the power of God unto salvation, Rom. 1:16.

Moses, A Man Afraid to Trust and Obey

Exodus 4:10-17

Thesis: To show that God does not require of man what he is incapable of doing.

Song: *Trust and Obey*

Introduction:

1. Moses felt inferior to accomplish the task that God assigned to him.
2. The church of Christ seems to feel inferior to accomplish the task that God has assigned to it.
3. Moses was to lead souls from Egyptian captivity; the church is to lead souls from the captivity of sin.
4. God became angry at Moses' reluctance to trust and obey; no doubt God is angry with the church whenever it is reluctant to trust and obey!

Body:

I. Moses, the servant of God.

- A. First, Moses presumed the authority to liberate his Jewish brethren 40 years prematurely, Exod. 2:11-12.
- B. However, when God was ready for Moses to deliver Israel from Egypt, Moses offered several excuses, Exod. 3:11, 13; 4:1, 10, 13.
- C. God, though, answered each excuse and was finally angered at Moses' refusal to comply with his command; God demanded that Moses trust and obey! Exod. 3:10-14; 4:1-17.
- D. Moses alone could not deliver Israel. This Moses had proved 40 years earlier, but through God, Moses accomplished the task.

II. Each soul needs to trust and obey.

- A. Jesus Christ will only save those who obey, Heb. 5:8-9; 2 Thess. 1:7-9.

- B. Though the task may seem superior to our abilities, we can and must do whatever God requires of us. We can with divine help succeed, Phil. 4:13.
- C. Trusting and obeying includes hearing, believing, repenting, confessing Christ, baptism for the remission of sins and remaining faithful.
- D. Salvation is unattainable without God and without trusting and obeying.

III. The church needs to trust and obey.

- A. The church needs to vigorously and relentlessly evangelize the world, Matt. 28:18-20; Col. 1:23.
- B. The church needs to take edification seriously, 1 Cor. 14:12.
- C. When the church trusts and obeys, it will practice benevolence, Gal. 6:10.
- D. God has not required of the church anything that it cannot do and God doubtlessly becomes angry when we are reluctant to do what he has commanded, Luke 6:46.
Trust and obey!

Conclusion:

1. We have no valid excuses for not performing the will of God. As God answered the excuses of Moses, he will answer our excuses.
2. God's people are a *can do* people if they have sufficient *want to!*
3. Are we prepared to suffer the anger of God for our refusal to do his bidding, Heb. 10:31.
4. We have, therefore, two reasons to trust and obey.
 - a. God will help us!
 - b. If we do not try, we shall be like the unprofitable servant who was cast away into a devil's hell, Matt. 25:30.

Invitation:

1. The whole world's salvation hinges on complete trust and obedience.
2. Non-Christian: Rom. 10:17; John 8:24; Acts 17:30; Rom. 10:9-10; Acts 2:38; Rev. 2:10.
3. Erring Christian: Acts 8:22; Rev. 2:10.

Samuel, A Life of Service

1 Samuel 7:15

Thesis: To show that God can use servants from their youth through old age.

Song: *How Shall the Young Secure Their Hearts?*

Introduction:

1. God wants all of his children to serve him regardless of age.
2. Perhaps no Bible character better illustrates this truth than Samuel who served God from his youth through old age.

Body:

I. The potential for a godly and useful life began for Samuel with his parents before he was born.

- A. While parents are not directly responsible for the spiritual deportment of their children, they nevertheless indirectly play an instrumental role in their early development.
 1. Children do not inherit sin from their parents or forefathers and neither are they automatically saved because of who their parents are, Ezek. 18:20.
 2. Parents, and the environment that they provide for their offspring, however, can affect their children favorably or unfavorably.
 3. Contemporary parents need to ensure that they have a positive and good affect upon their children, similarly as Elkanah and Hannah favorably affected young Samuel.
- B. Samuel's parents contributed greatly to the setting in which Samuel began to serve God from his early years.
 1. Hannah, Samuel's mother, was barren and prayed for a child, 1 Sam. 1:9-11; Hannah was a religious woman.
 2. Keeping a promise she made to God, Hannah dedicated young Samuel to the Lord, 1 Sam. 1:24-

28.

3. After Samuel was weaned, he was taken to Eli to live in the Temple where he received religious instruction and was trained to serve God.
4. Samuel also enjoyed Hannah's love for him, which was exhibited by the coats she brought him each year, 1 Sam. 2:19.

II. Samuel began serving the Lord while yet a child.

- A. He began his life of service by ministering to God in the Temple under the direction of Eli, the priest, 1 Sam. 2:11, 18.
 1. As Samuel grew, he gained favor with both God and man, 1 Sam. 2:26; cf. Luke 2:52.
 2. Still a youth, Samuel was called by God, from which time prophecies and revelations from God were renewed in Israel through Samuel, 1 Sam. 3:1-21.
- B. Samuel continued to serve God as a prophet from his youth into manhood, 1 Sam. 4:1.
 1. After the death of Eli, Samuel replaced him as Judge over Israel, 1 Sam. 4:18; 7:6, 15.
 2. Additionally, Samuel served as a priest in Israel, 1 Sam. 7:8-9.

III. Samuel continued to serve God through his senior years.

- A. Though a great servant of God, even Samuel had his failings.
 1. Samuel appointed his sons judges in Israel, 1 Sam. 8:1.
 2. However, for whatever reason, Samuel's sons did not learn the righteous and godly ways of their father, but took bribes to pervert judgment, 1 Sam. 8:3.
 3. Consequently, Israel rejected God from being their King and clamored for a king like the nations around them, 1 Sam. 8:5-7.
- B. Samuel continued to serve God for a number of years until his death.
 1. In his latter years, Samuel appointed kings Saul and David and reproved the people and their kings,

1 Sam. 9-16.

2. During these years, Samuel also encouraged others to become prophets, 1 Sam. 19:20, even as the apostle Paul prepared young men to follow him in his labors, 2 Tim. 1:13; 3:14-4:8.
3. Finally, Samuel died, for which the people were greatly saddened, 1 Sam. 25:1.
4. In a sense, one might say that Samuel served *after death*, too, 1 Sam. 28:7-19.

Conclusion:

1. Samuel's parents were pious and worshipped God; this was the type of **family** into which Samuel was born and which contributed to his later greatness as a servant of God.
2. At an early age, Samuel received **religious instruction** and was **trained** to serve God.
3. **Parental love** expressed by Hannah also contributed to Samuel's well being and fruitful development as a servant of God.
4. Samuel began **serving God** at a very early age and continued to serve faithfully throughout his life without any interruption unto his death.
5. Those who would serve God today must serve him unto death with the same diligence and faithfulness exhibited by Samuel, 2 Tim. 4:7-8; Rev. 2:10.

Invitation:

1. There is no better time to begin serving God than from the early years of one's accountability; there is a place in the church and its labors for all Christians, young and old.
2. Faithful and fruitful service, of course, must be preceded by primary obedience to the Gospel, Heb. 5:8-9; Mark 16:16.
3. Continued usefulness as a servant of the Lord is predicated upon continued faithfulness and obedience to the Gospel of Christ, Rom. 1:5; 16:26; 2 Thess. 1:8.

Astrology

Isaiah 47:8-15; Colossians 2:8

Thesis: Due to its present, almost universal popularity, to examine astrology in light of what the Bible says about it.

Song: *Only in Thee*

Introduction:

1. Astrology is a subject that is addressed with divine disdain in both testaments of the Bible.
2. Astrology is a pseudo-science in which one's horoscope and zodiac sign are supposed to influence his life by the movement of stars and planets.
3. Astrology is further defined both biblically and commonly as associated with witchcraft, sorcery, divination, palm reading and idolatry.
4. Incidentally, astrology and astronomy are not the same thing; astronomy is the science in which the position, composition and movement of planets and stars are studied for reasons other than superstition or religion.
5. The subject of astrology is a crucial study even for members of the church with its rise and widespread acceptance in modern society; such a study is necessary because astrology will affect the eternal disposition of souls who practice it.

Body:

- I. **How widespread is the practice and influence of astrology today?**
 - A. Astrology has literally saturated our society through all popular mediums of communication.
 1. There are an estimated 10,000 full-time astrologers today.
 2. Astrologers list their wares in the yellow pages.
 3. Newspaper advertisements also afford occultists an opportunity to solicit customers for their trade.
 4. Daily horoscopes appear in about 1,700 daily papers.

5. Astrology is embedded in some contemporary music.
 6. Literature is full of astrology, too.
 7. Astrological signs appear on jewelry, key rings, shirts, posters, etc. while cars and spaceships have been named after astrological signs; at least one mall used astrological signs instead of letters or numbers in the parking lot to designate the rows in which customers parked their cars.
 8. Coin operated biorhythm machines and scales provide *personalized* predictions.
 9. Psychic fairs in shopping centers and occultists' shingles outside their homes are popular.
- B. Astrology is the study of the position of stars and planets in an attempt to determine their influence on human beings.
1. Astrology originated with the ancient Chaldeans (or Babylonians) who considered the stars to be their gods.
 2. Today, astrologers use the sun, moon, earth, Mars, Mercury, Jupiter, Venus, Saturn and a pre-Copernican notion that the sun rotates around the earth.
 3. The path of the sun is divided into 12 "houses," each represented by the constellation in the East at the time.
 4. The 12 houses are Aquarius, Pisces, Aries, Taurus, Gemini, Cancer, Leo, Virgo, Libra, Scorpio, Sagittarius and Capricorn.
 5. Astrologists teach that the position of the stars at the moment of one's birth determines a person's personality.

II. What does the Bible say concerning astrology?

- A. Deuteronomy 18:9-15
1. The astrology referred to in this context is addressed in the same breath with idolatry. The Ammonites worshipped the idol god of Molech whereby they made their children walk through the ceremonial fires to their deaths.

2. Both idolatry and astrology in this context are said to be an **abomination** to God.
 3. The idolatry and astrology that the heathen nations practiced led God to allow Israel to drive them from Palestine.
 4. Modern counterparts to these abominable heathens receive little opposition, even by religious people: witchcraft, astrologers, palm readers, past-lives readers, psychics, psychometric readers, psychic tarot card readers, numerologists, clairvoyants, crystal ball readers, graphologists, card readers and mediums. At least one mall hosts an annual occult fair.
 5. God refused to allow his people to practice idolatry and the occult arts, of which astrology is part.
 6. The Old Testament penalty for idolatry or occultism was death by stoning, Deut. 17:2-5.
- B. Isaiah 47:8-15
1. The context addresses the kingdom of Babylon, which God formerly used to punish his sinful children, but which was about to be destroyed.
 2. The quest for pleasures and completely dominated the Babylonia people and they lived carelessly in pleasures and prosperity.
 3. Wickedness, failures to heed God's warnings and astrology had accompanied their quest for pleasures and careless living.
 4. However, at the impending destruction of Babylon, the occultists, idolaters and fortunetellers were to be unable to foretell the calamity ahead.
 5. Neither were they able to avert the wrath of God; the astrologers and their companions were powerless.
- C. Acts 7:41-43: Stephen condemned idolatry and astrology in New Testament times by quoting Amos 5:25-26.
- D. Acts 8:9-13: In this remarkable case of conversions among the Samaritans, an occultist, Simon, also obeyed the Gospel; he too could tell the difference between the real powerlessness of what he did compared to the

powerfulness of the miracles that accompanied the preaching of the Gospel in Samaria.

- E. Acts 19:13-20: Some occultists were afflicted by demons, for the exorcists had no real power; other occultists obeyed the Gospel and burned their books of curious arts or superstitions and witchcraft.
- F. Some other passages address astrology, Rom. 1:23-24; Ezek. 21:21; Isa. 44:25; Jer. 10:2; Gal. 5:20; Rev. 21:8.

Conclusion:

1. It is clear that God never has approved of astrology, but has rather reserved condemnation for those who practice it; Christians (and others) must abstain from astrology because it is sinful.
2. Biblically, God views astrology as a form of idolatry, and God hates all idolatry.
3. Astrology not only has religious and idolatrous overtones, but it is an attempt to escape one's responsibility for his own conduct and a denial of God's providence for our welfare, Rom. 8:28.
4. Astrology and its derivatives must be avoided by the children of God to please God and spend eternity with him in heaven.
5. Christians should avoid: biorhythms, psychic power, ESP, witchcraft, tarot cards, ouija boards, yoga, etc.
6. Col. 2:8, "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ."

Invitation:

1. While not everyone needs to turn from astrology to Christ, everyone must turn from every sin to Christ, on his terms.
2. Erring Christians must repent and pray for forgiveness, Acts 8:22.
3. Non-Christians must render initial obedience to the Gospel, Mark 16:16.
4. All of us must obey God and continue to faithfully obey God, Heb. 5:8-9; 2 Thess. 1:7-9; Rev. 2:10.

Authority in Religion

Colossians 3:17;
2 Corinthians 5:7; Romans 10:17

Thesis: To emphasize the absolute necessity of recognizing the correct, authoritative standard in religion — the Bible.

Song: *Back to the Bible; Standing on the Promises*

Introduction:

1. The generation in which we live has little to no respect for authority in **any area of life**.
2. Frequently, **in the home**, children fail to respect the authority of their parents.
3. **At school**, pupils often refuse to acknowledge the authority of teachers, principals and staff.
4. Everywhere around us, we see a common disrespect for the authority of **the laws** under which we live.
 - a. Stealing and robbery are commonplace.
 - b. Murder and rape sometimes seem epidemic.
 - c. Almost no one voluntarily obeys traffic laws.
 - d. Many people cheat on their taxes.
5. All of the disrespect for authority in the home, at school and for the laws of our nation has grown out of a **lack of respect for the authority of God**.
 - a. God is not respected because people do not respect the authority of God's Word — the Bible.
 - b. This breakdown of respect for God and his Word is not attributable to God, but to mankind.
6. As a nation, our homes and our churches have failed to teach respect for the authority of God.
 - a. Any home that is not anchored by the Word of God is itself adrift and ill prepared to instill in its family members a deep-rooted respect for the authority of God (or the home, the school or the nation).

- b. Every church that does not exist and conduct itself strictly according to God's Word is unable to properly inspire respect for God and his Word in anyone.

Body:

I. The world seems to be clueless regarding the true source of authority in religion.

- A. Each religious group supposes to have its own religious authority or standard.
 - 1. Yet, each religious group purportedly worships the same God!
 - 2. Yet, each religious group purportedly expects to arrive in the same eternal heaven.
 - 3. These notions *defy commonsense* and do *not even make good nonsense!*
- B. These so-called *authorities* and *standards* are far from being universally accepted authorities and standards — and differ greatly from Bible doctrine in many cases.
 - 1. Book of Mormon, Catholic catechism, the New World Translation, confessions of faith, creeds, manuals, disciplines, etc.
 - 2. Popes, contemporary apostles, conferences, councils, etc.
 - 3. Manmade traditions and opinions of learned men (theologians).
 - 4. The attitude of the religious world today is not much unlike the defective attitude of Israel during the period of God's judges, Judg. 21:25.

II. There are only two possible sources of authority in religion — God in heaven or man on earth.

- A. Jesus Christ recognized these two sources of authority in religion when he asked the Pharisees to discern if the baptism of John was from heaven or men, Matt. 21:23-27.
- B. Earlier in his ministry, Jesus rebuked the Pharisees for relying upon the authority of men for worshipping God, Matt. 15:9.
- C. Only the authority of God is acceptable to him; the authority of men in religion is not acceptable to God and is sinful.

III. Authority in religion is of fundamental importance.

- A. There must be an authoritative standard to which one can appeal to properly order his life, and to which one can appeal for resolution of conflict.
 - 1. Pragmatically, this is imperative in **secular life**; therefore, we have civil law, a judicial system (courts), U.S. Bureau of Standards, rules for baseball, etc.
 - 2. A standard of authority is no less essential in one's **religious life**.
- B. There **is** an **authoritative religious standard**, irrespective of whether mankind commonly acknowledges it.
 - 1. Religious **confusion and division** is commonplace and the direct result of the adoption of **different human standards** in religion instead of God's Word — the Bible.
 - 2. If each religious group in any community adhered to one common standard of authority, overnight all would be united into **one religious body — one church**.
 - 3. Further, if that common standard of authority were the Bible, all would be **New Testament Christians** and **members** of the non-denominational **church of Christ**.

IV. True authority in religion lies with God.

- A. *Authority involves the right to command and give final decisions.*
- B. God is the originator of all religious authority.
 - 1. **Jesus Christ has all authority** in heaven and on earth, Matt. 28:18, ASV.
 - 2. Jesus **delegated authority** to apostles and prophets of the first century, Matt. 18:18.
- C. These men ("earthen vessels," 2 Cor. 4:7), in turn, wrote the Word of God — the New Testament, cf., 2 Pet. 1:20-21.
 - 1. This means that the very **authority** of God is **inherent in the words of the Bible**.

2. Hence, the Bible is the religious authority by which we must **live our lives** and by which we will **be judged** at time's end, John 12:48; Rev. 20:12-15.
- D. God's Word — the Bible — alone is the standard in religion.
1. It is **not enough** simply to be **sincere**, John 4:24.
 2. We need a **“Thus saith the Lord”** or authority for everything we believe, teach and practice, 1 Pet. 4:11.
 3. Left to his own ingenuity, mankind will **stumble and fall to his spiritual death**, Jer. 10:23; Prov. 14:12.
 4. The Word of God is **sufficient**, 2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Pet. 1:3.
 5. **The Word of God in its written form is as authoritative as it was in its original spoken form!**
- V. **Divine authority in religion demands a life of faith.**
- A. **Certainty** in religious matters comes only from the Word of God.
1. Human experience cannot guarantee divine sanction of one's preparation for eternity, but the Bible can.
 2. Human judgment cannot assure divine appreciation of conduct in worship or life.
- B. Only a Bible-based faith will effectively serve one in this life and prepare him for eternity in heaven with God.
1. Faith is necessary to please God, Heb. 11:6.
 2. Personal faith is correctly derived from the system of faith, 2 Cor. 5:7.
 3. True faith is not a blind leap in the dark, but relies on biblical evidence, Rom. 10:17.
- C. We walk by faith, then, when we perform what is clearly authorized by God's Word. This authorization takes the form of:
1. Direct statements or commands,
 2. Apostolically approved examples
 3. Divine implications from which we necessarily draw corresponding inferences

VI. Divine authority tests manmade doctrines.

- A. God's plan of salvation includes *faith*.
 - 1. The Bible says we are saved by faith, John 8:24.
 - 2. Some teach that we are saved by faith alone, though James 2:24 says "not by faith alone."
 - 3. Salvation that includes faith is authorized by God.
 - 4. Salvation by faith alone is authorized by mankind and is false!
- B. God's plan of salvation includes repentance and baptism for the remission of sins.
 - 1. Bible authority: Acts 2:38; Mark 16:16.
 - 2. Many say that baptism does not save, but Peter said differently, 1 Pet. 3:21.
 - 3. Repentance and baptism for the remission of sins is authorized by God and is true.
 - 4. That baptism does not save is a doctrine of man and is false!
- C. God authorized a specific kind of music in worship — singing.
 - 1. Bible authority: Col. 3:16; Eph. 5:19.
 - 2. Many practice singing and instrumental music in worship.
 - 3. Singing is authorized by God.
 - 4. Instrumental music for New Testament worship is authorized by mankind and is false!
- D. God authorized a specific organization for the church.
 - 1. The Bible teaches that Jesus is the head of the church, from whom elders of independent congregations derive authorization to guide the church, deacons serve the church, teachers teach and preachers preach, Eph. 5:23; Acts 20:28; Titus 1:5; 1 Tim. 3:13; 2 Tim. 4:1-5.
 - 2. Denominations typically opt for an ecclesiastical hierarchy and are guided by missionary societies, earthly headquarters, conventions, etc.
 - 3. The New Testament pattern for church organization is authorized by God.
 - 4. Denominational patterns of church organization are manmade and sinful.

- E. This type of a test can be applied to everything one believes, teaches or practices religiously.
 - 1. If something is authorized by God (through the Bible), it is right and acceptable to God.
 - 2. Whatever is authorized by men is unacceptable to God and sinful.

Conclusion:

- 1. Men will never unite on the conflicting creeds, theories and human speculations, but they can unite on the Bible alone as the final, absolute, standard of authority in religion.
- 2. Unless one submits himself totally to the authority of God — through the written Word — he has no respect for God, but will be condemned by that Word at the final Judgment.

Invitation:

- 1. When Jesus comes again, he will punish the disobedient, 2 Thess. 1:7-9.
- 2. However, at the last day, Jesus will save the obedient, Heb. 5:8-9.
- 3. Only through compliance with biblical authority can one approach eternity with boldness and confidence, Heb. 10:19.
- 4. Have you obeyed the Gospel, 1 Pet. 4:17?

Elijah, Boldly Facing Sin

1 Kings 17:1; 18:1, 17-18

Thesis: By references to Elijah to encourage God's children to boldly preach, teach and live God's Word despite even personal danger.

Introduction:

1. We are living in a time when sin has been de-emphasized and old moral values that are based on the Bible have been discarded.
 - a. For instance, *drunkenness* has been transformed from the sin that it is to a *disease*.
 - b. *Homosexuality* has been upgraded from a closet sin to merely an *alternative lifestyle*.
2. In many cases, sin is now *politically* and *socially* acceptable.
 - a. For instance, alcohol sales and gambling are licensed and taxed by governments.
 - b. Our political system protects the rights of sinners to sin (e.g., homosexuals, prostitutes [Nevada]).
 - c. Couples living together without marriage, openly avowed homosexuals, etc. do not incur the shame and community outrage they once did.
3. In Elijah's day, (and ours) perverse religion was one of the widespread sins that the prophet courageously addressed.
 - a. Idolatry was the predominant and government sanctioned religion of Israel.
 - b. There were few bold children of God in Israel who dared to faithfully practice Judaism, and even fewer who were willing to risk their lives by confronting the proponents of idolatry.
4. God's children in every age must always be characterized by moral purity and otherwise conformity to the God-authored system of religion under which they live.
 - a. Morality and sin are not variables subject to the whims and dictates of society or the permission of government.

- b. Morality and sin are clearly and permanently defined in the Bible.
- c. God's people must stand for righteousness and cry out against unrighteousness and immorality, wherever it may be found and irrespective of its popularity or political correctness.

Body:

I. Elijah boldly faced King Ahab, announcing punishment for sin.

- A. Ahab's reign over Israel is portrayed by the Bible as the *most wicked* of any of the kings of Israel, **1 Kgs. 16:25, 29-33; 17:1.**
 - 1. Ahab was more evil than his predecessors, even his father who previously had been the most wicked king.
 - 2. Ahab followed the family tradition of wickedness!
 - 3. Adding to his wickedness, Ahab married a foreign princess by whom he revived Baal worship in Israel.
- B. Elijah, like other godly preachers, boldly preached God's message before commoners and kings, regardless of personal perils, 1 Kgs. 18:17-18; 19:1-3.
 - 1. Elijah preached to Ahab at the bidding of the Lord, but also at the Lord's bidding, Elijah fled for safety for three years, 1 Kgs. 17:2-18:1.
 - 2. Similarly, John the Baptist preached to King Herod the Great, for which he was imprisoned and beheaded, Matt. 14:3-4, 10.
 - 3. Stephen preached boldly to the Jewish Sanhedrin, for which they stoned him to death, Acts 7:1-60.
 - 4. The apostle Paul boldly proclaimed the Gospel for which he repeatedly suffered persecution, 2 Cor. 11:23-28.
 - 5. The apostle John was exiled to the island of Patmos due to his preaching, Rev. 1:9.
- C. Christians, and especially preachers, today must imitate Elijah and other Bible noteworthies by courageously standing for righteousness and denouncing unrighteousness.

1. Especially God's preachers in every age have the weighty task of *condemning sin and demanding repentance!*
2. The same Gospel message preached in the first century must be preached to commoner and the more highly esteemed in this life, because the Gospel is universally applicable, Mark 16:15.
3. The consequences of sin are the same for every soul, Rom. 3:23; 6:23.
4. Further, the same Gospel must be preached to sinners *and saints*, Rom. 1:7, 15; Mark 16:15-16.

II. **Elijah confronted and defeated King Ahab and the prophets of Baal.**

- A. Elijah was a bold warrior for God, **1 Kgs. 18:17-40.**
 1. Elijah refused to be blamed for troubling Israel, but properly attributed that disgrace to Ahab, 1 Kgs. 18:17-18.
 2. Elijah called for a showdown, 1 Kgs. 18:19.
 3. Elijah challenged the people to choose between God and Baal, 1 Kgs. 18:20-21.
 4. Elijah destroyed the prophets of Baal, first in the eyes of the people and then by death, 1 Kgs. 18:22-40.
 5. Elijah's confrontation with the prophets of Baal was calculated to win over souls to God, 1 Kgs. 18:39.
- B. Other Bible characters confronted evil and challenged the people to follow God.
 1. Joshua advised, "Choose you this day," Josh. 24:15.
 2. Joshua's influence lasted throughout his lifetime and for a generation after his death, Josh. 24:31.
 3. The apostle Paul struck the sorcerer Elymas blind and led the civil ruler present to believe in Christ, Acts 13:6-11.
 4. The first century was characterized by debates between Gospel preachers and both Jews and Gentiles, Acts.
 5. Debates were commonplace in 19th century

America between Gospel preachers and denominational preachers.

- C. Christians and especially Gospel preachers today need to imitate Elijah's opposition to sin.
 - 1. If we do not shoulder our responsibility (individually and congregationally) to oppose sin, then unrighteousness will go unchallenged.
 - 2. We have a responsibility to resist sin in the world around us and in the church.
 - 3. Though our weapons today are not carnal, we are in a spiritual war, John 18:36-37; Eph. 6:10-17; 2 Cor. 10:3-4.

III. The efforts of Elijah were not without personal peril.

- A. Elijah fled twice.
 - 1. The first time, Elijah fled at the direction of God, 1 Kgs. 17:2ff.
 - 2. Later, Elijah fled in desperate fear, because his life was threatened, 1 Kgs. 19:1ff.
 - 3. God preserved Elijah in each instance, 1 Kgs. 17:2ff; 19:4ff.
- B. Other servants of God have endangered their lives to preach the Word of God and fled to preserve their lives.
 - 1. The apostles fled from the Garden when Jesus was arrested.
 - 2. The Old Testament prophets often imperiled their lives (and often died) by proclaiming God's Word, Acts 7:51-53; 1 Thess. 2:15; Heb. 11:32-40.
 - 3. Jesus Christ himself was murdered.
 - 4. Many Christians fled Jerusalem following the murder of Steven, consequently taking the Gospel message with them, Acts 8:1, 4.
 - 5. Preachers in the Restoration Movement era often faced threats, mistreatment and at least one was murdered.
- C. Living according to the Gospel and preaching God's Word in a sin-filled world today is not without some peril.
 - 1. Preaching and teaching against sin is religiously, socially and politically unpopular.

2. Reactions to righteous living and teaching may include verbal rebuff, physical harm and legal challenges.
3. Though the sin-darkened world is aghast that anyone would expose its sinfulness, to be faithful, we must oppose sin and herald righteousness.
4. Above all, we must be careful never to *apologize* for the Gospel or those who faithfully live and proclaim it.

Conclusion:

1. God has not promised Christians an escape from peril in living, teaching and preaching the Gospel, but rather has assured us that we will be persecuted, 1 Tim. 3:12; 1 Pet. 4:16.
2. However, God promises spiritual protection from evil, Matt. 10:28; 1 Cor. 10:13; Rom. 8:28.
3. God has charged the church with the task of preaching the Word, Mark 16:15; Eph. 3:10.
4. Therefore, we are called upon to be a peculiar people (contrasted with an unrighteous world), to conform to the Gospel rather than to the world and to remain steadfast to God, 1 Pet. 2:9; Rom. 12:1-2; 1 Cor. 15:58.
5. Remember, a friend of the world cannot be a friend of God, Jam. 4:4.

Invitation:

1. Befriend the Lord Jesus by obeying the Gospel, Rom. 6:16-17.
2. Become a Christian, Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38.
3. Erring Christians need to repent and pray for forgiveness, Acts 8:22.

Elijah, A Discouraged Servant of God

1 Kings 19:9-10, 14, 18

Thesis: To show that God's people should not be overcome with discouragement.

Song: *Count Your Many Blessings*

Introduction:

1. Discouragement is dangerous because it eats away at one's desire to achieve.
2. Discouragement is difficult to cure because it often has no apparent cause.
3. Discouragement is potentially fatal because it breeds contempt and apathy or indifference, which ends in death.
4. Discouragement, not cured, will kill a society, a nation or a congregation.

Body:

I. Elijah was a portrait of discouragement, 1 Kings 19:9-10.

- A. Israel had forsaken its covenant with God, vs. 10.
 1. Religious perversion was commonplace, John 4:24.
 2. Their forefathers had pledged to always follow God, Josh. 24:15-16.
 3. Though Israel formerly destroyed idolatry (especially upon entrance to Canaan, Deut. 7:5), finally, Israel turned to idolatry.
 4. Political leaders were instrumental in leading the nation into idolatry, 1 Kings 11:1-8; 16:29-33.
- B. Israel destroyed the altars of God and murdered God's priests and prophets.
 1. There has always been and will always be this side of eternity a fierce, spiritual war.
 2. Error is intolerant of truth and demands not only to exist but proceeds to destroy all truth, too.
- C. Elijah supposed that only he remained a faithful servant

of God, and therefore, grew discouraged.

1. Elijah thought that the whole world was against him and that his life was in danger.
 2. In truth, God's faithful servants were vastly outnumbered, but Elijah was not alone.
 3. Additionally, **anyone plus God equals a majority!**
- D. Elijah allowed discouragement to cause him to cease laboring for God.
1. He sought the safety of a cave in a distant region.
 2. If left unchecked, discouragement will hinder us as well in the service of Christ.

II. Discouragement of the church will cause it to fail in its mission.

- A. The ungodly world has always presented reasons for discouragement.
1. If anyone ever had reason to be discouraged, it was Noah, who after 120 years in which to preach saved only eight souls (his immediate family).
 2. Jesus Christ faced discouragement as the world for which he left heaven to save murdered him.
 3. Doubtlessly, there are many discouragements that buffet us as individuals and perhaps congregationally, too.
- B. However, the reasons for which Christians ought to rejoice exceed in quantity and quality causes for discouragement.
1. Remission of sins is at the top of the list of joys that should overpower discouragement.
 2. All spiritual blessings afforded the children of God should be the basis of joy rather than discouragement, Eph. 1:3.
 3. The legitimate hope of heaven ought to relegate discouragements in this life to items of relative insignificance.
 4. The thought of the *eternal rest* that awaits the children of God can provide the reassurance we need to persevere in the face of discouragement, Heb. 4:9-11.

Conclusion:

1. Discouragement is often a matter of viewpoint (e.g., glass half empty or half full).
2. God countered Elijah's reasons for discouragement, even as our blessings far outweigh reasons for discouragement.
3. Discouragement hindered Elijah in his service for God, and if we allow it, discouragement will hinder us individually and congregationally.

Invitation:

1. Jesus Christ invites every soul to give him his burdens, Matt. 11:28-30.
2. There is no greater burden than sin, Acts 2:38.
3. The second law of pardon affords the erring child of God forgiveness of sins since baptism, Acts 8:22; 1 John 1:7-9.

Baptism

2 Timothy 2:15; Psalm 139:17

Thesis: To re-examine the well belabored subject of baptism and let the case for baptism rest wholly on the merits of these verses.

Introduction:

1. Perhaps no one Scripture alone adequately addresses the subject of baptism for the non-Greek speaking audience, since “baptism” is a *transliteration* instead of a *translation*.
 - a. The study of several verses, therefore, is necessary and in harmony with 2 Tim. 2:15 and Psal. 139:17.
 - b. Baptism is a New Testament topic, so we will consider only New Testament passages.
2. We begin with the reasonable premise that one can learn all God requires man to know from an English translation of the Bible.
 - a. Appealing to languages other than Greek such as German, French, Spanish, Latin or even Hebrew is not necessary or even helpful to our study.
 - b. Though knowledge of New Testament Greek would be helpful to Bible study, it is not necessary to know Greek to know God’s will for us, as long as we have a reliable translation of the Bible in our language.
3. There are especially two reasons why baptism will always be a subject worthy of earnest and honest consideration.
 - a. First, nearly every religious group requires of its members or candidates for membership an activity each calls as baptism.
 - b. Second, more importantly, baptism is a biblical subject that affects every accountable soul.
4. To better assist our study, I want everyone present to set aside for now everything he thinks he knows about baptism.
 - a. Even if you are correct and you hold to the truth regarding baptism, it is only fair that you as well as others agree to

- honestly examine your beliefs by what the Bible actually teaches about baptism.
- b. After all, it is easier to teach a man that is totally ignorant about a subject than one who is set in his ways beyond consideration of the facts.
 - c. Bias and prejudice favoring error can tower over and conceal truth.

Body:

I. Matthew 3:5-6, 11, 13-16.

- A. Verses 5-6.
 - 1. The act of baptism is not here identified.
 - 2. Baptism (whatever it is) took place in the Jordan River and those baptized were inhabitants of Jerusalem and Judea.
 - 3. Baptism was administered following the acknowledgement of sins.
 - 4. A man administered baptism.
- B. Verse 11.
 - 1. The new, additional information here is the element employed in baptism.
 - 2. Water is the substance in which John the Baptist baptized people, not milk, olive oil, etc.
 - 3. The act and significance of baptism are still, thus far, unknown.
- C. Verses 13-16.
 - 1. The additional information here is that Jesus Christ, here the recipient of baptism, came up out of the water.
 - 2. Regarding Jesus Christ, this baptism was said to fulfill all righteousness.
 - 3. Still, the act of baptism and its significance to humanity are unknown.
- D. Do not jump to conclusion!
 - 1. Your former instruction and beliefs may lead you to state, for instance, that baptism is by immersion.
 - 2. However, such a conclusion would be premature and not warranted by the information ascertained so far.
 - 3. Simply acknowledge what the passages reviewed

actually yielded.

II. Matthew 28:19.

- A. We learn three more things from this verse concerning baptism.
 - 1. Baptism is universal in scope or application.
 - 2. Baptism is quite solemn and serious since it is done in the name of each person of the Godhead.
 - 3. Baptism is preceded by teaching (therefore only accountable souls are candidates for baptism).
- B. So far, we know the following about baptism.
 - 1. It was performed in the Jordan River.
 - 2. Mankind received it and it was administered by mankind.
 - 3. Baptism was preceded by the acknowledgement of sins.
 - 4. Water was the element used in baptism.
 - 5. Jesus came up out of the water when he was baptized.
 - 6. Baptism is a serious and solemn matter by its association with the Godhead.
 - 7. Baptism has universal application to mankind.
 - 8. Baptism was preceded by teaching.

III. Mark 1:4-5.

- A. This passage, too, adds new information.
 - 1. Baptism requires repentance beforehand.
 - 2. Baptism is associated with the remission of sins.
- B. Still, baptism is a mystery.
 - 1. The act of baptism is still unknown.
 - 2. Further examination of New Testament verses about baptism will dispel any mystery about this Bible topic.

IV. Mark 16:15-16.

- A. This passage, too, provides additional, important information about baptism.
 - 1. Faith precedes baptism.
 - 2. Salvation follows baptism.
- B. Countless, sincere religious people denying the impact of Mark 16:16 does not annul the Word of God regarding baptism.

1. Associating remission of sins from Mark 1:4 and salvation with baptism is alarming to countless souls who have been taught contrariwise.
2. Nevertheless, the inspired Mark recorded what the inspired John the Baptist was doing and what our Savior said!

V. Luke 3:21. (no new information)

VI. John 3:23.

- A. Here, we learn that “much water” was used for baptism.
 1. Be careful not to jump to unsubstantiated conclusions so far as the verses we examined already.
 2. By themselves, baptizing in the Jordan River, coming up out of the water following baptism and much water associated with baptism do not by themselves prove, for instance that baptism is by immersion.
- B. There is still more to learn from still more passages regarding baptism in the New Testament.
 1. Can we “nail down” the act of baptism?
 2. Can we discover the relationship of baptism to the church?

VII. Acts 2:38, 41.

- A. Note the following conclusions from these verses.
 1. Repentance precedes baptism.
 2. Remission of sins follows baptism.
- B. The summary of evidence concerning baptism thus far is:
 1. Some were baptized in the Jordan River.
 2. Mankind administered baptism to mankind.
 3. Baptism was preceded by the acknowledgement of sins.
 4. Water was the element of baptism
 5. Jesus Christ came up out of the water when he was baptized.
 6. Baptism is serious, solemn and by the name (authority) of each person of the Godhead.
 7. Baptism is a universal requirement for all of humanity.
 8. Baptism was preceded by teaching (to accountable

souls).

9. Baptism was preceded by repentance.
 10. Baptism was for the remission of sins.
 11. Baptism was followed by salvation.
 12. Baptism was preceded by faith.
 13. Much water was associated with baptism.
- C. The mystery surrounding baptism is not yet resolved, though the picture is becoming clearer.
1. The act of baptism has not been proven yet.
 2. However, we have learned from Scripture that the redemptive plan of God includes teaching, faith, acknowledgement of sins and repentance before baptism.
 3. Remission of sins or salvation follows baptism.

VIII. Acts 8:12-13, 16, 36-39.

- A. Verses 12-13, 16.
1. Both genders, men and women, are universally subject to baptism.
 2. No infants or unaccountable persons are mentioned.
- B. Verses 36-39.
1. Confession of Jesus as the Christ precedes baptism.
 2. Immersion, again, appears to be the act of baptism.
- C. Acts 8 does not settle the act of baptism and adds nothing new regarding the significance of baptism.
1. The conversions of Saul, Cornelius, Lydia, the jailer and others throughout the balance of the Book of Acts contribute little if any additional new information about baptism.
 2. Acts 10:48, though, shows that baptism was important enough to be commanded.
 3. Also, Acts 22:16 adds that baptism washed away sins.

IX. Romans 6:3-5.

- A. These verses add new and conclusive evidence concerning the act of baptism.
1. Baptism is described as a burial.
 2. Baptism is also called a planting.
 3. Combined with former evidence, baptism in the

- Bible was a burial or planting beneath much water, such as would be found in the Jordan River.
4. Bible baptism is immersion.
- B. Romans 6:3-5 concurs with other passages that teach baptism is by immersion.
1. Colossians 2:12 likewise teaches that baptism is a burial.
 2. Immersion for baptism explains why baptizing was performed in the Jordan River, why much water was sought for baptism, and why people went down into and came up out of water when they were baptized.
- C. Romans 6:3-5 also furnishes additional information regarding the significance of baptism.
1. One is baptized into Jesus Christ.
 2. Galatians 3:27 also teaches that one is baptized into Jesus Christ.
 3. All spiritual blessings are afforded in Jesus Christ, Eph. 1:3.
 4. Romans 6:3-5 further teach that baptism places one in the death of Christ, where his saving blood was shed, Eph. 1:7; Acts 20:28; Rev. 1:5; John 19:34.
 5. The true significance of baptism becomes apparent when it is seen that baptism puts one into Jesus Christ wherein are all spiritual blessings and into the death of Jesus Christ wherein is the redemptive blood of Christ.
 6. Other verses in the New Testament also note the saving role of baptism, 1 Pet. 3:21.

Conclusion:

1. Conclusively, Bible baptism is by immersion.
2. The New Testament plainly teaches that baptism is the point at which souls are saved.
3. Baptism is preceded by teaching, faith, acknowledgment of sins, repentance and confessing Christ.
4. Baptism is the process through which Jesus Christ adds the saved to his body or the church, 1 Cor. 12:13; Acts 2:47; Eph. 1:22-23; Col. 1:18.

Invitation:

1. Have you been the recipient of Bible baptism, by which you put on Christ, were buried into his death and contacted his blood, and by which you were saved?
2. Jesus invites you now to put him on in baptism this day; will you disappoint him?
3. Erring Christians make their baptisms void as long as they persist in sin; privately or publicly as was the nature of your sins, won't you repent and pray for forgiveness today, Acts 8:22?

Respect for the Bible

Psalm 119

Thesis: To encourage a greater respect for the Bible.

Songs: *Give Me the Bible, Standing on the Promises*

Introduction:

1. We live in a time when people often have little respect for sacred things.
 - a. Neither God nor his Word, the Bible, receives the respect they deserve.
 - b. Commonly, little more respect is shown for our nation or society, the home or family life, or even human life itself.
2. A greater respect for God and his Word would cause people also to have a greater respect for the foregoing.
3. The often-wayward course that America is pursuing will not vary until Americans derive a renewed respect for God and his Word.
4. Likewise, if the church loses proper respect for God and his Word, it will die.
5. Lack of respect for the Bible equals a lack of respect for God.

Body:

- I. Proper respect for the Bible begins with a proper attitude. “And I will delight myself in thy commandments, which I have loved,” Psa. 119:47.**
 - A. One cannot properly understand Scripture with an improper attitude toward Scripture.
 1. Many imagine that the Bible is much like any other book.
 2. If one attempts to study the Bible as manmade books are studied, he will shortchange himself.
 - B. The Bible is a unique book, the only one in its class.
 1. To class it with manmade books dilutes its influence.
 2. The Bible is more than simply another literary piece.

- C. The Bible cannot be taught as other books.
 - 1. Again, the Bible is unique, the only one in its class.
 - 2. To teach it as though it were a history, science or merely a human book on any subject dilutes its influence.

II. The Bible deserves respect in its entirety, from the beginning throughout its pages. “Thy word is true from the beginning: and every one of thy righteous judgments endureth for ever,” Psa. 119:160.

- A. For instance, Genesis One is as true as any portion of Scripture.
 - 1. No theory of beginnings ought to be allowed more or even equal esteem the Creation account in the Bible.
 - 2. To compromise Genesis One undermines the foundation of trust on which the whole Bible rests.
- B. Anyone willing to compromise on Genesis One or any other Scripture, ultimately will compromise on any passage or maybe the entire Word of God.
 - 1. Compromising on any portion of the Bible strikes a heavy blow to confidence in the inspiration of the Bible.
 - 2. Failing to hold any segment of the Bible as sacred greatly diminishes the sacredness of the Bible in its entirety.

III. The Bible deserves respect for it in its entirety. “Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all thy commandments,” Psa. 119:6.

- A. Many people pick and choose the parts of the Bible they want to accept.
 - 1. It is true, of course, that not everything in the Bible applies to mankind today, e.g., Patriarchy, Judaism, Miracles, etc.
 - 2. However, God, and not man, has already selected the law under which we live (and by which we will be judged), John 12:48; Rev. 20:11-15.
- B. Even some Christians purport that some portions of the Bible are inspired whereas other portions are not inspired.

1. If this were true, mankind would be faced with the impossible task of discerning the difference (i.e., lacking inspiration).
2. Attempting to disarm the Bible regarding unpopular doctrines destroys the integrity of the Bible.

IV. The Bible is right on any subject that it addresses.

“Therefore I esteem all *thy* precepts concerning all things to be right; and I hate every false way,” (Psa. 119:128; 98-100).

- A. Obviously, the Bible is not a science or history book, as such.
 1. However, whatever the Bible speaks to, it tells the truth.
 2. Often the Bible recorded even scientific truth before scientists were aware of it.
- B. The Bible has the last word on any subject that it addresses.
 1. The Bible is correct on facts that can be independently corroborated: historically, topographically, geographically, politically, etc.
 2. Therefore, the Bible is as credible regarding what it says on subjects that cannot be corroborated with the sciences and history, e.g., eschatology, salvation, other spiritual matters.
- C. Hence, the Bible is absolute, not subjective.
 1. The church is obligated to discern Bible doctrine, as opposed to supposing that it is the source of doctrine.
 2. The Bible alone is the source of instruction relative to salvation, worship, Christian service and doctrine.
- D. Bible doctrine is distinctive.
 1. Therefore, most of the time there is an obvious difference between Gospel preaching and denominational preaching.
 2. Denominational preaching is usually comprised of the popular contemporary ideas of men, but Gospel preaching derives its content from an ancient

document, the Bible.

- V. **One needs to respect the Bible with his whole being. “Blessed *are* they that keep his testimonies, *and that seek him with the whole heart,*” Psa. 119:2.**
- A. The Bible heart is comprised of intellect, emotions and will.
 - 1. The Bible as God gave it is adapted to man as God made him.
 - 2. Each facet of the human composition intellect, emotions and will, must be used together in embracing the Word of God.
 - B. An imbalanced or partial response to the Bible is substandard and counterproductive.
 - 1. An mere emotional response overrides the intellect and will.
 - 2. A mere intellectual response is emotionally hollow and may hamper the will.
- VI. **The Bible has cleansing power. “Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed *thereto according to thy word,*” Psa. 119:9.**
- A. Young and old can only find soul cleansing power through the Bible.
 - 1. No other source to which one can turn can lead one to redemption, because only through the Christ of the Bible is redemption possible, John 14:6; Eph. 1:3, 7.
 - 2. God has not obligated himself to any other system of redemption, Heb. 10:26.
 - B. Only the Bible has the solution for cleansing the sins that afflict even congregations.
 - 1. Congregations can sin as well as individuals, for which the individuals that comprise the church (and hence the church) need to repent, 1 Cor. 5; Rev. 2-3.
 - 2. Cleansing individual Christians from sin, cleanses the congregation, 1 Cor. 6:9-11.
- VII. **We must respect the Bible’s counsel. “Thy testimonies also *are my delight and my counselors,*” Psa. 119:24.**
- A. God’s wisdom is far superior to the wisdom of men.

1. Human wisdom hides God, spiritual truth and redemption from men, 1 Cor. 1:18-31.
 2. Divine wisdom affords the attentive the opportunity to be right in all things that the Bible addresses (both material and spiritual matters).
- B. Even God's inspired advice is worthy of adoption.
1. In most instances, God's instructions are obligatory (not optional).
 2. There are, though, some discretionary matters in which one may opt to adopt or dispense with God's inspired advice, 1 Cor. 7:8-9, 26.

VIII. The Bible must be respected even when what it says is unpopular. "I have stuck unto thy testimonies: O LORD, put me not to shame," Psa. 119:31.

- A. The Bible is the most popular book in the world.
1. The Bible in one version or another outsells all other titles.
 2. The contents, though, of the Bible are not as nearly popular as merely superficially acknowledging it.
- B. Obviously, Bible doctrine is very unpopular.
1. Why else would so many different churches with their conflicting doctrines, etc. exist?
 2. Christians must be true to the Bible irrespective of whether they find Bible doctrine to their liking.

IX. One needs to respect the Bible when making decisions. "I have chosen the way of truth: thy judgments have I laid before me," Psa. 119:30.

- A. The greatest decision anyone can make is to become a child of God.
1. Faith, repentance, confessing Christ and baptism, according to the Bible, will make one a Christian, Rom. 10:17; Acts 17:30; Rom. 10:9-10; Acts 22:16.
 2. False doctrines of faith only, infant baptism, sprinkling for baptism, joining a church, human creeds, etc. spring forth from a defective respect for the Bible.
- B. The Bible ought to be consulted respecting every decision made in life.

1. Marriage and home life decisions would be better made with the Bible as counsel.
 2. The Bible ought to be the counsel of every congregation about to make a decision about virtually anything.
- C. Imagine how it would be if even every Christian accepted the counsel of the Bible.
1. Every Christian would attend all the services he could, give as he was prospered and tell others about the saving Gospel of Christ.
 2. Every congregation would be spiritually strong and vibrantly engaged in every facet of the church's mission.
- X. We ought to respect the Bible when attempting to answer religious questions. "So shall I have wherewith to answer him that reproacheth me: for I trust in thy word," Psa. 119:42.**
- A. Every religious question deserves a biblical answer.
1. We are to speak as the oracles of God, 1 Pet. 4:11.
 2. Through study and anticipation, we can be ready to answer at least the fundamental questions regarding the Christian faith, 2 Tim. 2:15; 1 Pet. 3:15.
- B. Psychology and philosophy books are the improper sources of answers for religious questions.
1. Just think of how inappropriate it would be for a medical doctor to look up medical advice in a math book.
 2. Likewise, we need to turn to God rather than the think-so's of fallible mortals.
- XI. We need to respect the Bible when we find ourselves in the midst of difficulties. "They had almost consumed me upon earth; but I forsook not thy precepts," Psa. 119:87.**
- A. Seasons of distress are the least opportune time to diminish one's respect for the Bible.
1. The Bible is a refuge, especially during times of personal misfortune.
 2. Congregations, too, ought to consult God's Word during times of turmoil.

- B. The early church relied upon God's Word in the face of grave adversity.
 - 1. Early Christians clung in their faith to the Bible even when doing so led to their deaths.
 - 2. The comfort of God is superior to the comforts of this planet and the spiritual preservation is something on which the child of God can rely when nothing else can relieve life's distresses, 2 Cor. 1:3; Matt. 11:28.

XII. Mankind needs to respect the finality of the Bible. "Forever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven," Psalms 119:89.

- A. God has the first and last word on every subject on which he has chosen to speak through his Word.
 - 1. We will be judged by those words, John 12:48.
 - 2. God's Word is changeless!
- B. It already has been delivered and no amendments or postscripts will be forthcoming.
 - 1. Inspired writers affirmed that the Word of God has been once for all delivered, Jude 3.
 - 2. No other Gospels are coming, Gal. 1:6-9.

Conclusion:

- 1. The Bible truly is a book like none other.
- 2. Every accountable soul needs to fully embrace the Bible with his whole being.
- 3. The Bible is a unique and distinctive book that can give man the best of life and eternity.
- 4. The Bible is the wisest counsel on all subjects that it addresses to which a human can appeal.
- 5. The Bible is not always popular in what it says, but it is always right.
- 6. The Bible has the only answer that matters to every religious question.
- 7. The Bible will see the child of God through difficult times.
- 8. The Bible is God's final Word to us this side of eternity.

Invitation:

- 1. In the Word of God, one can find the necessary information how to live his life on earth and prepare for a home in heaven.
- 2. First, one must accept the blessings of the Gospel on the terms

of God, Mark 16:16.

3. Afterward, one must remain faithful and repent on those occasions when he sins, Rev. 2:10; Acts 8:22.

Fire Is Fire

Lev. 10:1-2

Thesis: To emphasize God says what he means and means what he says, and to do otherwise spells certain condemnation.

Song: *Give Me The Bible*

Introduction:

1. Nadab and Abihu were priests of God, sons of Aaron, who was God's high priest.
 - a. They may have assumed that **fire is fire** and that the source from which it was acquired was unimportant.
 - b. Nadab and Abihu carelessly handled God's instructions regarding the ceremonial fire.
 - c. With God, one fire was not as good as any other fire and God consumed the two priests with a fire from heaven, Lev. 10:1-2.
2. Uzzah was one of the movers, who at the bidding of King David, moved the Ark of the Covenant.
 - a. Apparently, Uzzah and the others that day presumed that **moving is moving**.
 - b. Uzzah and the others with him carelessly handled God's instructions for the moving of the ark, Ex. 25:12-15; Num. 4:15.
 - c. With God, one method of moving something is not equal to all other ways of moving an item, and God struck Uzzah dead when he steadied the ark with his hand on the shaking oxcart, 1 Chron. 13:1-14.
3. As in these two biblical incidents, contemporary men often make unwarranted assumptions about God's instructions.
 - a. God has always said what he means and means what he says, Deut. 4:2.
 - b. To disregard, add to or take away from God's instructions on any subject will lead to certain condemnation, Rev. 22:18-19; Pro. 30:6.

- c. However, modern man often carelessly handles God's instructions on a number of subjects.

Body:

I. Church is Church

- A. Most people today assume that one church is as good as another.
 - 1. This is evident from the popular slogan, "Worship at the church of your **choice**."
 - 2. Currently, there are hundreds of denominational churches and thousands of variations among them from which to choose.
 - 3. They have their distinctive names, creeds and organizational patterns.
- B. Yet, Jesus Christ died to purchase one (his) church, which is his spiritual body, Acts 20:28; Col. 1:18; 3:15.
 - 1. Mankind would fare better to worship with the church of Christ's choice, Matt. 16:18; Eph. 4:4.
 - 2. Our Lord's church was known by several distinctive designations, most of which glorify Deity (e.g., churches of Christ, church of God, house of God, the church, Rom. 16:16; 1 Cor. 1:2; 1 Tim. 3:15; Acts 2:47).
 - 3. The church Jesus built has the New Testament alone as its all-sufficient creed, John 12:48; Matt. 15:9; Rev. 20:18-19; 2 Pet. 1:3.
 - 4. Every congregation of our Lord's church is independent and guided by elders, served by deacons and taught by preachers and teachers, Acts 14:23; 1 Tim. 3:8-13; 2 Tim. 4:1-2; Heb. 5:12-14.
- C. To assume that one church is as good as another is to make a grave spiritual error with tragic eternal consequences.
 - 1. Jesus will return for **his** church and take it to heaven with him, 1 Thess. 4:13-17.
 - 2. Regrettably, according to Jesus, the vast majority of religious people will be lost, Matt. 7:13-14; 21-23.
 - 3. To avoid divine condemnation and to receive eternal blessings, one must renounce his

membership in any manmade church and become a faithful member in the church that Jesus built.

II. **Worship Is Worship**

- A. Most people today assume that it does not matter how we worship as long as we are sincere.
 - 1. Again, this is evident from the popular slogan “**Worship** at the church of your choice.”
 - 2. There is great diversity regarding worship among the thousands of manmade churches, as well as between them and the church of the New Testament.
- B. Yet, the first century church has a distinctive, God-given pattern of worship, Acts 2:42.
 - 1. Preaching, Acts 20:7.
 - 2. Praying, 1 Cor. 14:15.
 - 3. Free will offering (not tithing), 1 Cor. 16:1-2.
 - 4. Lord’s Supper (on the first day of each week), Acts 20:7.
 - 5. Singing hymns (not instrumental music, humming, etc.), Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16; 1 Cor. 4:15.
- C. It is a serious spiritual mistake to assume that it does not matter to God how we worship him.
 - 1. Jesus said that true worshiper must worship in spirit and in **truth**, John 4:23-24.
 - 2. All other worship is vain and unacceptable to God, Matt. 15:9.
 - 3. One must worship according to the New Testament pattern to avoid condemnation and to have God favorably receive his worship, Col. 3:17.

III. **Baptism Is Baptism**

- A. Most people assume that it does not matter how one is baptized.
 - 1. Commonly, religious people are either unaware of what the Greek word translated baptism means or they are not concerned about it.
 - 2. Hence, sprinkling or pouring on and immersion in water have come to mean “baptism” in our language.
 - 3. Further, some imagined that instead of water that

the Holy Spirit is the element of baptism, while still others do not believe that baptism has anything to do with salvation.

- B. However, the inspired apostle Paul taught that there is only one valid baptism in the church age, Eph. 4:5.
 - 1. That one baptism involves water and is associated with salvation, 1 Pet. 3:20-21; Acts 22:16; Acts 2:38.
 - 2. Further Bible baptism is **immersion** in water, Rom. 6:3-5; Col. 2:12; John 3:23; Acts 8:36-38.
 - 3. Contrary to popular opinion, Bible baptism is important enough to be commanded and urgent enough to be administered in the wee hours of the night, Acts 10:48; 16:25, 33.
- C. To assume that one baptism is as good as another is to make a grave spiritual error with tragic eternal consequences.
 - 1. One's baptism can be wrong, even if it is immersion (i.e., for the wrong reasons), Acts 19:1-7.
 - 2. Bible baptism puts one in Christ and Christ puts that one into his church, Gal. 3:27; Acts 2:41, 47.
 - 3. Anyone not immersed in water for the remission of his sins still bears the guilt of those sins, Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 22:16; 1 Pet. 3:21.

Conclusion:

- 1. God says what he means and means what he says in the Bible.
- 2. To avoid condemnation and to receive divine commendation, each soul must obey the word of God, for the disobedient will be severely and eternally punished, Heb. 5:8-9; 2 Thess. 1:7-9; Matthew 25:46.
- 3. For the past few minutes, we have emphasized the biblical principle of divine authority in religion through references to Fire Is Fire, Moving Is Moving, Church Is Church, Worship Is Worship and Baptism Is Baptism.
- 4. The same principle could be emphasized by referring to any New Testament doctrine.
- 5. There by, one can know certainly whether he is a member of Christ's church, is worshipping God in the ways he has

appointed or has received the forgiveness of sins by receiving Bible baptism.

Invitation:

1. Baptism for the remission of sins is the means by which one becomes a member of the Lord's church and precedes acceptable worship.
2. Have you been baptized for the remission of your sins; if not, will you consent to be buried with your Lord in baptism this very day?
3. Erring Christians also need to know that their salvation is in jeopardy and that their worship is flawed; we invite you, also, to come forward as we stand and sing.

Return Unto Me

Malachi 3:7

Thesis: To exhort God's people to zealously embrace God.

Song: *Come Unto Me*

Introduction:

1. About 400 years before the birth of Christ (or about 2400 years ago), many Jews had returned to Canaan from Babylonian Captivity.
2. Jerusalem, its walls and the temple had been rebuilt.
3. The Jews had finally gotten idolatry "out of their system" through 70 years of exile because of their sins.
4. However, the Jewish nation grew tired of serving Almighty God and substituted empty form or ritual.
5. God, though, called upon his people to **return** to him.

Body:

I. "I have loved you, saith the Lord. Yet ye say wherein hast thou loved us," Mal. 1:2-5.

- A. God preserved and blessed the Jews despite their small nation and often waywardness.
 1. The Jews were the least of all nations, but God made them a great nation, Deut. 9:1; 11:23; 14:2.
 2. However, God punished them when they pursued idolatry and unrighteousness, Josh. 23:11-16; 24:20.
 3. Yet, God brought them back from captivity, Ezra 3:8.
 4. God demonstrated his love toward the Jews by elevating them above other nations (even their cousins – the Edomites), Mal. 1:2-5.
 5. The Jews, though, were discontent with their lot and did not attribute their good fortune to God, Mal. 1:2-5.
- B. God preserves his people today despite their small number and often waywardness.

1. Comparatively speaking, God's people today are few, but still an innumerable host, Matt. 7:13-14; Rev. 7:9.
2. God has made his children today a holy nation, 1 Pet. 2:9.
3. Like Israel of old, God will exile Christians (even whole congregations) from his favor if they persist to sin against him, Rev. 2:5.
4. Christians who become disenchanted have no other Savior to whom they can turn or system of religion to which they can appeal, Heb. 10:22-31.
5. God's love toward us has been amply demonstrated and we, therefore, ought to love God also, Rom. 5:8; 1 John 4:19.

II. "A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master: if then I be a father, where is mine honour? and if I be a master, where is my fear? saith the LORD of hosts unto you, O priests, that despise my name. And ye say, Wherein have we despised thy name?" Mal. 1:6.

- A. The Jews grew tired of serving Almighty God and substituted empty form or ritual.
 1. They offered moldy bread and blind, lame, and injured sacrificial animals on God's altar.
 2. They considered worship to God as a weariness, but they were afraid not to at least go through the motions of worshipping God.
 3. At best, they only partially practiced Judaism.
 4. Under these circumstances, their religious activities were unacceptable to God, even though formerly God had commanded them to worship him.
- B. We also must be careful that we do not grow tired of worshipping God and substitute empty form or ritual.
 1. To be acceptable, our worship must be in spirit and in truth, John 4:23-24.
 2. While we must duplicate the New Testament pattern for worship, it must be more than empty form and hollow ritual.
 3. Otherwise, our practice of God-ordained worship will be no more acceptable than the empty worship

in Malachi's day.

4. We must worship God the way he wants to be worshipped because we want to, not because we *have to*.

III. "Ye have wearied the LORD with your words. Yet ye say, Wherein have we wearied him? When ye say, Every one that doeth evil is good in the sight of the LORD, and he delighteth in them; or, Where is the God of judgment?" Mal. 2:17.

- A. The Jews took it upon themselves to make God's Word more palatable by changing the doctrine of God.
 1. They used many words, which God had not given them by revelation, by which they wearied God.
 2. Jews redefined wickedness as good and righteousness as evil.
 3. They attempted to wrest from God the right of judgment.
 4. Further, they were indignant that God, through the prophet, dared complain against them.
- B. Often, modern men also have taken it upon themselves to alter the doctrine of God to make it more palatable.
 1. Frequently contemporary man has gone far beyond bonafide interpretation of the biblical text and added many words that alter the doctrine of God (e.g., manuals, disciplines, creeds, catechisms, etc.).
 2. Even Christians in our time, have elevated sinful practices to states of acceptability (e.g., homosexuals, gambling, abortion, marriage-divorce-remarriage, etc.).
 3. It is commonplace for sinners and saints alike to condemn or justify as they please, irrespective of the judgments of God.
 4. Further, no one today is any happier being corrected than were the Jews of Malachi's day, yet unless we repent we will perish, Luke 13:3.

IV. "Even from the days of your fathers ye are gone away from mine ordinances, and have not kept *them*. Return

unto me, and I will return unto you, saith the LORD of hosts. But ye said, Wherein shall we return?” Mal. 3:7.

- A. A. Anciently, God always pleaded with his people to repent and return to him.
 - 1. Noah, a preacher of righteousness fruitlessly warned his fellows for 120 years of the impending flood, 2 Pet. 2:5.
 - 2. The whole period of the judges was a cycle of sin, punishment, a call to repentance and redemption.
 - 3. Later, throughout the periods of both the united kingdom and the divided kingdoms God continually called upon the Jews to repent, Ezek. 14:6.
 - 4. Malachi, after the captivity in Babylon and the resettlement of Jerusalem, also delivered God’s message of repentance and redemption.
- B. B. Even now, God desires everyone to repent and be saved.
 - 1. The earliest preaching in the New Testament era by John the Baptist and Jesus Christ called for repentance, Matt. 3:1-2; 4:17.
 - 2. Repentance was the sermon topic on the birthday of the church and continued to be the thrust of first century preaching, Acts 2:38; 3:19; 26:20.
 - 3. God earnestly desires every soul to come to him in humble obedience and avoid eternal condemnation, 2 Pet. 3:9-10.
 - 4. Each soul today needs to come to God **through Christ**, Matt. 11:28; John 14:6.

Conclusion:

- 1. The Jews failed to recognize that they (in their hearts) had departed from God.
- 2. Therefore, they were indignant when God, through the prophets, called upon them to return to him.
- 3. The Jews failed to acknowledge the ways in which God loved them, and we, too, sometimes fail to realize just how much God loves us.
- 4. Like the Jews of old, we also sometimes fail to properly revere God and practice heartfelt religion.

5. Even Christians too frequently wish that God's Word read differently in some doctrinal matters, and may actually alter the doctrine of God.
6. However, despite our human failures, God will take us back **if** we return to him on **his terms**.

Invitation:

1. God's terms for the salvation of non-Christians and the recovery of erring Christians are clearly discernable from the New Testament.
2. Non-Christians, Rom. 10:17; Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38.
3. Erring Christians, Acts 8:22; James 5:19-20.

Death Points to God

Hebrews 9:27

Thesis: Aside from the usual perceptions of death, to show that death points to God.

Song: *There's a Great Day Coming, An Empty Mansion, Further Along*

Introduction:

1. From a casual observance and as long as time continues, every thoughtful soul knows that every person is subject to death.
2. Further, every sane person fears death, having at least some apprehension, since no one has ever experienced it (and lived to tell about it).
3. Aside from the heartache that death causes when it takes our loved ones or threatens us, death points toward God.

Body:

I. Death points to God because the spirit returns to God after death, Ecc. 12:7.

- A. God created mankind in his image, Gen. 1:26-27; 9:6.
 1. God is a spirit, John 4:24.
 2. Mankind, therefore, is a spirit being, too.
- B. The Bible defines physical death as the separation of the body and the spirit, Jam. 2:26.
 1. The physical part of man returns to the ground and the spiritual part returns to the custody of God, Ecc. 12:7.
 2. Then, the spirit will either be welcomed into heaven, Matt. 25:34, or sent away from God, which is spiritual death, Rom. 6:23.

II. Death points to God because death is a judgment of God in response to sin, Gen. 2:17; 1 Cor. 15:21.

- A. The consequence of the sin of Adam and Eve was death.
 1. That consequence, death, has passed to all of humanity.
 2. The guilt of that sin, though, has not passed to

anyone besides the first pair, Ezek. 18:20.

- B. Death, though, is not eternal, 1 Cor. 15:26.
 - 1. Jesus Christ vanquished death, 2 Tim. 1:10.
 - 2. Death lasts no longer than time, Rev. 20:14.

III. Death points to God because God's judgment follows death, Heb. 9:27.

- A. Final judgment following this life is a theme of both testaments.
 - 1. Ecc. 12:13-14.
 - 2. Rev. 20:12-15.
- B. There are but two possible eternal dispositions to which God after judgment can assign souls.
 - 1. Heaven is reserved for righteous souls, 1 Pet. 1:3-4.
 - 2. Fiery hell will be the permanent abode of the unrighteous, Matt. 25:41.

IV. Death points to God because death is the vehicle by which the righteous can be with God, Phil. 1:21-23; 2 Cor. 5:8.

- A. Only two souls avoided the pangs of death to cross into eternity.
 - 1. God took Enoch, Gen. 5:24.
 - 2. Elijah traveled to heaven in a flaming chariot, 2 Kings 2:11.
- B. Death is the threshold between time and eternity.
 - 1. Through death, both the righteous and the unrighteous enter eternity, Luke 16:19-31.
 - 2. Jesus and Stephen passed from this life to eternity by the means of death, Luke 23:46; Acts 7:59.

Conclusion:

- 1. Death is a fact of life that cannot be ignored.
- 2. Death can be a fearful thing and brings heartache.
- 3. However, death also points to God as the source of our spirits.
- 4. Further, death reminds us that it was assigned to humanity by God because of sin.
- 5. Every Bible student also knows that God's judgment ultimately follows death.
- 6. Death permits human spirits to go to God.
- 7. However, no one needs to fear death if he is prepared to meet God.

Invitation:

1. Fortunately, the Bible informs us how we can adequately prepare to meet God.
2. Erring Christians must repent and pray, Acts 8:22.
3. Unbaptized believers must repent and be baptized, Acts 2:38.

Speaking in Tongues

1 Corinthians 14:8-9

Thesis: To discern the biblical definition of speaking in tongues and the relationship tongues sustain to the church.

Introduction:

1. What passes for speaking in tongues today is incompatible with the biblical definition of speaking in tongues.
2. Though its adherents purport it to be a miraculous demonstration, such speaking in tongues today is not miraculous, but rather often unintelligible, emotional outbursts.
3. However, without the aid of miracles, it **is** biblically correct and sometimes necessary to speak in tongues today.
4. Please listen carefully as we survey what the Bible, namely the New Testament, teaches respecting speaking in tongues.

Body:

- I. The Bible clearly and decisively defines in Acts Two what it means to speak in tongues.**
 - A. Acts Two opens with the apostles being baptized with the Holy Spirit, 1:26-2:4, after which they were miraculously enabled to speak in tongues, 2:4.
 1. Later, other Christians were enabled to miraculously speak in tongues after apostolic hands were laid upon them, Acts 8:14-19.
 2. Still later, Cornelius, his family and friends were enabled by the Holy Spirit to speak in tongues, Acts 10:44-46.
 - B. The tongues spoken were the native languages of the 15 different nationalities present in Jerusalem on the first Pentecost after the Ascension, Acts 2:4-11.
 1. "...every man heard them speak in his own language," Acts 2:6.
 2. "And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born?" Acts 2:8.

3. "...we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God," Acts 2:11.
- C. Miraculous assistance enabled the apostles to teach the Word of God to those present in their respective native languages, although the apostles had not been schooled in foreign languages.
1. The Gospel message was intelligible to those to whom it was directed (other men).
 2. Further, the recipients of the message were convicted of their sins, Acts 2:37.
- D. The contrasts between this biblical account of speaking in tongues and contemporary, so-called tongue speaking are several.
1. The apostles spoke in tongues to men, not God.
 2. The apostles were not convulsing but conversing, Acts 2:38.
 3. The biblical definition of speaking in tongues is speaking in human languages.
 4. In Acts 2 the apostles were enabled by miracle to speak in languages that they had not studied.

II. Speaking miraculously in tongues was abused by first century Christians, for which they were rebuked and further instructed.

- A. Speaking in tongues by miracle was no more important than other miracles
1. i.e., wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing, working miracles, inspired teaching, inspired discerning of spirits, interpretation of tongues, 1 Cor. 12:8-11.
 2. Even in the early church, not everyone was to speak in tongues, 1 Cor. 12:28-31.
- B. The miracle of speaking in tongues was not emphasized.
1. Speaking in tongues and the interpretation of tongues do not head the list of miracles here, but conclude it.
 2. Speaking in tongues is inferior to love, 1 Cor. 12:31; 13:1.
 3. Prophesying was superior to speaking in tongues, 1 Cor. 14:2-3.
- C. Corinthian Christians abused speaking in tongues.

1. They spoke in tongues when it served no purpose and actually hindered communication, 1 Cor. 14:1-25.
2. These Christians erroneously created confusion in the assembly by speaking at the same time, 1 Cor. 14:26-33.

III. Even if miraculous speaking in tongues still occurred today, those who purport to speak in tongues violate the corrective instruction of the apostle Paul in 1 Cor. 14.

- A. Tongues (foreign languages, Acts 2) that are unknown to the audience and uninterrupted are forbidden, 1 Cor. 14:23, 27-28.
 1. Speaking in unknown, uninterrupted tongues (languages) essentially addresses the one speaking and God, 1 Cor. 14:2, 28.
 2. Yet, Charismatics and Pentecostals do what the apostle expressly condemned.
- B. Simultaneous speaking by more than one person is prohibited, 1 Cor. 14:27, 30-31, 33, 40.
 1. The apostle said that otherwise confusion resulted, 1 Cor. 14:33.
 2. Yet, Charismatics and Pentecostals do precisely what the apostle condemned.
- C. Further, women are forbidden to speak in the assembly of the church, 1 Cor. 14:34.
 1. See also 1 Tim. 2:11-12.
 2. Yet, Charismatics and Pentecostals have women participate in so-called tongue speaking, as well as preaching.

IV. Miraculous speaking in tongues ceased with the end of miracles, but non-miraculous speaking in tongues remains today, as needed.

- A. Miracles ceased when a completed, written revelation was given by God.
 1. Miracles, including speaking in tongues, were never intended to be permanent, 1 Cor. 13:8-13; Eph. 4:11-13.
 2. The faith has been once for all delivered to man, Jude 3.

- B. The first century sources of miracles are no longer available.
 - 1. The baptism of the Holy Spirit is not the one baptism (in water) that remains effective today, Eph. 4:5; 1 Pet. 3:21.
 - 2. The apostles, by whom many received the ability to perform miracles, have all died.
- C. However, it is still possible and often needful to speak in tongues (foreign languages) today.
 - 1. Today, though, such is accomplished through learning those languages.
 - 2. Even Charismatics and Pentecostals must learn foreign languages to speak them.
 - 3. Tongues are spoken non-miraculously in the sense in which the Bible refers to speaking in tongues, whenever a preacher speaks to a congregation or group of people not acquainted with the language of the preacher (which requires an interpreter).

Conclusion:

- 1. Tongues simply refer to languages.
- 2. Unknown tongues refer to foreign languages.
- 3. The miracle associated with tongues was speaking in languages not learned by the speaker.
- 4. The purpose of tongues or the interpretation of tongues was to present an intelligible message from God at a time before the complete revelation of God was available to mankind.
- 5. Non-miraculous tongues or the ability to speak in a foreign language is possible today only through study and are often needed today.
- 6. Miraculous tongue speaking does not now occur.
- 7. Non-miraculous tongues or the ability to speak in learned languages is permitted only when it is necessary; tongues are not now and were never intended to be an option to make worship more vibrant.

Invitation:

- 1. Jesus Christ has not spoken in an unknown tongue regarding salvation, but clearly and unmistakably.
- 2. Erring Christians must repent, Rev. 2:5.
- 3. Unbaptized believers must repent and be baptized, Acts 2:38.

Think on These Things

Philippians 4:8-9

Thesis: To encourage Christians to fill their minds only with holy thoughts.

Song: *How Shall the Young Secure Their Hearts?*

Introduction:

1. We live in the age of computers, with which we manage and store all kinds of data.
 - a. This data can be stored on computer disks, some of which data is useful whereas other data is useless.
 - b. Since data disks have a maximum capacity, the available data space is very precious.
 - c. Unprofitable data ought to be erased so that more valuable data can reside on the available disk space.
 - d. Whatever is stored on such data disks is all that can possibly be recalled for use; one cannot call up what simply is not there!
2. Similarly, the human mind is like a data disk or some computer memory bank.
 - a. Like the computer, the human mind fills itself with various types of data, some useful and some useless.
 - b. Especially Christians need to make the best possible use of the mind and store only valuable information.
 - c. To the best of our abilities, we need to erase from our minds impure things and reserve our minds for noble thoughts.
 - d. Like the computer, whatever is stored in our minds is all that can possibly be recalled; one cannot call up what simply is not there!

Body:

- I. **We need to be selective when entering data into our minds.**
 - A. The human mind records what it sees and hears.
 1. Whatever is recorded is repeatedly recalled, sometimes for conscious use and sometimes

- contrary to choice; we are what we think, Prov. 23:7.
2. Foul language to which we may be subjected or voluntarily subject ourselves through our entertainment choices (e.g., movies) may inscribe such speech in the brain, speech that may come forth from one's own mouth unexpectedly particularly if angered, Eph. 4:29; Col. 3:8; Matt. 15:18-19.
 3. Pornographic or sensual books, magazines, TV and movies vividly engrave themselves on the mind and crowd out thoughts of nobler things, Matt. 5:27-28; Prov. 6:24-25.
 4. The sins in which young and old may participate can be forgiven upon repentance, but the consequences of sin and one's remembrance of sin can nevertheless result in much torment, 2 Cor. 2:6-7; Heb. 10:17.
- B. Everything with which we come in contact in life should be examined by Philippians 4:8 before it is allowed storage space in the human mind.
1. If it fails to pass the divine test, not only should it not be granted admission to our minds, but also we should flee from it, Rom. 12:9; 2 Tim. 2:22.
 2. Most of what this world finds pleasurable is out of step with Philippians 4:8 and is sinful, Heb. 11:25.
 3. Christians must be careful to avoid every type of evil, 1 Thess. 5:22.
- C. The companions we choose keenly affect what we say, do and record in our minds.
1. The Bible warns all Christians of the danger of evil companions, 1 Cor. 15:33.
 2. Christians are further cautioned from becoming unequally yoked with unbelievers, thereby led into sin, 2 Cor. 6:14.
 3. However, Christians are not forbidden from having contact with non-Christians as long as a friendship with the world does not occur, 1 Cor. 5:9-10; Jam. 4:4.

4. If Christians live intensely godly lives, they will be more likely to influence, persuade and perhaps convert their friends instead of being corrupted by one's friends, 1 Pet. 3:1-6.

II. Philippians 4:9 would have us teach each other God's ways.

- A. As Christians who hope to influence the world and as parents who hope to properly rear their children, we each need to live Philippians 4:8.
 1. The people around our children and us will not apply Phil. 4:8 to their lives if we do not apply it to our lives.
 2. Phil. 4:9 portrays the holy example in our lives that is "learned, and received, and heard, and seen."
 3. Sin and apathy toward religion in the lives of Christians and parents relates directly to the appearance of the same in the lives of others, including our children.
 4. By whatever standard of righteousness parents operate, their children are likely to do likewise.
- B. The children of God above all others ought to realize what matters in life.
 1. The most important factor in living life is to prepare ourselves to go to heaven, Ecc. 12:13-14.
 2. One can be poor and with few friends, but still be pleasing to God.
 3. Seeking heavenly things first is what matters most, Matt. 6:33.

Conclusion:

1. Don't be a litterbug! Garbage and trash do not belong in the mind or heart of any of God's children.
2. Each of us needs to guard himself against worldly corruption; the pleasures of sin cost too much — costing us an eternity in heaven.
3. There are morally good companions with whom we can associate and activities in which one can participate without compromising godliness; why not opt for them?
4. Conformity to the world rather than transformation of one's life after godliness is sinful, Rom. 12:1-2.

5. Every Christian (including each parent respecting his children) has the grave and sobering responsibility to put forth the best example and provide spiritual direction.

Invitation:

1. We must think on holy things and provide that example to those around us.
2. If we have failed in this regard, as erring Christians we need to humbly approach God in prayer and petition him for forgiveness, Acts 8:22.
3. Unbaptized believers must obey the Gospel before they can effectively embrace Phil. 4:8 and demonstrate it for others, Heb. 5:8-9; 2 Thess. 1:8.

The Place of the Old Testament Today

Romans 15:4

Thesis: Two-fold: to show conclusively that the Old Testament in its entirety has ceased to be the law by which men are bound **and** to discover the proper significance of the Old Testament to Christians.

Introduction:

1. Perhaps the thesis appears to be a riddle, a paradox or contradictory.
 - a. Both observations in the thesis, however, are true and harmonize perfectly with each other.
 - b. Restated, man is now amenable directly to the New Testament, which has superseded the Old Testament, while at the same time parts of the Old Testament still affect us indirectly.
2. Confusion concerning the proper roles of the Old and New testaments contributes immeasurably to the unfortunate and sinful religious division that characterizes Christianity or the religious community.
 - a. Most religious people have little or no conception regarding the significance or distinction between the testaments.
 - b. It, therefore, is little wonder that religious people are genuinely ignorant of how Bible doctrine affects them.
 - c. Few sincere religious people know whether to turn to the Old Testament or the New Testament or both for passages concerning the church, salvation, worship and doctrine.
3. Unfortunately, sometimes even members of the Lord's church, who ought to know better, appear to be clueless respecting the complementary but different roles of the testaments.
 - a. Probably most members of the church recognize that we appeal to the New Testament instead of the Old Testament for our direction in religion today.

- b. Some would even discard the Old Testament from any consideration respecting our knowledge and practice of Christianity.
- c. However, those individuals fail to realize the great dependence of the New Testament on the Old Testament, without which the New Testament would lack foundation and otherwise be difficult to impossible to understand.
- d. Further, many Christians fail to recognize that they are bound **indirectly** by numerous **principles** contained in sundry Old Testament passages, especially those topics that are also addressed in the New Testament.
- e. Additionally, the Old Testament is a vast resource of information respecting man's relationship to God and how God reacts toward human obedience and disobedience.

Body:

I. Contrary to popular opinion, the Old Testament as a unit (whole and in its entirety) has been replaced by the New Testament.

- A. The Old Testament, though begun to be penned by Moses, records a religious dispensation prior to Judaism.
 - 1. The first divinely given religion was a family-type religion, such as practiced by righteous Abel; his brother Cain corrupted that religion as did many others after him, all of which received divine condemnation rather than commendation.
 - 2. Called the Patriarchal Age, others who practiced this family religion included Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.
 - 3. Under this system of religion, God spoke through the fathers of the families and commanded animal sacrifices, Noah's ark, etc.
 - 4. Patriarchy for the descendants of Jacob ended with the establishment of Judaism or the Mosaic Age on Mt. Sinai; Patriarchy continued for everyone outside the nation of Israel (except proselytes) possibly until the conversion of the Samaritans (Acts 8) and the Gentiles (Acts 10-11).
- B. The Law of Moses that was delivered on Mt. Sinai ushered in a divinely authored national religion, Judaism.

1. Judaism replaced and superseded Patriarchy, though it also reflected some of the principles and laws of the former system of religion.
 2. Neither Patriarch nor Judaism, separately or combined, could save souls; each respectively saved souls of the obedient **in prospect** of still other dispensation in which the Messiah came to earth, Heb. 10:1-4.
 3. Judaism was characterized by sundry laws, animal sacrifices, lamps, incense, washings, sprinkling blood, a priesthood, etc.
 4. The apostle Paul portrayed Judaism as a vehicle by which humanity was transported into the Gospel Age, Gal. 3:22-29.
- C. Jesus Christ **personally** brought the Gospel into the world, John. 1:17.
1. Jesus Christ gave all mankind Universal Religion when he gave us the Gospel.
 2. The Gospel Age was predicted to begin in the days of the Romans (Dan. 2), in the generation in which Jesus lived (Mark 9:1) and after the death of the Christ, Heb. 9:15-16. See also Isa. 2:2-3; Joel 2:28-3:2.
 3. Bible history records that Judaism was discharged at the center cross of Calvary, but was allowed to remain in affect until replaced 50 days later when the church was established, Col. 2:14; Acts 2.
 4. The New Testament abounds with testimony that the Old Testament is no longer in affect and that instead we are bound the by the New Testament, John 12:48; Matt. 17:1ff; Eph. 2:15-16; Col. 2:14; Rom. 7:6-7; 2 Cor. 3:6-11; Heb. 7:18; 8:6; Revelation 20:12.
 5. Like Judaism before it, the Gospel or Christianity supersedes previous God-given religious law, yet it reestablishes some laws common to previous divine law, while also containing different laws respecting worship, doctrine and redemption.

II. Though the Old Testament has been replaced with the New Testament, the Old Testament still plays a significant role in Christianity.

- A. The Old Testament is worthy of study by Christians.
 - 1. Paul directed study of it, 2 Tim. 2:15.
 - 2. Paul also addressed the significance of the Old Testament in 2 Tim. 3:16-17.
 - 3. The Bereans searched the Old Testament to see if the Gospel plea was true, Acts 17:11.
 - 4. Peter declared the holy source of the Old Testament when addressing Christians, 2 Peter 1:20-21.
 - 5. Paul said that the Old Testament is for the Christian's learning or instruction, Rom. 15:4.
- B. The Old Testament is the foundation on which the New Testament rests.
 - 1. The four Gospel records, especially the first three, would be virtually meaningless without the Old Testament, to which they make frequent reference and from which they quote often.
 - 2. The entire Book of Acts refers extensively to the Old Testament and would be meaningless without the Old Testament.
 - 3. The Romans epistle is based almost entirely on the Old Testament, without which the Romans letter would be useless.
 - 4. Galatians and Ephesians reply heavily on the Old Testament for their teaching.
 - 5. Several other New Testament books, including Colossians, 2 Timothy, 2 Peter, Jude and Revelation, frequently refer to or quote the Old Testament.
 - 6. The Book of Hebrews would be almost entirely nonexistent if every Old Testament reference were removed from it.
 - 7. Virtually each New Testament book contains some degree of reference to or quotes from the Old Testament; clearly, if the Old Testament were unknown, much if not essentially the entire New

- Testament would be worthless to us; this factor makes the Old Testament extremely valuable to us.
- C. Many Old Testament passages possess indirect authority in the lives of Christians.
 - 1. Again, as a unit, the Old Testament is no longer the law to which we are bound today, Col. 2:14.
 - 2. However, the Old Testament contains laws that have been reestablished in the New Testament, e.g., 9 of the 10 commandments.
 - 3. Indirectly, then, such Old Testament passages contain insightful information to complement New Testament passages that treat the same topics.
 - 4. Though the Old Testament is not in force today, it still contributes to a better understanding of those topics about which both testaments say something.
 - D. Finally, the Old Testament provides an immeasurable wealth of lessons on moral values and interaction between God and man.
 - 1. Lev. 10:1-2, among other passages, teaches the punishment of God toward presumptuous sin.
 - 2. The death of Korah and his band teaches about God's reaction toward rebellion.
 - 3. The rewarding of Enoch, Noah, etc. shows that God favorably responds toward obedient souls.
 - 4. Cleansing of Naaman exhibits the superiority of what appears to be the foolishness of God over the wisdom of men; it also teaches the necessity of total obedience to God to secure the blessings of God.
 - 5. The providential punishment of nations by God demonstrates God's powers over them.
 - 6. Creation, causing the sun to stand still or go backwards reflects the omnipotence of God.
 - 7. Virtually every chapter of the Old Testament portrays some valuable lesson that can be applied profitably to Christianity.

Conclusion:

- 1. The Old Testament is not the spiritual law to which we are amenable today, but it is quite pertinent to Christianity.

2. The value of the Old Testament to the Christian is obvious if we were to disregard as much of the New Testament that is affected by the Old Testament
3. Also, the value of the Old Testament should manifest itself when studying nearly every biblical subject.
4. Some portions of the Old Testament are especially useful today because of the pragmatic information contained in it, e.g., Proverbs.

Invitation:

1. Both testaments demonstrate the requirement to obey God, without which one cannot be saved.
2. People living today who are disobedient to God's Word and meet God in eternity in that condition will be lost, 2 Thess. 1:7-9.
3. God requires mankind to obey to be saved, Heb. 5:8-9.
 - a. Unbaptized believer, Acts 2:38.
 - b. Erring child of God, Acts 8:22.

The People Had a Mind to Work

Nehemiah 4:6

Thesis: To glean principles from Nehemiah 1-6 that can encourage God's people today to a greater level of service.

Song: *I Want To Be A Worker*

Introduction:

1. The ten northern tribes (known as the nation of Israel) disappeared in Assyrian captivity as they intermingled with foreigners in a foreign land following the fall of the city of Samaria in 722 B.C.
2. Rural citizens of the nation of Judah were taken away into Babylonian captivity in 606 B.C., though these captives were permitted to retain their ethnicity in exclusive neighborhoods.
 - a. More deportations of Jews from Judah occurred in 597 B.C.
 - b. Jerusalem fell to Babylon in 587 B.C.
3. Persia defeated Babylon in 538 B.C.
 - a. Two years later in 536 B.C., the Jews were permitted to return from captivity to Canaan and were led by Zerubbabel.
 - b. Ezra led more Jews back to Canaan in 458 B.C.
 - c. Nehemiah led still more Jews back to Canaan in 444 B.C.
4. About Nehemiah:
 - a. Son of Hachaliah, 1:1.
 - b. In Shushan the palace, 1:1.
 - c. King's cupbearer, 1:11.
 - i) This was a high and important position.
 - ii) God's people often occupied high positions in foreign nations, e.g., Joseph, Esther, Daniel.
 - d. Nehemiah became aware of the dilapidated condition of Jerusalem and the reproach that it represented, 1:3.
 - i) Nehemiah wept, mourned and prayed, 1:4-11.

- ii) He acknowledged his sin and the sin of his Jewish brethren, 1:6-9.
- e. The king observed Nehemiah's sadness, 2:2.
 - i) Nehemiah approached God in prayer before proposing his request to the king, 2:4.
 - ii) The king permitted Nehemiah to go to Jerusalem, 2:6.
- 5. Think about the **principles** involved in the rebuilding of the walls around Jerusalem.
 - a. Imagine what applications those principles have today to the **work of the church**.
 - b. Essentially, aside from the details, the principles involved in this **success story** relate to any success story to which the people of God, even today, commit themselves.

Body:

I. Preparation to rebuild Jerusalem's walls.

- A. Nehemiah didn't waste any time.
 - 1. He arose in the night to survey the condition of the walls, 2:12-15; some tasks must be addressed even at night.
 - 2. He took just a few men with him, 2:12; not every task requires many persons.
- B. Nehemiah observed the condition of the walls and anticipated the work that needed to be done.
 - 1. He made plans, set goals and considered the ability of the people.
 - 2. He realized that it was a good work and that God was with them, 2:18.
- C. Preparation completed, Nehemiah exhorted the people to undertake the rebuilding of the walls; good leaders are necessary to achieve any goal.
 - 1. He pointed out the condition; people must be caused to realize any challenge before they can accomplish its goals, 2:17.
 - 2. He encouraged the people to begin rebuilding the walls at once, 2:18; procrastination defeats mere good intentions.
 - 3. The residents of Jerusalem had been intimidated by the enormity of the task to rebuild; they had

languished in self-defeat.

4. They had given up and resigned themselves to suffer the scorn of their enemies.
 5. The positive speech of Nehemiah uplifted the people's attitude and confidence.
- D. Their enemies, though, immediately attempted to discourage the people from rebuilding the walls.
1. Sanballat and Tobiah ridiculed the Jews and accused them of rebellion against the King, 2:19.
 2. Nehemiah repudiated the agitators and attributed the impending successful undertaking to God, 2:20.

II. **The building of the walls.**

- A. All had work to do; everyone joined in, 3:1-32; a coordinated and successful effort requires everyone to do his part.
- B. Sanballat and Tobiah continued to ridicule and try to raise an opposition to the Jews, 4:1-3; there are critics of every good work and adversaries of every good worker.
- C. Nehemiah resorted to prayer for his consolation, 4:4-5; reliance on prayer cannot be over emphasized.
- D. The people continued to rebuild the walls despite opposition and because **the people had a mind to work**, 4:6; the power of determination cannot be easily stymied.

III. **The enemies intensify their threats.**

- A. Many enemy peoples conspired to war against the Jews to prevent the completion of the walls, 4:7-8; the **number** of those who oppose a good work does not itself validate that opposition.
- B. The Jews adopted procedures to permit them to continue to rebuild the walls.
1. They first prayed to God, 4:9.
 2. They armed themselves for defense and continued to rebuild the walls, 4:10-21.
 3. They remained ready to fight, if necessary, day and night by not departing to their homes outside the city and wearing their clothes except for washing, 4:22-23.
 4. The preparedness and resistance to the threats of war prevented their enemies from attacking.

5. Nehemiah resolved interpersonal matters that otherwise could have hindered progress, 5:1-13; unrelated problems can derail a good work.
 6. The king made Nehemiah governor of Judah, 5:14-19; those who prove themselves in service are qualified to lead others.
- C. The enemies of the Jews sought to stop the completion of the walls through **distraction** of Nehemiah from his goal.
1. They repeatedly petitioned Nehemiah for a meeting in the **plains of Ono**, 6:1-4.
 2. Nehemiah responded, “...**I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down: why should the work cease, whilst I leave it, and come down to you?**” 6:3.
 3. Nehemiah’s enemies then resorted to **false accusations**, 6:5-8; unfortunately, good people engaged in good works are not immune to baseless accusations.
 4. Nehemiah reacted by praying to God, 6:9.
 5. Next, Nehemiah’s enemies hired Jews who tried to frighten Nehemiah from completing the walls, 6:10-14; sometimes opposition arises from among those who are supposed to be part of the solution and fellow workers.
 6. Nehemiah, though, refused to be frightened from accomplishing the task to which God had appointed him.

IV. The wall was finished.

- A. The walls were completed in the astounding brief span of 52 days, 6:15; it is amazing what can be accomplished for the Lord when godly people dedicate themselves to the task at hand and refuse to be swayed from it.
- B. The enemies of the Jews were demoralized and forced to recognize that the rebuilding of the walls was the will of God, 6:16; often the success of godly workers sets aside former criticism, while at the same time glorifying God.
- C. The walls were completed despite the disloyalty of many of the Jews in Jerusalem who had formed ungodly alliances with the enemies of God’s people, 6:17-19;

disloyalty among the children of God saddens faithful workers, but it does not deter them from their labors.

- V. **How the Jews could have responded to Nehemiah in a number of ways instead of adopting a mind to work.**
- A. “We tried that before and it didn’t work.”
 - B. “What do you think we pay you for?”
 - C. “Who do you think you are to come here and tell us such things?”
 - D. “What’s wrong with things just the way they are?”
 - E. “You’re too negative; tell us only positive things that make us feel good.”
 - F. “Everyone in the community already knows what we believe and they don’t accept it.”
 - G. Fortunately, Nehemiah was an able leader and the people had a mind to work.

Conclusion:

- 1. Old Testament principles can bolster the faithful service of Christians, Rom. 15:4.
- 2. The seemingly impossible is possible with the help of God, Phil. 4:13.
- 3. Faith that works is acceptable to God, Jam. 2:14-26.
- 4. Qualified leaders must lead and the rest must work together for the common goal, Titus 3:1.
- 5. Working together accomplishes much good and draws the workers closer to each other and God, 2 Cor.6:1.
- 6. **There’s no telling what good Christians can accomplish as long as they have a mind to work.**

Invitation:

- 1. The attitude that manifests itself in a “mind to work” is the same attitude and commitment required to become a child of God.
- 2. Do you have a mind to obey God and become a child of God, Acts 5:29; Heb. 5:9; Acts 2:38?
- 3. If an erring child of God, do you have a mind to obey God once more, Acts 8:22?

Miracles of Jesus in Mark

Mark 8:22-26

Thesis: To survey the miracles of our Lord that are recorded in the Gospel According to Mark.

Introduction:

1. Before we can discuss the miracles of Jesus in the Gospel according to Mark, we must render a **biblical definition** for what we mean by *miracles*.
 - a. *Easton's Bible Dictionary*, in part, says a miracle is “an event in the external world brought about by the immediate agency or the simple volition of God, operating without the use of means capable of being discerned by the senses, and designed to authenticate the divine commission of a religious teacher and the truth of his message (John 2:18; Matt. 12:38).” (*Easton's Bible Dict.*)
 - b. The first definition in *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* likewise represents the biblical sense in which the word miracle is used: “an extraordinary event manifesting divine intervention in human affairs.”
2. Both of these definitions note that a miracle involves:
 - a. divine intervention in the affairs of men, and
 - b. not the effect but the affect of the miracle is clearly discernible to mortal observers.
 - c. Importantly, *Easton's* also denotes that a miracle has a purpose, namely to:
 - i) bring forth new revelation from God and
 - ii) validate that message and its messenger.

Body:

- I. **Miracles and providence differ chiefly in that though they both derive from divine power and involve divine intervention, the former is designed to be observable whereas the latter is not open to inspection.**
 - A. **Miracles** may provide new revelation and prove something through their discernible evidence.

1. The **purpose** of miracles is concisely stated in Mark 16:20, “And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with *them*, and confirming the word with signs following.”
 2. Miracles proved the Gospel message to be true.
 3. Anything else accomplished by miracles was incidental and a **byproduct** (e.g., healing) to the true purpose of miracles.
- B. **Providence** does not provide new revelation directly and because it is **not discernible**, it is **not designed to prove anything**.
1. Providence has a different mission from miracles.
 2. Chiefly the answering of prayer by the children of God (Matthew 6:25-34) and
 3. God’s behind the scenes manipulation of events (Daniel 2:21; John 19:11).

II. What a miracle IS NOT.

- A. By *miracle*, we **do not mean** any of the biblically inaccurate references often used by contemporary man.
1. For instance, though the marvel of **birth** is awe-inspiring, that event, strictly speaking, is not a miracle.
 - a) Women have been giving birth through **natural means** in keeping with natural law for thousands of years.
 - b) Mankind made his debut on earth through supernatural means (i.e., Adam and Even were miraculously created), but everyone else, excepting Jesus Christ, owes his existence to wholly natural means (i.e., procreation).
 2. Further, healing from disease and injury that results from appeal to medicine and surgery is not miraculous but relates to non-miraculous application of natural law, and perhaps God’s providence in conjunction with natural law.
 - a) Some of what is ascribed to God as miraculous intervention is a **poor exhibit of a divine miracle** and undercuts the omnipotence of God,

- which was truly demonstrated in Bible miracles (e.g., incomplete healing from accident or disease does not do justice to the miraculous vehicle and Deity that authored it).
- b) Some **supposed miracles** are **frauds** because nothing has been effected despite prayers and claims to the contrary (e.g., praying to God that poison ivy be cured and subsequently thanking God for the miracle, notwithstanding the afflicted goes home with the poison ivy with which he also came).
3. Finally, all **modern miracles** are **bogus**, since Scripture clearly teaches that miracles were temporary and ended when the purpose for which they were given was fulfilled (1 Cor. 13:8-12; Eph. 4:11-13).
 - a) Miracles are confined to the biblical context long since completed and are **not contemporary events**.
 - b) We must turn exclusively to the Bible to examine miracles.

III. Original language and English words for *miracle*.

- A. Besides the English word *miracle*, additional, similar terms, translated from several Hebrew and Greek words describe what we categorically refer to as miracles in the Bible. These terms include:
 1. power,
 2. mighty works,
 3. signs and
 4. wonders.
- B. In the New Testament these four Greek words are principally used to designate miracles:
 1. **Semeion, [say-mi'-on]** a “sign”, i.e., an evidence of a divine commission; an attestation of a divine message (Matt. 12:38, 39; 16:1, 4; Mark 8:11; Luke 11:16; 23:8; John 2:11, 18, 23; Acts 6:8 ...)
 2. **Teras, [ter'-as]** “wonders;” ... Acts 2:19
 3. **Dunamis, [doo'-nam-is]** “mighty works;” works of superhuman power (Acts 2:22; Rom. 15:19; 2

Thess. 2:9) ...

4. **Ergon, [er'-gon]** “works;” John 5:20, 36 (*Easton’s Bible Dict.*)

IV. Miracles of Jesus appearing in Mark.

- A. There are **18 miracles** of Jesus recorded in the Gospel according to Mark.
 1. Only one of them is unique to Mark.
 2. **The Blind Man Near Bethsaida (8:22-26)**
- B. The other three Gospel records also contain miracles of Jesus not reported in other accounts, besides references to miracles that do appear in one or more other Gospel records.
 1. **Matthew** has **21** miracles of Jesus, **two** of which are unique to Matthew;
 2. **Luke** has **18** miracles of Jesus, **five** of which are unique to Luke;
 3. **John** has **seven** miracles of Jesus, **five** of which are unique to John.
- C. The miracles of Jesus recorded in Mark are:
 1. **The Man with an Unclean Spirit** (1:23-26; cf. Luke 4:33-35)
 2. **Healing Simon’s Mother-in-law** (1:30-31; cf. Luke 4:38-39)
 3. **Healing a Leper** (1:40-45; cf. Matt. 8:2-4; Luke 5:12-14)
 4. **Healing Palsy** (2:1-12; cf. Matt. 9:2-8; Luke 5:17-26)
 5. **The Withered Hand** (3:1-6; cf. Matt. 12:9-14; Luke 6:6-11)
 6. **Stilling the Storm** (4:35-41; cf. Matt. 8:23-27; Luke 8:22-25)
 7. **The Gadarene Demoniac** (5:1-20; cf. Matt. 8:28-34; Luke 8:26-39)
 8. **The Daughter of Jairus** (5:21-43; cf. Matt. 9:18-26; Luke 8:40-56)
 9. **The Afflicted Woman** (5:25-34; cf. Matt. 9:20-22; Luke 8:43-48)
 10. **Feeding the Five Thousand** (6:30-46; cf. Matt. 14:13-23; Luke 9:10-17; John 6:1-15)

11. **Jesus Walking on the Water** (6:47-56; cf. Matt. 14:24-36; John 6:16-21)
12. **Syrophenician Woman's Daughter** (7:24-30; cf. Matt. 15:21-28)
13. **Deaf and Dumb Man** (7:31-37; cf. Matt. 15:29-31)
14. **Feeding the Four Thousand** (8:1-9; cf. Matt. 15:32-38)
15. The **Blind Man Near Bethsaida (8:22-26, unique to Mark)**
16. The **Demoniac Boy** (9:14-29; cf. Matt. 17:14-20; Luke 9:37-43)
17. The **Blind Men Near Jericho** (10:46-52; cf. Matt. 20:29-34; Luke 18:35-43)
18. The **Withered Fig Tree** (11:20-25; cf. Matt. 21:20-22)

D. The miracles of Jesus demonstrated his **divine power over disease, nature, the spirit world, material things and death.**

1. Miracles that Jesus performed proved that he was from God.
2. "There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him" (**John 3:1-2**).
3. "And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name" (**John 20:30-31**).

V. **How the Gospel of Mark compares to the other Gospel accounts.**

- A. Like the miracles, most of the verses in the Gospel According to Mark also appear in the companion Gospel accounts.
 1. "Out of a total of 662 verses, Mark has 406 in

common with Matthew and Luke, 145 with Matthew, 60 with Luke, and at most 51 peculiar to itself.” (*Easton’s Bible Dict.*)

- B. What Mark recorded and the way in which he recorded it was fashioned especially for its intended **audience, the Romans**.
 - 1. Therefore, absent from Mark are the genealogies of Christ, the early life of John the Baptist and Jesus (the **first 30 years**).
 - 2. He “...only twice quotes from the Old Testament...” (*Easton’s Bible Dict.*)
- C. Mark ‘*cut to the chase*’ (at least as far as the book’s readers would be concerned) and as well relied more on **testimony** than the fulfillment of **prophecy**.
 - 1. Mark appealed to the **portion of the body of evidence** that was the most likely to persuade the auditors of his Gospel record concerning the Christ and his kingdom.
 - 2. Hence, we can expect Mark’s rendition of Christ’s **miracles** recorded in his Gospel to be especially **adaptable to his Roman audience**.
- D. **Modern society** more nearly mirrors the Romans than the Jews of 2,000 years ago.
 - 1. We, then, can expect the Gospel of Mark, inclusive of its record of Christ’s miracles, to be particularly useful to contemporary man.
 - 2. The Gospel of Mark is well able to establish a healthy faith in Jesus Christ and his kingdom.
 - 3. Mark proceeded to do this through an emphasis on the miracles of Christ.
 - 4. “... much shorter than Matthew’s, not giving so full an account of Christ’s sermons as that did, but insisting chiefly on his miracles.” (*Matthew Henry*)

VI. Overview of Jesus’ miracles recorded in Mark.

- A. The **first miracle** that Mark chose to record evidenced the supreme power of Jesus Christ over the **spirit world** (1:23-26, the man with an unclean spirit).
 - 1. Mark did not copy the incident from Matthew, as the critic might assert, since Matthew did not

- chronicle this particular miracle in his record.
2. Each of the first three Gospel records have sometimes been arranged first, second or third place in the New Testament.
 3. However, generally the present order of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John commonly is thought to represent the chronological sequence in which they were published.
 4. “Each of the 3 Gospels has been put first, each second, and each third, and each in turn has been regarded as the source of the others.” (*ISBE*)
- B. The **second miracle** that Mark recorded showed Jesus’ power over **disease** (1:30-31, healing Peter’s mother-in-law).
1. Like the previous miracle, only Mark and Luke reported this particular miracle.
 2. While Luke noted the power of Jesus to speak the disease gone, Mark chronicled the compassion and personal activity of Jesus as he took the sick woman by the hand and lifted her to her feet.
 3. Both records mention that Jesus healed several others, too, on that occasion.
- C. The **third miracle** appears in each of the three first Gospel records and also is a healing miracle (1:40-45, healing a leper).
1. The **disease** from which this person was cured was an outwardly visible malady, perhaps even more so than the fever with which Peter’s mother-in-law was afflicted.
 2. Yet, Jesus healed the leprous man instantly and completely.
 3. Consequently, his fame spread and other sick came to him for healing.
- D. The **fourth** (2:1-12, healing palsy) and **fifth** (3:1-6, healing a withered hand) miracles likewise were miracles over **disease** and appear in Matthew, Mark and Luke.
1. Healing a **withered hand** is another rather **obvious** miracle.
 2. To learn the **full account, each** of the Gospel

- records in which it appears is essential.
- E. The **sixth miracle** recorded by Mark demonstrated the power of Jesus over **nature** (4:35-41, stilling the storm).
1. This miracle was done in the presence of the apostles of Christ in the midst of the Sea of Galilee.
 2. It reinforced with them just with whom they were companion.
- F. The **seventh, eighth and ninth** miracles also appear in the first three Gospel records.
1. Respectively, they show Jesus victorious over the **spirit world** (5:1-20, Gadarene possessed with unclean spirits),
 2. **disease** (5:25-34, the afflicted woman) and
 3. **death** (5:21-43, Jairus' daughter).
- G. The **tenth** miracle appears in *all four Gospel records* (6:30-46, feeding the 5,000) and is a miracle over **nature**.
1. The appearance of this miracle in each of the Gospel records.
 2. This is an indication that the miracles of Jesus were widely known and *amply documented* — thereby, undeniable *evidence*.
- H. Only Luke omits the **eleventh** miracle that Mark recorded, another victory for Jesus over **nature** (6:47-56, Jesus walking on water).
- I. Mark's **twelfth** miracle of Jesus was over the **spirit world** again (7:24-30, unclean spirit in the Syrophenician Woman's daughter).
1. The miracles of Jesus became commonplace and represented the multiplication of evidence regarding the Deity of Jesus.
 2. However, this miracle was unique in that the recipient of this miracle was not Jewish, but a Gentile.
 3. This was perhaps a subtle hint that ultimately the ministry of the Christ would affect all of humanity (cf., Gen. 12:1-2; Isa. 62:2).
- J. The **thirteenth** miracle of Jesus that Mark recorded exhibited Jesus' power over **disease** (7:31-37, deaf man

with a speech impediment).

- K. The **fourteenth** miracle was over **nature** as Jesus fed 4,000 this time (8:1-9).
- L. ***We will skip for now the **fifteenth** miracle of Jesus that Mark recorded and treat it separately since it is the only miracle of Jesus that was recorded exclusively in the Gospel According to Mark.***
- M. Mark's **sixteenth** miracle of Jesus was over the **spirit world** (9:14-29, a boy with an unclean spirit).
- N. The **seventeenth** miracle recorded by Mark is over **disease** (10:46-52, blind man near Jericho).
- O. Mark's **eighteenth** miracle of Jesus demonstrated our Lord's supremacy over **nature** (11:20-25, withered fig tree).

VII. The miracle of Jesus recorded only in Mark.

- A. The combined accounts of the Gospel records provide a full picture of the events that they chronicle, including the miracles of Jesus.
 - 1. However, the Gospel of Mark records one miracle that does not appear in any of the three other Gospel records.
 - 2. This is, by Mark's list, miracle number **fifteen**, the blind man near Bethsaida (8:22-26) and one of the many miracles of Jesus over **disease**. It reads:
 - a) "And he cometh to Bethsaida; and they bring a blind man unto him, and besought him to touch him. And he took the blind man by the hand, and led him out of the town; and when he had spit on his eyes, and put his hands upon him, he asked him if he saw ought. And he looked up, and said, I see men as trees, walking. After that he put his hands again upon his eyes, and made him look up: and he was restored, and saw every man clearly. And he sent him away to his house, saying, Neither go into the town, nor tell it to any in the town" (Mark 8:22-26).
- B. Bethsaida was at the northeast corner of the Sea of Galilee.

1. Several Galilean cities were on the shore of this important inland body of water in Palestine, including Chorazin, Capernaum and Tiberias.
- C. This account contains some curious and **mysterious elements** (i.e., some things not explained in the context).
1. Why did Jesus lead the man out of the city before healing him?
 2. The verses immediately preceding this healing find the Pharisees seeking a sign from Jesus and desiring an opportunity to discredit him.
 3. While our Lord refused to lend himself to the disingenuous Pharisees who already had ample evidence regarding him, apparently, Jesus would not deny the blind man the miracle of healing that he needed to restore his sight.
 4. Hence, Jesus removed the blind man from the arena of the Pharisee's gawking.
- D. The **audience** for this miracle of Jesus was an audience of one (other than his disciples, verses 10, 27), the blind man.
1. Therefore, the miracle was for the benefit (spiritually) of the blind man and our Lord's disciples.
 2. The byproduct of the miracle, healing from blindness, was effected upon the intended pawn of the Pharisees (the blind man).
- E. "Why did Jesus **not heal** the blind man **immediately** in this instance?"
1. No doubt Jesus could as easily restored sight to this blind man as readily as he had healed countless other persons.
 2. The blind man was put forth by the Pharisees as a challenge to the miraculous powers of Jesus.
 3. For the sake of the blind man as well as the disciples of Christ, Jesus particularly emphasized his ability to perform a genuine miracle in what was put forth by his enemies as a *test case*.

4. Consequently, Jesus enlisted the testimony of the blind man himself as to the progress of the successful application of the miracle.
 5. Doubtless, the dramatic restoration of sight emboldened the faith of the blind man and the disciples in the Deity of Jesus.
- F. Jesus told the former blind man **not to return to the city** for the same reason for which our Lord led the man from the city before performing the miracle.
1. Jesus did not intend for the Pharisees to have the **sign they demanded**.
 2. They and all men in Palestine had **ample evidence** regarding the miracles of Jesus, etc.
 3. With dishonest hearts and spiritually derelict, they had fully demonstrated before their disdain for God and Jesus, too.
 4. It was not time yet for Jesus to be taken on trumped up charges and put to death for us, which further aggravation of the Pharisees just then may have precipitated prematurely.
- G. Not only the Pharisees, but also the populace of **Bethsaida** itself was of the sort **not worthy** of further miraculous demonstrations.
1. Jesus condemned Bethsaida for not being responsive to the signs he performed there.
 2. “Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes” (Matthew 11:21).
 3. The fact that no one followed Jesus as he led the blind man from the city may also indicate the general disinterest exhibited for spiritual matters by the citizens of that city.
- H. There is **no** indication that even the blind man had any interest or **expectation** regarding Jesus healing him from blindness.
1. This may shed light on why our Lord performed this healing miracle in *stages*.

2. The blind man's interest was peaked following stage one when his vision began to be restored.
3. When quizzed by the Christ, the blind man articulated an interest in his own healing.

VIII. It is difficult not to resort to making homilies from the account of this miracle.

- A. There is a frightening similarity between the blind man and Bethsaida's lack of interest in the ministry of Jesus then to the **widespread lack of interest in spiritual matters** today.
- B. Just as many were apathetic to the actual presence of Jesus Christ during his earthly ministry, now countless souls are **impervious to the saving ministry of Jesus Christ** through the Gospel.

Conclusion:

1. In summary, **true miracles** were episodes of **immediate divine intervention** into human affairs.
 - a. They were intentionally visible to humanity.
 - b. Their purpose was to deliver new revelation,
 - c. while validating the revelation and
 - d. the messenger.
2. These **miracles evidenced divine power** over
 - a. disease,
 - b. nature,
 - c. the spirit world,
 - d. material things and
 - e. death.
3. About **18** of our Lord's miracles are recorded in the Gospel According to Mark.
 - a. Only **one** of these miracles appears **exclusively** in Mark.
4. The Gospel of Mark was written to a **Roman readership**.
 - a. Therefore, absent in Mark are most references to the Old Testament and the prophecies found therein, which were more meaningful to Jewish readers.
 - b. Hence, Mark relies heavily on the miracles of Jesus to prove to that he is the Savior of the world.
5. The miracles of Jesus that are recorded in Mark constitute **sufficient evidence** by which one can confidently develop faith in Jesus Christ.

- a. Whereas the miraculous age concluded when the purpose for which miracles were implemented was fulfilled, those miracles that appear in Mark are they to which men living now must appeal for their faith.
 - b. Mark did **not** pen a *different Gospel* (Galatians 2:6-9), but selected from the **body of evidence** that part that was predictably the most persuasive to the Roman mind.
6. **Contemporary society** mirrors the old Roman world.
- a. Therefore, **we ought to benefit** greatly from the Gospel According to Mark in establishing a confident faith in Jesus Christ, our Savior.
 - b. God forbid that we should demonstrate the **indifference** to the Christ and his ministry for which **Bethsaida**, other cities and the religious leaders of the first century were justly condemned by our Lord.

Life's Burdens

Galatians 6:2, 5

Thesis: To emphasize Christian responsibilities respecting life's burdens

Introduction:

1. The burdens of this life are often many, frustrating and relentless.
 - a. What individual responsibilities do we have respecting these burdens that appear in our lives and the lives of others around us?
 - b. Our responsibility depends on the **type** of burden.
2. The word "burden" in Gal. 6:2 **appears** to contradict the usage of the same English word in Gal. 6:5.
 - a. The "burden" addressed in this context pertains to "faults" or sins of verse one.
 - b. The word "burden" in 6:2 refers to heavy burdensome grief for sin, which cannot be borne alone.
 - c. The word "burden" in 6:5 refers to a burden that can be borne or carried, and in this verse, without help from another.
3. Borrowing a **principle** from this context, for the next few moments, we will emphasize Christian responsibilities respecting life's burdens.

Body:

I. Galatians 6:2

- A. "Burden" here is from the Greek "**baros**."
 1. It means, "weight, burdensome, difficult requirements, load, oppressive, momentous, heavy, pressing on one; it is the idea of a **crushing load**."
 2. This type of burden cannot be borne or carried alone.
- B. If we have a burden of this kind, we should appeal to our brethren for help.
 1. Christians who become aware of the crushing

burdens of other Christians ought to willingly help them carry these burdens.

2. These verses are addressed to brethren (6:1) and primarily affect interaction between brethren, but we may elect to assist non-Christians as we have opportunity, 6:10.

C. Biblical examples of crushing burdens lifted with the help of others.

1. Physical burdens lifted: Acts 4:34-35; 1 Cor. 16:1-2; Rom. 15:26; 2 Cor. 9:1-5; 8:4.
2. Spiritual burdens lifted: Rom. 12:15; 2 Cor. 1:3-4.

II. Galatians 6:5

A. “Burden” here is from the Greek “**phortion**.”

1. It means, “load carried as in the cargo of a ship.
2. In this verse, it represents a **daily burden** for which no one needs help to bear.

B. Since this burden can be borne alone, it must be borne alone.

1. One should not expect anyone to carry this type of burden for him.
2. Further, we should not seek to lift this type of burden from the shoulders of one to whom it belongs.

C. Biblical examples of daily burdens that are not to be borne by one’s brethren (under normal circumstances).

1. Physical burdens: 2 Thess. 3:10; 1 Tim. 5:8; however, daily burdens became crushing burdens to the saints in Jerusalem following Pentecost and later in Judaea during famine.
2. Spiritual burdens: There are individual spiritual responsibilities that if one fails to accept brethren still cannot bear them, 2 Thess. 3:6; Matt. 18:15-17.

Conclusion:

1. Christians have individual responsibilities as well as congregational responsibilities to aid those with crushing burdens.
2. Christians have daily burdens that under normal circumstances they alone must bear.

3. Daily burdens can become crushing burdens to which Christians must respond and bear.
4. We do not fulfill the Law of Christ if we do not carry our own daily burdens and help lift crushing burdens from our brethren.

Invitation:

1. The burden of sin is a burden only Jesus Christ can lift, and only if we let him.
2. Erring Christians must repent and pray, Acts 8:22.
3. All other accountable souls must believe and be baptized, Mark 16:16.

What It Means to be a Lawbreaker

James 2:8-12

Thesis: To consider what it means to be a lawbreaker

Song: *Trust and Obey*

Introduction:

1. What makes one a lawbreaker, 1 John 3:4?
 - a. Every soul is a lawbreaker, even if one tries not to be a lawbreaker, Rom. 3:10, 23.
 - b. Jesus Christ was the only exception, who did no sin, 1 Pet. 2:22.
2. How serious, then, is the circumstance of sin (i.e., being a lawbreaker), in which condition mortals find themselves, Rom. 6:23; Jam. 2:26; 2 Thess. 1:7-9?
 - a. What can one do to extricate himself from sin and its consequence, or to compensate for being a lawbreaker, Rom. 5:20; Eph. 2:8?
 - b. However, will God hold Christians guiltless when they **purposely** commit sins (i.e., are lawbreakers), Rom. 6:1-2; **Heb. 10:26-31**?
3. On the other hand, Christians who obey but sometimes stumble in sin can have confidence respecting the forgiveness of their sins, Acts 8:22; 1 John 1:7, 9.
 - a. Yet, forgiveness is not possible if one continues to be a lawbreaker, and
 - b. He persists in disregarding religious authority.

Body:

- I. **The subject of being a lawbreaker relates to authority in religion and whether one will obey God.**
 - A. Jesus Christ has **all authority** in heaven and in earth, Matt. 28:18, ASV; Col. 3:17.
 1. There are tremendous consequences for disregarding the authority of Christ, John 12:48.

2. There are also significant reasons to obey Jesus Christ, Heb. 5:8-9; Matt. 25:21.
- B. Jesus delegated authority to his apostles, Matt. 16:19; 18:18.
 1. The apostles were enabled by the Holy Spirit to act on behalf of God in heaven, John 14:26; 15:26; 16:13; Acts 2:1-4.
 2. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the apostles were uniquely the “ambassadors for Christ,” 2 Cor. 5:20.
- C. The church and Christians who comprise it are obligated to submit to divine authority or be lawbreakers, Eph. 5:24.
- D. The home is obligated to submit to the husband and father of the family or be guilty of lawbreaking, Eph. 5:22; 6:1-2.
- E. Civil government exists by divine design (but no particular form of government), to which its citizens must submit or be lawbreakers, Rom. 13:1-7.

II. The lawbreaker sets aside the affect and authority of the whole law.

- A. The Law of Moses (and actually Patriarchy also) possessed no provision in itself to justify lawbreakers.
 1. Condemnation as a lawbreaker came upon everyone who sinned against any part of it, **Deut. 27:26; Gal. 3:10-11**.
 2. For first century Jews, for instance, to forsake Christianity for a return to Judaism constituted spiritual suicide, Gal.; Heb.
 3. Fortunately, the New Testament does provide a means to offset the penalty of being a lawbreaker, Acts 2:36-38.
- B. By inspiration, James also affirmed that breaking any law of God makes one a lawbreaker, Jam. 2:8-12.
 1. It was neither the Old Testament nor the New Testament argument that, for instance, if one was guilty of **murder** that he also was guilty of **adultery**, Jam. 2:11.
 2. However, breaking any law makes one a

lawbreaker or lawless, 1 John 3:4, ASV.

3. To illustrate, imagine the time when our nation was still being settled. A father sent his oldest son beyond the frontier to prepare for the arrival later of his father with the rest of the family and household stuff. The son observed to himself that his father had selected just the right spot on the homestead for the house and the son built the house accordingly. Likewise, the son agreed with his dad regarding where to dig the well and he dug the well in that place. However, the son concluded that his father erred regarding where the barn should be built, and the son opted for another building site for the barn. In which of these three instances did this son obey his father? The correct answer is **none!** In each instance, the son set aside the law of his father and did what he wanted to do. Coincidentally, two out of three times the wills of the father and the son were the same.
4. According to James 4:11-12, to violate any portion of God's law removes one from being a doer of the law and elevates him to be a judge of the law; essentially, we put ourselves in the place of God when we decide which laws we will reject and which ones we will adopt as our own.
 - C. When the **church** or the Christians who comprise it elect to be lawbreakers, there is a serious *authority problem*.
 - D. Whenever family members elect to be lawbreakers, there is a serious authority problem in the **home**.
 - E. Whenever citizens elect to be lawbreakers, there is a serious authority problem respecting civil government, Acts 5:29.

Conclusion:

1. Anyone who elects to disregard any part of the Gospel (i.e., be a lawbreaker) needs an attitude adjustment respecting authority in religion.
2. Anyone who attempts to change the church as God designed it (e.g., female leadership, instrumental music, etc.) needs an attitude adjustment respecting authority in religion.

3. Anyone who proposes to change God's pattern for the home (e.g., homosexual parents, daddyless homes, ruled by matriarchs, etc.) needs an attitude adjustment respecting authority in religion.
4. Anyone who supposes he can exempt himself from obeying civil law (e.g., cheating on his taxes, break speed limit laws, etc.) needs an attitude adjustment respecting authority in religion.

Invitation:

1. These attitude adjustments are called repentance, Acts 17:30.
2. For the non-Christian, repentance is preceded by faith (John 8:24) and followed by professing Christ (Rom. 10:9-10) and baptism, Acts 2:38.
3. For erring Christians, penitence is coupled with prayer, Acts 8:22.

God Bless America

Psalm 33:12; Proverbs 14:34

Thesis: “Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD ...” (Psalm 33:12). “Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people” (Proverbs 14:34).

Song: *America the Beautiful*

Introduction:

1. Many of the first settlers who flocked to the shores of America came seeking religious freedom.
2. The laws that our *founding fathers* made to govern this nation were often based on biblical principles.
3. At one time, the United States of America was referred to as a *Christian nation*.
4. Few reflective souls would seriously doubt that America has been wonderfully blessed by Almighty God over the past two centuries or so.
5. In former years when facing great trials, our nation has petitioned God on bended knee in prayer.
6. However, do we as a nation, as individuals or even as the church, have a right today to expect God to grant our plea that he bless America, Psa. 33:12; Prov. 14:34?

Body:

- I. **America today is far from being a *Christian nation*.**
 - A. First, the face of religion in America has changed.
 1. There has been a great influx of other world religions into our nation, including: Judaism, Islam, Buddhism and Hinduism.
 2. American denominationalism in so-called Christianity has greatly expanded and in the process significantly diminished its reliance on biblical principles.
 3. Increasingly, the American population is at best indifferent to religion and at worst has embraced practical atheism.

- B. Consequently, our country is guilty of many sins.
1. A nation that murders a million and half babies annually through **abortion** is hardly in a position to petition God to bless America, Gen. 9:6.
 2. A nation that abounds in **immoralities**, including adultery, fornication and homosexuality, is in an untenable position to petition God to bless America, 1 Cor. 6:9; Gal. 5:19.
 3. A nation that is immersed in **alcohol** and other pleasure **drugs** is neither in the right frame of mind nor demonstrating a proper conduct by which it is reasonable for it to ask God to bless America, 1 Cor. 6:10; Gal. 5:21.
 4. A nation whose citizens have no or little respect for the **rule of law** ought to be embarrassed to petition God to bless America, Rom. 13:1-7.
 5. A nation whose citizens often exhibit a poor **work ethic**, prefer the **public dole** (handout) and place their hope in **gambling** can hardly expect God to bless America, 2 Thess. 3:10; Eph. 4:28.

II. Even the Lord's church today often falls far short of being the ideal church of the Bible.

- A. The Lord's church has undergone some hurtful **changes** over the years.
1. Not long after the restoration of New Testament Christianity in America through the present, the church has experienced a gradual and continual **departure** from its biblical moorings, 1 Tim. 4:1; 2 Tim. 2:3-4; Acts 20:30.
 2. Unfortunately, the church has been lax in **policing itself**, Rom. 16:17-18; Titus 3:10; 2 Thess. 3:6, 14; 1 Cor. 5:1, 13; Titus 1:9.
 3. Lamentably, the church has settled into deadly **indifference**, Rev. 2:4; 3:15-16.
- B. Consequently, respect for **Bible authority and God** who gave man the Bible is sometimes deficient.
1. Congregations and the Christians who comprise them can hardly expect God to hear their cries to bless America while **adding to and subtracting**

- from** the Bible, Rev. 22:18-19; Isa. 59:1-3.
2. Congregations and Christians who **distort worship** (instrumental music, female leadership, choirs, charismatic tendencies) cannot honestly hope that God will bless America on their account, Eph. 5:19; 1 Tim. 2:11-12; 1 Cor. 13:8-13.
 3. Congregations and Christians who try to extend fellowship to denominations (**ecumenism**) cannot move God bless America according to their pleas, Eph. 5:11; 2 Cor. 6:14.
 4. Congregations and Christians who favor **false doctrine** (premillennialism, modernism) over Bible truth can hardly expect God to hear their pleas to bless America, 2 John 9-11; Gal. 1:6-9.
 5. Congregations and Christians who alter the church **mission** to downplay evangelism and append entertainment cannot reasonably expect God to bless America because they request it, Mark 16:15-16; 1 Cor. 14:12; Gal. 6:10.
 6. Congregations and Christians who **befriend the world** from which they were saved are in no position to petition God to bless America, Jam. 4:4; Luke 9:62.
 7. Congregations and Christians who do not **pray** regularly cannot expect their petition to God to result in him blessing America, 1 Thess. 5:17.
 8. Congregations and Christians who **fail to faithfully practice Christianity** are not in a position to ask God to bless America, Luke 6:46.

Conclusion:

1. “Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD ...” Psalm 33:12.
2. “Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people,” Proverbs 14:34.
3. Neither our nation nor the church (or Christians) can reasonably expect that God will heed pleas to bless America while persisting in disobedience.

Invitation:

1. Petitions for God to bless America will be more effective when

those making such petitions are righteous, Jam. 5:16.

2. Unbaptized believers need to repent and be immersed for the remission of sins, Acts 2:38; Rom. 6:3-5.
3. Erring Christians need to repent and pray as privately or as publicly as the sin, Acts 8:22.

The Value of a Soul

Matthew 16:26

Thesis: To effect zealous evangelism in the communities in which Christians live and labor, by causing the children of God to realize and acknowledge the awesome value of even a single soul.

Songs: *Far and Near, Must I Go and Empty Handed, Rescue the Perishing, Seeking the Lost, Will You Not Tell It Today*

Introduction:

1. It is a grievously sad day when the children of God seem to care little for the welfare of their souls and exhibit even less concern for lost souls!
2. Planet earth is now home to several billion souls, the vast majority of whom are lost and will cross the threshold of eternity unprepared to meet man's Creator and God.
3. It is evident from the Scriptures that all of heaven and godly servants greatly care for the souls of mankind.
4. The most valuable commodity on the earth is the human soul (regardless of race, etc.).

Body:

I. God's concern for the souls of men is abundantly demonstrated in Scripture.

- A. God's intention before the creation of the world to redeem man once he fell away shows that God is deeply concerned about the souls of men.
 1. 1 Pet. 1:18-20; Titus 1:1-3; Eph. 3:1-12.
 2. Though "world" may mean "age" in some applications in Scripture, "world" is translated "times eternal" in the ASV rendering of Titus 1:1-3, and Eph. 3:1-12 (11) says that Jesus Christ's coming to save lost men was in the "eternal purpose" of God, hence, before the "world" began.
- B. God further demonstrated his concern for mortal souls by preparing man for the reception of the Savior.
 1. At a divinely appointed time, after a number of

centuries of interaction with God, the Messiah came to earth (Gal. 3:22-29; 4:1-5) to reveal the “mystery” of the Gospel, Col. 1:26.

2. The ages preceding the Gospel Age were preparatory to the deliverance of the Gospel by our Lord (John 1:17) and therefore **prefigured** and **foreshadowed** the Gospel Age, Heb. 9:9; 10:1.
- C. No greater concern for man’s welfare could be shown by God than the sending of the **only begotten Son of God** to die for a sin-sick and dying world.
1. John 3:16; 1 John 4:9-10; Rom. 8:32.
 2. Furthermore, while men were **content** in their sins, God sent Jesus to die upon the cross and thereby bear the sins of the world, Rom. 5:8; Heb. 9:28.

II. **Jesus Christ has also himself demonstrated concern for the souls of men; he too greatly values the human soul.**

- A. First, Jesus willingly fulfilled the will of the Father and came to earth and shed his blood on the cross.
1. John 4:34; 6:38.
 2. Christians ought to have the will of Christ (1 Pet. 4:1-2; Phil. 2:5), which was to fulfill the will of the Father.
- B. The compassion and tears of the Lord also demonstrate his concern for the lost.
1. Jesus once grieved over the lost souls in Jerusalem who would not hearken to the Gospel, Luke 19:41-42.
 2. Our Lord even exhibited great compassion upon the cross after men for whom he came to save crucified him, Luke 23:34.
- C. Our Lord’s Great Commission also reveals intense heavenly concern for the human soul.
1. Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16; Luke 24:46-47; Acts 1:8.
 2. The Great Commission represents the transferal of Christ’s mission to save souls (Luke 19:10) to “earthen vessels,” 2 Cor. 4:7.

III. Even the angels in heaven are concerned about the spiritual condition of men.

- A. Angels rejoice when souls obey the Gospel.
 - 1. Luke 15:7, 10.
 - 2. The implication is that the angels are grieved or sorrowful at the loss of souls.
- B. Angels, as heavenly messengers, have often revealed God's will to man by which through obedience to the same souls can be saved.
 - 1. The primary function of angels was to serve as a medium of revelation of God's will to man, Dan. 10:1-21; Rev. 1:1.
 - 2. At least once, an angel also directed a preacher to a lost soul who needed to hear the Gospel, Acts 8:26.

IV. The apostle Paul was also concerned about the souls of men; he, too, acknowledged an inherent value in the human soul.

- A. Paul's many personal sacrifices and the afflictions borne by him in order to preach the Gospel to lost souls testify of the value of souls and his concern for souls.
 - 1. The apostle Paul suffered bitter persecutions that doubtless he would not have endured had he not been deeply concerned about souls, 2 Cor. 11:23-28.
 - 2. Paul also willingly suffered the forfeiture of his station in life as a Pharisee and a Jew for the preaching of the Gospel to lost souls, Phil. 3:4-11.
- B. So concerned about lost souls was the apostle Paul that he encouraged others to also preach the Gospel.
 - 1. 2 Tim. 2:1-2.
 - 2. Like Christ, he prepared others to carry on in the proclamation of the Gospel to lost souls in anticipation of his death, 2 Tim. 4:1-8.

Conclusion:

- 1. God is concerned about, and hence places an immense **value** on, the souls of men.
- 2. Then, why do even Christians and whole congregations, and sometimes it appears much of the brotherhood, idly watch friends, neighbors and loved ones depart this life completely

unprepared to meet God?

3. Why do the children of God often appear completely unconcerned about either their own souls' welfare or other lost souls?
4. The answer may be that:
 - a. **We do not really believe that non-Christians are really lost, or**
 - b. **We do not really care.**
5. How many children of God have forgotten **why** they are really on this earth (Ecc. 12:13-14) and have traded their souls away for a piece of this green earth, Matt. 16:26?
6. In order for a soul to be saved, it must concern itself with its own salvation (Phil. 2:12) and exhibit the same concern for other souls (Mark 16:15-16; Jam. 5:19-20), as was demonstrated by God, Jesus Christ, the angels and the apostle Paul.
7. **Whose soul are you allowing to go to a devil's hell because you will not tell him about the Gospel? How many souls is this congregation willing to allow to go to hell before it turns this community upside down with the Gospel of Christ, Acts 17:6?**
8. Our friend, neighbors and loved ones are dying in sin everyday.
 - a. **What are you going to do about it?**
 - b. Souls are at stake, including yours!
9. Evangelistic success begins with the **individual!**
 - a. The preacher and elders cannot successfully evangelize the community without the dedicated involvement of other Christians.
 - b. Church programs in which many Christians fail to participate cannot successfully evangelize the community.

Invitation:

1. "Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men ..." 2 Cor. 5:11.
2. Christians need to examine themselves, 2 Cor. 13:5; 1 John 1:9.
3. Non-Christians need to put on Christ in baptism to be saved, Gal. 3:27; 1 Pet. 3:21.

Where Are the Dead?

Luke 20:37-38

Thesis: To give biblical answers to some of the most frequently asked questions about the dead.

Introduction:

1. The Bible is the only source on which we can rely for true answers concerning the state of the dead.
 - a. Atheists, philosophers, scientists and a host of like counselors are completely unable and ill prepared to answer what is one of the life and eternity's most crucial questions.
 - b. The Bible is also the only source on which men can rely for true answers concerning the origin and purpose of man's existence.
 - c. Since the Bible is the only volume that bears obvious divine credentials, it is to the Bible alone man should appeal for answers to questions concerning our origin, purpose and destiny.
 - d. All other sources of information regarding these questions pale in comparison to the Bible.
2. Equally important to a useful understanding of our topic is the correct assessment of the nature of man.
 - a. As long as man continues to perceive of his origin as the product of animalistic evolution, what the Bible has to say regarding his status after death will not be heeded.
 - b. An adequate examination of any question pertaining to man's eternity must acknowledge the dual nature of man.

Body:

I. What is the nature of man?

- A. There are only two reasonable answers to this question.
 1. Either man is entirely and only physical, possessing no spiritual nature, or
 2. Man's physical or mortal nature has been divinely complemented with a spiritual or immortal nature, too.

- B. Atheists, for instance, would have us believe that man is wholly animalistic in nature.
 - 1. They, therefore, address the origin of man with theories of evolution.
 - 2. It is only, then, a matter of consequence that he views death as annihilation or ceasing to exist.
 - 3. Incidentally, after one arrives at the conclusion that God neither put him here nor will greet him in eternity, he will neither acknowledge a divine purpose in his existence nor allow God to inhibit his evil conduct.
- C. The Bible teaches that man is a composite being, possessing both a spirit and a physical tabernacle in which the spirit resides throughout life.
 - 1. That people have physical bodies will not be denied by any clear thinking person. (However, some philosophers and one religious group deny the obvious.)
 - 2. In addition to the physical nature of man, mankind also possesses the “image” of God who is a spirit being, Gen. 1:26-27; John 4:24.
 - 3. A sampling of several passages amply demonstrate the composite nature of man, Dan. 7:15; Zech. 12:1.
 - 4. Consequently, the Bible addresses the “inward” or “hidden man of the heart” contrasted with the “outward” man, 2 Cor. 4:16; 1 Pet. 3:4; Rom. 7:22.

II. What is death?

- A. Death is the separation of the composite being, man, into his component parts, body and soul.
 - 1. Therefore, Peter referred to death as the putting off the body or tabernacle, 2 Pet. 1:13-15.
 - 2. Several passages especially well illustrate the biblical teaching about death being a separation, Ecc. 12:7; Jam. 2:26; Gen. 35:18-19.
 - 3. The phrase “gave up the ghost,” signifying the departure of the soul from the body or death, also helps define death, Gen. 25:8; Luke 23:46.
- B. Miraculous resurrections about which we can read in the

Bible further illustrate that death is a separation of the soul from the body.

1. 1 Kings 17:21-22.
 2. Luke 8:55.
- C. Incidentally, spiritual death is also a separation, a separation of man's spirit from the spirit of God, Rom. 6:23; Isa. 59:1-3; 2 Thess. 1:7-9.

III. Where are the dead?

- A. Generally speaking, the dead are in the custody of God, Ecc. 12:7.
1. The dead are not annihilated as atheists and other materialists erroneously suppose.
 2. Where, precisely, are the departed spirits of the dead?
 3. Are they in purgatory, in hell, in heaven or in Hades?
- B. I can tell you in less than five seconds everything that the Bible teaches about purgatory. (pause in silence before continuing)
- C. Now, concerning hell, heaven or Hades, the Bible teaches that men will not enter the eternities of heaven or hell until the final judgment, Matt. 25:31-46; Acts 2:34.
1. 1 Thess. 4:13-18; John 5:28-29.
 2. Neither heaven nor hell presently harbors the departed spirits of any mortals.
- D. The Bible, though, teaches about a place in which departed spirits await the end of time and the final judgment.
1. The abode of both the good and the bad spirits of men who have departed this life is in Hades, Luke 16:23; Acts 2:27, 31 "Hades," ASV; Matt. 11:23; Luke 10:15; Rev. 1:18; 6:8; 20:13-14.
 2. The saintly spirits abide in a chamber referred to by the Lord as "paradise," Luke 23:43; in this division of Hades there is comfort and a foretaste of eternity in heaven, Luke 16:19-31.
 3. A second chamber in Hades, called "Tartarus," holds departed wicked spirits (and the devil and his angels) awaiting the resurrection and final

judgment, Luke 16:19-31; 2 Pet. 2:4, “Tartarus”; appropriately, Tartarus provides a foretaste of the eternal hell into which the wicked will ultimately be thrust.

IV. Miscellaneous questions.

- A. Are the dead conscious?
1. Luke 16:19-31 teaches conclusively that the dead are conscious; *soul sleeping* is a myth.
 2. Some would attempt to dilute the impact of Luke 16 by affirming it to be “a parable,” as though that would make our Lord’s teaching equivalent to a *fairy tale* or unreliable as a source of truth.
Absurd!
 3. The dead are conscious of their past lives, their present state and the eternity awaiting them after judgment.
- B. Will the body be raised?
1. Yes, the bodies of those who have died will be raised at the end of time for the great judgment, John 5:28-29; Acts 24:15.
 2. The resurrected bodies will be changed and endowed with an incorruptible, immortal nature, 1 Cor. 15:50-57; Phil. 3:21.
 3. Then raised, changed and united with the spirit, punishment and reward will be meted out according to men’s lives and the Word of God, Matt. 25:31-46; Rev. 20:12-15; 2 Cor. 5:10.
- C. Will there be any future recognition?
1. Incidental statements in the Bible imply that there will be future recognition in heaven.
 2. For instance, biblical characters Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, Matt. 8:11, and martyrs, Rev. 6:9-10, will be recognized in heaven.

Conclusion:

1. The Old Testament word “sheol” and the New Testament word “Hades,” though variously translated in our English Bibles (“grave,” “hell,” “the pit”), represent the place of departed spirits awaiting the resurrection.

- a. Another Greek word, “gehenna,” also translated “hell” is the eternal place of torment.
 - b. Careful Bible study enables one to distinguish between instances when Gehenna is translated “hell” and instances when Hades is translated “hell.”
2. Departed spirits **cannot** alter their eternities between death and the universal resurrection and final judgment.
- a. There is a “gulf” between paradise and Tartarus in Hades that cannot be crossed, Luke 16:19-31.
 - b. Hence, the punishment of the ungodly precedes and follows the final judgment, 2 Pet. 2:9; Luke 16:19-31.
 - c. Likewise, the godly in Hades are blessed with a foretaste of heaven, Luke 16:19-31.

Invitation:

1. Since only in this life can souls amend their lives in order to spend eternity in heaven, it is of the utmost importance that each soul obey the Gospel of Jesus Christ, Heb. 5:8-9.
2. Christians must examine themselves, repent when necessary and continue in faithfulness, 2 Cor. 13:5; Acts 8:22; Rev. 2:10.
3. Unbaptized believers must repent and be baptized for the remission of sins, Acts 2:38.

DNA of the Church

Romans 6:17

Thesis: To stress the identity of the Lord's church so one can more easily discern it from manmade, counterfeit, denominational churches.

Song: *The Church's One Foundation*

Introduction:

1. DNA is short for **d**eoxyribo**n**ucleic acid.
 - a. DNA has to do with the molecular basis of heredity.
 - b. DNA uniquely identifies any living thing sufficiently to lend itself to forensic purposes.
2. DNA fingerprinting is the super evidence to discern one person from another.
 - a. DNA fingerprinting has conclusively proved the guilt of numerous criminals as well as proved the innocence of persons who were wrongfully convicted and imprisoned.
 - b. DNA evidence is presented as irrefutable.
3. Likewise, the Bible essentially provides DNA fingerprinting for Christ's church.
 - a. The Bible uniquely identifies Christ's church and distinguishes it from manmade, counterfeit, denominational churches.
 - b. This biblical DNA evidence respecting the church of the Bible is irrefutable!
 - c. With the Bible, one can make a forensic examination of any religious body and conclusively know whether it is or is not Christ's church.

Body:

- I. The biblical counterpart to DNA in the physical world is God's divine pattern for the church.**
 - A. God has never left mankind without instruction, but has always provided patterns.
 1. Under patriarchy, Noah was given a pattern for building the ark, Gen. 6:14-16.

2. Under Judaism, Moses was given an explicit pattern for construction of the tabernacle, Exod. 25:9, 40; Acts 7:44; Heb. 8:5.
 3. God-given patterns are no less important under Christianity.
- B. The New Testament is full of references to obligatory instruction, essentially composing *pattern theology*.
1. “Hold the **pattern of sound words** which thou hast heard from me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus,” 2 Tim. 1:13, ASV.
 2. “But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that **form of doctrine** which was delivered you,” Rom. 6:17.
 3. “... the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord,” 1 Cor 14:37.
- C. Hence, pattern theology is universally applicable.
1. “... as I teach every where in every church,” 1 Cor. 4:17.
 2. “... so ordain I in all churches,” 1 Cor 7:17.
 3. Deviations from the “apostles’ doctrine” is strictly forbidden, Acts 2:42; Gal. 1:6-9; Rev. 22:18-19.
 4. God’s people must contend for the faith or defend the Gospel and refrain from any who do not bring the doctrine of Christ, Jude 3; Phil. 1:17; 2 John 9-11; Eph. 5:11.

II. The biblical DNA or divine pattern for Christ’s church pertains to its establishment, organization, government, name, redemption, worship, etc.

- A. The Old and New testaments variously refer to that divine institution as the kingdom and the church.
1. Kingdom and church were used interchangeably by Jesus, Matt. 16:18-19.
 2. Apostles Paul and John also used the terms kingdom and church interchangeably, Col. 1:13, 18; Rev. 1:4, 9.
- B. Christ’s church was the subject of prophecies hundreds of years before its **establishment**.
1. It was to be established during the days of the Roman Empire, which it was, Dan. 2:31-44.

2. It was to be established in Jerusalem, which it was, Isa. 2:2-3.
 3. Any church that was not established during the days of the Roman Empire and in the city of Jerusalem lacks the biblical DNA to be the Lord's church.
- C. In the first century, the Lord's church was **organized** as independent congregations.
1. Each congregation had its own elders who guided that congregation, Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5.
 2. Only each congregation's strict adherence to the apostles' doctrine or the Gospel bound together the churches of Christ, Acts 2:42; Eph. 4:13.
 3. Any church that is not organized as independent congregations lacks the biblical DNA to be the Lord's church.
- D. The first century church was governed by elders, also called pastors, bishops and presbyters.
1. The New Testament records divine qualifications for elders, 1 Tim. 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9.
 2. A plural number of elders were to oversee or rule, Acts 20:17, 28; Heb. 13:17.
 3. Any congregation that is not governed by a plurality of elders when fully organized lacks the biblical DNA to be the Lord's church.
- E. The first century church was known by several descriptive terms or names.
1. Scripture refers to it as the "church of God," "churches of Christ," "temple of God," "house of God," "kingdom," "body," etc., 1 Cor. 1:2; Rom. 16:16; 2 Cor. 6:16; 1 Tim. 3:15; Col. 1:13, 18.
 2. Members of our Lord's church were known as "saints," "brethren," "Christians," "disciples," etc., 1 Cor. 1:2; Acts 12:17; 11:26, 29.
 3. Any church that is not known by the biblical designations or is known rather by non-biblical terms lacks the biblical DNA to be the Lord's church.
- F. The divine redemptive plan distinguished the saved or

the church from lost souls.

1. The Lord adds the saved to the church, making the church the body of the saved, Acts 2:47.
 2. The divine side of the redemptive plan includes grace, mercy, instruction, the blood of Christ, etc., Eph. 2:8; Titus 3:5; Heb. 8:10-11; Rev. 1:5.
 3. Man's side of the divine redemptive plan includes hearing the Word of God, belief, repentance, professing Christ, immersion for the forgiveness of sins, obedience, faithfulness, Rom. 10:17; John 8:24; Luke 13:3; Rom. 10:9-10; 6:3-5; Acts 22:16; Heb. 5:8-9; Rev. 2:10.
 4. Any church that is not the body of the saved, having conformed to this redemptive plan, lacks the biblical DNA to be the Lord's church.
- G. The New Testament church worshipped God according to divinely given instruction, including:
1. Purposeful, weekly freewill giving based on one's prosperity, weekly communion, preaching, prayer and singing, 2 Cor. 9:7; 1 Cor. 16:1-2; Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 14:15; Eph. 5:19.
 2. Deviations from God-appointed worship is vain and styled as will-worship, Matt. 15:9; Col. 2:23.
 3. Any church that changes the biblical pattern for worship lacks the biblical DNA to be the Lord's church.

Conclusion:

1. Every biblical doctrine is essentially an identifying characteristic of Christ's church and could be examined respecting the biblical DNA of the Lord's church.
2. Each student of the Bible can ascertain the identity of the Lord's church so he can more easily discern it from manmade, counterfeit, denominational churches.
4. Biblical DNA evidence respecting the church of the Bible is irrefutable!
3. With the Bible, one can make a forensic examination of any religious body and conclusively know whether it is or is not Christ's church.

Invitation:

1. Friends, what would a forensic examination of your religious life reveal, irrefutable evidence that you are a child of God and that the church of which you are a member is the Lord's church, or not?
2. Unbaptized believers need to follow the instruction of the apostle Peter, Acts 2:38.
3. Peter also instructed an erring child of God, Acts 8:22.

Marriage, Divorce & Remarriage

Matthew 19:9

Thesis: To ascertain the applicable New Testament doctrine concerning marriage, divorce and remarriage.

Introduction:

1. Biblically, marriage is a consensual covenant between one man and one woman for life.
 - a. To be legally valid, marriage must conform to the civil laws under which a couple lives, Rom. 13:1-7.
 - b. To be biblically valid, marriage must conform to both the appropriate civil law and the law of God, since God instituted the institution of marriage, Gen. 2:18-25.
2. It is no wonder that marriage is universally practiced in every society throughout the world and was universally practiced throughout history, too.
 - a. Fornication and adultery are illicit deviations from socially and biblically sanctioned marriage.
 - b. Throughout man's existence, marriage has always been the societal norm.
3. Historically, mankind has often abused the God-given institution of marriage.
 - a. Lamech was the first to introduce polygamy, Gen. 4:17.
 - b. God tolerated divorce under Judaism, Matt. 19:7-8.
 - c. Jesus, however, restored the institution of marriage its original status, Matt. 19:4-9.

Body:

- I. **Jesus Christ taught one man for one woman for life, except that the innocent spouse in a divorce because of adultery may remarry to an eligible candidate.**
 - A. The ministry of Jesus prepared for the establishment of the church, that is, he taught doctrines that did not become effective until the church began.

1. The first indication that the church existed as a reality is in Acts 2.
 2. Yet, Jesus taught about resolution of private sins between individuals or if necessary involving the church in such matters, before the church was established, Matt. 18:15-17.
 3. The Great Commission was given prior to the establishment of the church, but became effective only after the beginning of the church, Matt. 28:18-20.
 4. Before the establishment of the church, Jesus taught about the restoration of God's original plan respecting marriage, which took effect after the church began, Matt. 19:3-9; Mark 10:11-12.
- B. Jesus directed the attention of his audience back beyond the marriage practices of Judaism and what was contemporary in his day to the institution of marriage by God at the dawn of creation, Matt. 19:4-6.
1. God-sanctioned marriages are not dependent on contemporary social values, but marriage as God began the institution.
 2. God made marriage to be the physical and social union of one male and one female.
 3. Further, God designed marriage to be permanent!
- C. Jesus asserted his authority when he said, "I say unto you," and pronounced as adultery in the eyes of God divorce and remarriage, with a single exception.
1. The lone exception that Jesus granted for one with a **living spouse** marrying another is that one's former spouse committed adultery.
 2. Romans 7:1-3 acknowledges that a widow or a widower also may remarry.
 3. Matthew 19 and Romans 7 record the **only** biblically permissible remarriages that God allows!

II. The apostle Paul also taught about marriage and divorce.

- A. Paul affirmed what Jesus already taught about marriage and divorce.
1. The apostle specifically referred to the teachings of Christ and prohibited divorce, 1 Cor. 7:10.

2. He added, though, that if they do divorce (implied: for reasons other than adultery), they must remain celibate or reconcile the marriage, 1 Cor. 7:11.
 3. At least one person sins every time a divorce occurs.
 4. The sin of separation or divorce, for instance, when a wife and mother flees the home with her children to avoid the abuse of her husband rests on him, not her.
 5. Still, divorce for safety reasons, etc., by itself, does not permit remarriage while one's spouse is alive.
 6. The apostle Paul absolutely did not establish an additional reason for which one can remarry while a former spouse yet lives!
- B. Paul spoke on some things respecting marriage about which Jesus said nothing.
1. Husbands and wives have mutual physical obligations to each other, 1 Cor. 7:3-5.
 2. The marriages of non-Christians and Christians are recognized by God, 1 Cor. 7:12-14, 16.
 3. If a Christian is deserted by his mate, he is not required to give up Christianity to convince the spouse to stay, 1 Cor. 7:15.
 4. Nothing is said in the verse about remarriage.
 5. Paul does not give an additional ground for divorce and remarriage to what Jesus Christ already stipulated.
 6. The apostle advised Christians to abide in the circumstances in which they were when called by the Gospel, 1 Cor. 7:17-23.
 7. Paul noted that becoming a Christian did not change social circumstances.
 8. He did not teach that becoming a Christian would make a biblically unlawful marriage permissible.

III. Both Christians and non-Christians are bound by New Testament marriage laws.

- A. The lists of sins in the New Testament for which impenitent souls will be lost include adultery.
1. 1 Cor. 6:9-10; Gal. 5:19-21.

2. Adultery is one of the sins of which some Corinthian church members were guilty and for which they repented when they became Christians, 1 Cor. 6:11.
- B. Repentance involves stopping the sinful practice for which one is repenting.
1. Adultery is not a one-time act, but a continuing lifestyle, Col. 3:5-7.
 2. If one could continue in the same adulterous relationship for which he was supposedly repenting, then one could continue doing any other sin for which he purported to repent. Absurd!

IV. There are only three types of persons who are biblically eligible candidates for marriage.

- A. Persons who have never been married are biblically eligible to marry.
1. Marriage helps one avoid fornication, 1 Cor. 7:2.
 2. Marriage is honorable before God and man, Heb. 13:4.
- B. Persons whose spouses have died may marry other biblically eligible spouses, Rom. 7:1-4; 1 Cor. 7:39; 1 Tim. 5:14.
- C. A person whose spouse is guilty of fornication may divorce that spouse and remarry another biblically eligible spouse, Matt. 19:3-9.

Conclusion:

1. God instituted marriage in the Garden of Eden between Adam and Eve.
2. Jesus Christ restored marriage to its original state, Matt. 19:3-9.
3. The apostle Paul re-affirmed Christ's teaching about marriage, 1 Cor. 7.
4. Only never married persons, widowed people and innocent spouses in divorces for adultery can contract biblically approved marriages.

Invitation:

1. Whether its marriage laws or the plan of salvation, are obligation is to obey God, for which obedience Jesus Christ saves us, Heb. 5:8-9.
2. Have you obeyed the command to be baptized for the

remission of your sins, Acts 10:48; 2:38?

3. If a child of God, are you continuing to pursue an obedient faith, Rom. 1:5; 16:26; Rev. 2:10?

Success Story

1 Thessalonians 2:1-20.

Thesis: To encourage God's people today to zealously practice evangelism.

Songs: *Far and Near, Must I Go and Empty Handed, Will You Not Tell It Today*

Introduction:

1. The context of 1 Thessalonians 2:1-20 depicts a success story of a Gospel preacher and a congregation of the Lord's church.
2. This dual success story of a preacher and a local church can be repeated over and over today as well.
3. What Paul and the Thessalonian church did nearly 2,000 years ago, whereby God was glorified and pleased with them, if practiced today, too, will glorify God and please him now.

Body:

I. Paul labored not in vain (2:1).

- A. First, Paul "labored."
 1. His labors were abundant, about which one can read throughout the latter half of the Book of Acts, Acts 9-28.
 2. A prerequisite to success is that one first labor or work; Paul worked for the Lord.
- B. Notable consequences occurred as a result of Paul's many labors.
 1. Paul's evangelistic efforts were responsible for the beginning of several congregations and the salvation of many souls, Acts 13:6-12; 14:1; 15:36; 16:4-5, 15, 33; 17:1-4, 11, 12, 34.
 2. Paul himself was also edified through his labors for the Lord, Phil. 1:3-8; 1 Thess. 1:2-4; 5:11.
- C. Paul's labors could not have been "in vain."
 1. Overall, Paul's efforts to spread the Gospel were very successful.
 2. However, even when few obeyed the Gospel in

Athens (Acts 17:16, 34) and had none obeyed the Gospel then or at other times, neither Paul nor any other servant of God is a failure when he does what God commands him to do.

3. When a Christian fulfills the Great Commission's command to *GO* and *TEACH*, he has done his saintly duty in this regard and the increase should be left to the hearts of those to whom the Gospel is preached and to God, 1 Cor. 3:6.

II. Paul boldly preached the Gospel (2:2).

- A. Beatings, imprisonment and the threat of death did not deter Paul from boldly preaching the Gospel, Acts 16:19-24; 21:13.
 1. Preachers should preach the Gospel confidently in the pulpit and before the brethren.
 2. However, to truly preach the Gospel boldly is to preach it fearlessly before those who do not already acknowledge it as the Word of God (and who may even harm the speaker).
 3. Peter and Stephen are two prime examples of preachers boldly preaching the Gospel of Christ (Acts 2; 7); whereas Peter's auditors obeyed the Gospel, Stephen was killed for his devotion to the Gospel.
- B. Contemporary Christians should be no less willing to suffer persecution (if necessary) to boldly proclaim the Gospel.
 1. Often, obeying and practicing the Gospel may lead to persecution, 2 Tim. 3:12; Matt. 10:22; 1 Pet. 4:16.
 2. Boldly living and proclaiming the Gospel incurs a life of sacrifice and submission to the Lord, Matt. 16:24-26.

III. Paul's manner of speech was plain, true and sure (2:3-5), not comprised of cunning fables (2 Pet. 1:16).

- A. God's servants are to please God rather than men, 1 Thess. 2:4.
 1. Peter and the other apostles refused to please man while displeasing God, Acts 5:29.

2. Paul also was determined to please God, not men, Gal. 1:10.
 3. Those who purpose to please the world and thereby befriend the world are the enemies of God, Jam. 4:4.
- B. Paul's preaching was not comprised of flattery, 1 Thess. 2:5.
1. The apostle did not use enticing words in preaching (1 Cor. 2:1-4), but cautioned Christians to beware of enticing words, Col. 2:3-4.
 2. Paul's words were sincere and true, 2 Cor. 2:17.
 3. False teachers often appeal to "good words and fair speeches" and are to be marked for their error, Rom. 16:17-18.

IV. Paul dealt with the Thessalonians in gentleness, meekness, affectionately, piously and honestly (2:6-8).

- A. Paul taught that God's servants should teach the lost with gentleness, meekness and affection.
1. Paul possessed the disposition of gentleness and meekness, 2:7-8; 2 Tim. 2:24-25.
 2. Paul affectionately desired that souls be saved and that the churches would be fruitful and multiply, Phil. 4:17; 2 Pet. 1:8; Titus 3:14.
- B. Paul lived above reproach so that the Gospel message would not be impaired, 2:10.
1. Paul wronged or defrauded no man, 2 Cor. 7:2.
 2. Christians are implored to follow after holiness, Heb. 12:14.

V. The apostle Paul labored diligently, night and day, and exhorted those to whom he preached the Gospel (2:9-12).

- A. Paul worked relentlessly in order to proclaim the Gospel.
1. He may have worked by day at his trade of tent making to earn his livelihood, and worked at night teaching the Gospel, 2:9; 2 Thess. 3:8.
 2. Providing for himself or being supported by other churches avoided the appearance of preaching merely for gain, 2 Cor. 11:8-9.
 3. Paul had a right to forbear working in order to preach the Gospel, but he did not always exercise

that right, 1 Cor. 9:3-15.

- B. Paul conducted himself in a fatherly way toward those who he taught the Gospel.
 - 1. He exhorted, comforted and charged them as a father would his children, 2:11-12.
 - 2. A godly father tries not to unnecessarily provoke his children to anger (Eph. 6:4; Col. 3:21), but only has his children's best interest and welfare in mind.

Conclusion:

- 1. The apostle Paul was very successful as a servant of God.
 - a. He worked out his own salvation (Phil. 2:12) and was personally edified.
 - b. The Lord's church was established in Thessalonica and other places after the divine pattern, 2:13-14.
 - c. Especially the Thessalonian church became strong enough to endure persecution, 2:14.
 - d. The Thessalonian church also became strong enough and was sufficiently zealous to spread the Gospel into new areas, 1 Thess. 1:8.
- 2. The success story of both the apostle Paul and the Thessalonian church can be the success story of every Christian and every congregation, if we will duplicate what they did with the same intensity.
 - a. We can work out our own salvation and be personally edified.
 - b. Every congregation needs to give earnest attention to the divine pattern today.
 - c. We and the church with which we worship must become strong enough to withstand persecution.
 - d. Every congregation needs to be strong enough to spread the Gospel throughout its community and as far as its influence may reach.
- 3. First Thessalonians Two depicts a dual success story that needs to be multiplied throughout the brotherhood and the world today.
 - a. Each individual Christian must be prepared to spread the Gospel.

- b. Each congregation must accept its responsibility to participate in the fulfillment of the Great Commission, Matt. 28:18-20; Acts 1:8; 1 Thess. 1:8.

Invitation:

1. The Gospel can become a success story in your life if you obey the Gospel of Christ and abide in the doctrine of Christ, Rom. 1:16; 1 John 2:24.
2. Jesus saves those who obey him and will punish those who disobey him, Heb. 5:8-9; 2 Thess. 1:7-9.
3. Repent and be baptized, or if an erring child of God, repent and pray for forgiveness, Acts 2:38; 8:22.

Companions in the Kingdom

Matthew 16:18-19

Thesis: To cite passages applicable to the kingdom promised by God, to show that those promises or prophesies have been fulfilled, and to demonstrate that the church and the kingdom are the same institution, and therefore, that the kingdom now exists.

Song: *I Love Thy Kingdom, Lord*

Introduction:

1. There are several matters over which the religious community is confused:
 - a. properly dividing the Old Testament from the New Testament,
 - b. frequency with which communion should be observed,
 - c. tithing versus free-will giving,
 - d. music in worship,
 - e. the Sabbath,
 - f. church organization,
 - g. baptism (salvation in general), etc.
2. Our religious neighbors are also greatly confused about the establishment and identity of the kingdom.
 - a. Many churches teach premillennialism — namely, that the church and the kingdom are not the same institution, and that the kingdom is yet future.
 - b. Really, though, the church and the kingdom are the same institution, and both are the same as the house and the body, too.
 - c. The Bible simply uses different perspectives to demonstrate several characteristics of the same divine institution.

Body:

- I. **God promised or prophesied he would build a kingdom.**
 - A. The king of the promised kingdom was to be a descendant of David, 2 Sam. 7:12-16; Psa. 89:3-4, 29,

26-27; Jer. 23:5-6; Isa. 9:6-7. **FULFILLED:** Acts 2:25-36.

- B. The king of the promised kingdom identified as the Christ (Messiah), Psa. 2:6-7; **FULFILLED:** Acts 13:33; Matt. 21:5; Luke 1:26-33; John 18:37
- C. The king of the promised kingdom was to be a priest, Zech. 6:12-13. **FULFILLED:** Heb. 2:17; 3:1; 4:14-15; 5:5; 6:20; 7:1ff; 8:1ff; 9:11; 10:21; etc. (Can't be priest on earth — therefore, he can't be king on earth.)
- D. The kingdom of promise was to be eternal, 2 Sam. 7:16; Psa. 45:6; Dan. 7:13-14; Isa. 9:6-7. **FULFILLED:** 2 Pet. 1:11.
- E. The kingdom of promise was to be established in Jerusalem (Zion), Isa. 2:2-3; 62:1-2; Joel 2:28-3:2. **FULFILLED:** Luke 24:46-47.
- F. The kingdom of promise was to be for all nations, Isa. 2:2-3; 62:1-2. **FULFILLED:** Acts 1:8; Mark 16:15-16; Luke 24:46-47.
- G. The kingdom of promise was to bring salvation, Isa. 62:1-2; Joel 2:28-3:2. **FULFILLED:** Luke 24:46-47; Acts 2:38.
- H. The kingdom of promise was to have a new name, Isa. 62:1-2. **FULFILLED:** Acts 11:26.
- I. The kingdom of promise was to be established during the reign of the Roman kings, Dan. 2:31-45. **FULFILLED:** Luke 2:1.
- J. The kingdom of promise was to come with power, Joel 2:28-3:2; Mark 9:1. **FULFILLED:** Acts 1:4-8; 2:1-4.
- K. The kingdom of promise was still yet future during the respective ministries John the Baptist and Jesus Christ, Matt. 3:1-2; 4:17; 6:10; 16:18. **FULFILLED:** Col. 1:13; Heb. 12:28; Rev. 1:9.

II. God promised to bless all nations through Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, Gen. 12:1-3; 18:18; 22:17-18.

- A. Gabriel told Mary Jesus was to be born in fulfillment of promises made to Jacob and David.
- B. This ties together the promises to the patriarchs with the king and his kingdom of promise, Luke 1:26-33; Gen. 12; 18; 22.

III. God promised to raise up a Prophet like Moses, Deut. 18:15, 18-19.

- A. By inspiration, the apostle Peter taught Deut. 18 was fulfilled in Jesus Christ, Acts 3:19-26.
- B. This ties together the promise of a Prophet with the promise of a kingdom.

IV. God promised a Messiah (Saviour), Isa. 40:3-5; Mal. 3:1; 4:5-6.

- A. John the Baptist prepared the way for the Messiah, Christ, Matt. 3:1-2.
- B. The wise men looked for the king of the Jews and were told that Scripture said he was to be born in Bethlehem; this ties together prophecies of the Messiah and the king — hence, the kingdom, Micah 5:2. **FULFILLED:** Matt. 2:2-11.
- C. Jesus claimed to be the promised king in fulfillment of a passage about the Messiah's entry into Jerusalem riding a donkey; this ties passages about the Messiah and the king and his kingdom together, Zech. 9:9. **FULFILLED:** Matt. 21:5.

V. The church and the kingdom are the same divine institution.

- A. Jesus used the terms “church” and “kingdom” interchangeably, Matt. 16:18-19.
- B. The apostle Paul used the terms “church” and “kingdom” interchangeably, Col. 1:13, 18.
- C. Jesus is now reigning in his kingdom, 1 Cor. 15:24-28 and he is also head of the church which is also called the body, Col. 1:18; Eph. 1:22-23.
- D. The apostle Paul stated that he and the Colossian Christians were in the kingdom, Col. 1:13.
- E. The apostle John declared that all Christians and he were companions in the kingdom, Rev. 1:9.
- F. The Hebrews writer said we have received a kingdom, Heb. 12:28.
- G. The church was in the eternal purpose of God — not an after-thought; therefore, the church and the kingdom, with Jesus the head of both are the same institution, Eph. 3:4-12.

Conclusion:

1. God fulfilled his promise to build a kingdom when he gave man the church.
2. God's promises to the patriarchs were fulfilled in the establishment of the church/kingdom.
3. God's promise to raise up a prophet like Moses was fulfilled in Jesus Christ as head of the church and king over the kingdom.
4. The Messiah became king over the kingdom/church.
5. Church, kingdom and body are used interchangeably to describe varied facets of the same institution.
6. The kingdom is present, not future; premillennialism is false!

Invitation:

1. You can become a citizen of the kingdom today by obeying the Gospel, after which Jesus will add you to his church, which is his kingdom, Heb. 5:8-9; Acts 2:47
2. Matt. 28:18-20.
3. Erring Christians can repent and pray, Acts 8:22.

The Tabernacle, Type of the Church

“According to all that I shew thee, after the pattern of the tabernacle, and the pattern of all the instruments thereof, even so shall ye make it,” Exod. 25:9.

Thesis: To note that forasmuch as the tabernacle was made according to a divine pattern, the church (the spiritual body) is patterned after the tabernacle.

Song: *The Church's One Foundation*

Introduction:

1. Judaism contains types of the New Testament church.
 - a. A type is a “representative form” or “characteristic” of something else.
 - b. The tabernacle is a type of the Lord’s church, Heb. 9:1-12, 23-24.
 - c. Judaism was never intended by God to be his final revelation to man, Heb. 10:1-2.
2. Old Testament types perfectly fit the New Testament church and its doctrine.
 - a. Therefore, we can learn something about the Lord’s church by examining Old Testament types.
 - b. However, it is impossible to learn anything about manmade churches from these types.
 - c. Types, then, confirm the church of the Bible to be the fulfillment of the longstanding will of God (Eph. 3:10-11), but indict denominations as mere imitations of the real thing (God’s church).

Body:

I. Background of the Tabernacle:

- A. The tabernacle was made at the command of God, Exod. 25-27.
 1. God gave detailed instructions on how it was to be constructed.

2. The tabernacle was built with precious materials.
 3. The purpose of and conduct in the tabernacle was specified by God.
- B. The tabernacle is a type of the New Testament church.
1. Therefore, it is reasonable that God also gave detailed instructions on how the church was to be constructed.
 2. The church was also built with precious material, (the blood of Christ, Acts 20:28).
 3. Further, the purpose of and conduct in the church was specified by God.
- C. Different areas of the tabernacle represented various aspects of the world and the church.
1. The court around the tabernacle equals the WORLD.
 2. The Holy Place is the church.
 3. The Most Holy Place (Holy of Holies) is HEAVEN.

II. Elaboration and Discussion.

- A. The court and the world.
1. The court represents the world outside of a spiritual relationship with God.
 2. Not everyone in the court was a fit candidate to enter the tabernacle; only the priests entered the tabernacle.
 3. Not everyone in the world is a fit candidate to enter the church and heaven; the church is comprised of priests, 1 Pet. 2:5, 9.
 4. Through redemption, anyone can be made fit to enter the church, Rom. 3:23; 1 John 1:8-9; Acts 2:38, 41, 47.
- B. The altar of burnt offering before the tabernacle was 5 cubits by 5 cubits by 3 cubits high.
1. An animal victim was sacrificed in lieu of sinners for atonement.
 2. Jesus Christ was sacrificed in lieu of sinners for redemption, Rom. 3:23-25; Eph. 5:2; Heb. 10:10; 2 Cor. 5:21.
- C. The Laver was before the door of the tabernacle and was

- 15 feet in diameter (the temple laver), Exod. 38:8.
1. Its placement immediately before the entrance to the tabernacle was specified by God, Exod. 30:18.
 2. Priests performed a ceremonial washing before their entrance into the tabernacle, Exod. 29:4-9.
 3. Baptism is the ceremonial washing of the New Testament, and God specified its placement immediately before entrance to the church, Acts 22:16; 1 Cor. 12:13; Acts 2:38, 41, 47.
- D. The table of shewbread (2 cubits by 1 cubit by 1 cubit) was placed in the tabernacle, Exod. 25:23; 26:35.
1. The shewbread was eaten by the priests each Sabbath (Saturday), Lev. 24:5-9.
 2. The Lord's Supper is the anti-type and is observed each Lord's Day (Sunday) by Christians, who are priests, Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 11:23-30.
- E. The Holy Place was 10 cubits by 20 cubits.
1. There was only ONE ENTRANCE.
 2. Entrance of the Most Holy Place could only be made by first entering the Holy Place.
 3. Likewise, the Lord's church only has ONE DOOR, John 10:1-9.
 4. Heaven also is only accessible through entrance first into the church, Heb. 9:8-12.
- F. The Golden Candlestick was in the Holy Place, Exod. 25:31-37.
1. This elaborate lamp burned continually.
 2. Its New Testament anti-type is God's Word which also is a perpetual light, Psalm 119:104-105, 130; 2 Pet. 1:19.
- G. The altar of incense was in the tabernacle before the veil leading to the Most Holy Place (1 cubit by 1 cubit by 2 cubits), Exod. 30:1-9.
1. Incense was offered morning and evening, and its aroma made its way to the Mercy Seat and the presence of God beyond the veil.
 2. Likewise, the frequent prayers of Christians ascend to the presence of God in heaven, 1 Thess. 5:17; Acts 10:4; Rev. 8:3-4.

- H. The Most Holy Place was 10 cubits by 10 cubits, Exod. 26:33.
1. Furniture and items within the Most Holy Place included the ark of the Covenant, manna, Aaron's rod and the mercy seat, Heb. 9:1-12.
 2. Into the Most Holy Place, the high priest alone entered once a year to make atonement for the sins of the people.
 3. Jesus entered once into the Most Holy Place of heaven to make redemption possible for all men.

Conclusion:

1. The church is the anti-type of the tabernacle, both of which were constructed according to the instructions of God.
2. The tabernacle as a type of the church distinguishes the church of the Bible from every other religious body.
3. Denominations and their doctrines are foreign to the Bible and void of redeeming virtue.
4. Among other important points that could also be emphasized, one cannot be saved without baptism or outside of the Lord's church.

Invitation:

1. Will you enter the holy tabernacle of God.
2. Non-Christians, HEAR God's Word exclusively and BELIEVE it, Rom. 10:17; REPENT of sins, Acts 17:30; CONFESS CHRIST, Rom. 10:9-10; BE BAPTIZED into Christ for the remission of sins, Acts 2:38; Rom. 6:3-5 and purpose to LIVE FAITHFULLY until death, Rev. 2:10.
3. Erring Christians, repent as privately or publicly as the sin may have been committed, Acts 8:22-24.

Bruised for Our Sins

Isaiah 53:5

Thesis: To emphasize the horribleness of our Lord's crucifixion whereby non-Christians and erring Christians may be persuaded to obey the Gospel, and the rest of the children of God may be encouraged to practice Christianity more enthusiastically.

Song: *From the Garden to the Cross*

Introduction:

1. Scriptures prophesied that the Messiah would be bruised for humanity's sins.
 - a. Gen. 3:15 is the Bible's first prophecy and it refers to the bruising that Jesus Christ would receive.
 - b. Isa. 53:5 predicted the Savior's crucifixion and stated he would be "bruised for our iniquities."
2. The contemporary definition of the word "bruise" hardly conveys the severity of the treatment Jesus received for us when he was crucified.
 - a. The word "bruised" in Isa. 53:5 can mean to beat into pieces.
 - b. Examination of what was involved in the crucifixion of Christ will reveal the horribleness of all he endured in our place.

Body:

I. The arrest and trials of Jesus.

- A. Jesus experienced a bloody sweat while in the Garden of Gethsemane on the Mount of Olives, Matt. 26:30, 36; Luke 22:44.
 1. This is a real, though rare, medical condition where minimal amounts of blood color sweat.
 2. Numerous documented cases of this condition trace it to extreme stress.
 3. The anguish through which Jesus was going as he anticipated shouldering the sins of the whole human family as well as his impending crucifixion

was more than sufficient to result in a bloody sweat.

- B. Jesus did not sleep the night preceding his arrest, trials, scourging and crucifixion.
 - 1. However, his disciples did fall asleep, Matt. 26:40-45; Mark 14:37-41.
 - 2. Fatigue due to a lack of sleep along with the physical abuse, scourging and crucifixion, doubtless, contributed to Christ's death on the cross by the time soldiers came to break the legs of the crucified.
- C. Jesus was beaten, mocked and condemned during his various trials.
 - 1. Our Lord was blindfolded, and struck in the face by the ones who took hold of him, Luke 22:63-64.
 - 2. Jesus was struck again in the presence of the high priest, John 18:22.
 - 3. Shortly after daybreak, Jesus was taken before the Sanhedrin, which condemned him to death for supposed blasphemy, Matt. 27:1; Luke 22:66-71; John 18:31.
 - 4. Next Jesus was taken to the Roman Governor, Pilate, whereupon the Jews accused our Lord of treason, Luke 23:1-2.
 - 5. Pilate sent Jesus to Herod for trial, at which time our Lord was mocked, Luke 23:7-11.
 - 6. Returning to Pilate, Jesus was scourged, mocked, beaten and a crown or hat of long thorns was pressed into his head, Mark 15:15-20.

II. The cruelty of scourging.

- A. Scourging preceded every Roman execution.
 - 1. The victim was stripped to his loincloth or naked and tied to a post with his back outward.
 - 2. The scourge or whip itself was a handle to which was attached several leather cords, each cord of which had pieces of bone and metal woven into it.
 - 3. Scourging was so severe that 7 out of 10 victims died from the scourging alone.
 - 4. The scourging may have been attended by possibly

two Roman soldiers and there was no limit to the number of blows the victim might receive.

- B. The affect of scourging.
 - 1. The ordeal weakened the victim through shock and blood loss.
 - 2. Subsequent blows with the scourge struck back, buttocks, legs and wrapped around to the chest, and stomach, etc.
 - 3. Initial blows tore open the flesh.
 - 4. Repeated blows tore muscles, damaged veins and arteries, tattered flesh and caused blood to spurt out in time with one's beating heart.
 - 5. Especially that back appeared as a single, massive wound of shredded meat.
 - 6. The scourging alone caused irreversible tissue and organ damage.
 - 7. The scourging victim almost didn't look human any more.
- C. After the scourging, Pilate's soldiers abused our Lord more before the crucifixion.
 - 1. They put a robe on Jesus, mocked him, placed a crown of thorns on his head, spit on him and hit him, John 19:1-3.
 - 2. The thorns were about an inch long and would have caused great pain and bleeding when forced on his head and each time Jesus was struck on the head.
 - 3. When the robe was removed from Jesus, the wounds that had begun to scab would be violently reopened, bringing increased pain and renewed bleeding.

III. The horribleness of crucifixion.

- A. Crucifixion was well known as the most horrific form of execution ever developed by mankind.
 - 1. The Romans borrowed crucifixion from earlier peoples and perfected it in horribleness, pain and fear factor.
 - 2. They applied crucifixion especially to slaves and other non-citizens.

3. Crucifixion was used to punish the crimes of sedition, piracy, assassination, perjury and treason; the Jews accused Jesus of treason before Pilate.
 4. The Romans used crucifixion to keep conquered nations under control through deterrence.
 5. Crucifixions occurred outside cities along a public road and were calculated to inflict great pain and intense shame.
- B. The Roman cross.
1. It consisted of an upright beam 9' above the ground with a 7' crossbeam.
 2. The victim carried the crossbeam, weighing between 75 and 125 pounds, to the place of crucifixion.
 3. A tablet identifying the victim's crimes was carried ahead of the procession and attached at the top of the upright beam.
 4. The distance to the site of crucifixion was about a third of a mile; the total distance Jesus traveled during his trials was about 2 ½ miles.
 5. The upright beam of the cross might also have a slight seat to help support the weight of the body.
- C. The affect of crucifixion.
1. Nails from 4 ½" to 7" long and almost ½" thick were used to nail the wrists (that's what the Greek means and hands would not hold one's body to a cross) and feet to the cross.
 2. Nailing the wrists would strike nerves, which would produce excruciating pain in the arms, spinal cord and the brain.
 3. Nailing the feet would produce comparable agony.
 4. One's posture on the cross with hands and feet nailed was in the shape of a "Y"; raising up to form the shape of a "T" was required to take a breath; this could only be accomplished through great pain, struggling against the nailed hands and feet.
 5. The victim's bones would be 'out of joint,' Psa. 22:14.
 6. When the victim became totally exhausted and

could not lift up to take a breath, he would die of asphyxia — suffocate.

7. Our Lord's final moments on the cross included being surrounded by dogs, garments parted, dehydration, mocking, Psa. 22; and being spit upon, Isa. 50:6.

D. Death was inevitable.

1. Crucifixion victims lingered for up to 36 hours before dying, unless their deaths were hastened by breaking their legs while on the cross.
2. Soldiers guarded crucified persons as long as they remained alive to prevent their removal from the cross and subsequent revival.
3. Finally, a soldier pierced the side of Jesus to confirm his death, John 19:34.

IV. Jesus Christ didn't belong on that Roman cross, we did!

A. Jesus, the Creator, left all the glories of heaven to take on the form of the creature, 1 Cor. 15:47; John 1:14.

1. God was manifested in the flesh, 1 Tim. 3:16.
2. Heb. 2:14-17; 10:5.

B. He came on a mission to save mankind from eternal loss in a devil's hell — but we murdered him!

1. Love made Jesus come to earth and willing die for us, Rom. 5:8; John 15:13.
2. The first century Jews literally murdered the Christ through the hands of the Romans, Matt. 27:23-25; Acts 2:36.
3. Sinners and even Christians who sin crucify afresh Jesus Christ, Heb. 6:4-6.

Conclusion:

1. Jesus had no sin, 1 Pet. 2:22.
2. Our sins, though, caused Jesus to leave heaven and become flesh.
3. Our sins lashed him to a post naked or nearly naked where he was mercilessly battered and torn with the scourge.
4. Our sins drove nails the size of railroad spikes through his hands and feet on the cruel cross of Calvary.
5. Our sins pierced our Lord's side.
6. Our sins humiliated God in the flesh, our Savior, along a public

road on the cross.

Invitation:

1. Jesus died a horrible death for our sins, but he suffered in vain unless we allow his sacrifice to save us from our sins.
2. Obey the Gospel right now and receive the remission of your sins, Acts 22:16.
3. Prodigals come back to the Lord, Luke 15:11-32; Acts 8:22.

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He Is My Everything

Genesis 3:15

Thesis: To view a synopsis of the extended mission of Jesus Christ.

Song: *He Is My Everything*

Introduction:

1. Jesus Christ is the scarlet thread running through the Bible -- from the beginning to the end.
2. Jesus is the heart of the Bible, without which the Bible would be aimless.
3. The cross of Christ stands center of the Bible and the extended mission of Christ -- everything looks toward or back to the cross of Christ.

Body:

I. A Beautiful Declaration, Jesus Is Coming!

- A. A veiled promise, Gen. 3:15.
- B. A slightly more detailed promise, Gen. 12:1-3.
- C. There are 100's of prophecies about Jesus, Isa. 7:14; 53.
- D. John the Baptist prepared the way for the coming of Christ, Matt. 3:1-3.

II. Wonderful News, Jesus Is Here!

- A. Angels announced a Savior is born, Luke 2:10-11.
- B. Jesus is the fulfillment of John's preaching, Matt. 11:2-11.
- C. Christ's earthly ministry ended, risen from the grave, he lingered, showing himself prior to his Ascension, Matt. 28:6-7; Acts 1:3-4; 1 Cor. 15:6.

III. Heavenly History, Jesus Christ Is Ascending!

- A. The awe-inspiring Ascension, Luke 24:50-51; Acts 1:9-11.
- B. Our Lord came into the world humbly; he left triumphantly and in glory.

IV. The Magnificent Present, Jesus Is Reigning!

- A. An angel foretold Jesus would reign, Luke 1:30-33.

- B. Jesus claimed a non-earthly kingdom, John 18:36-37.
- C. Jesus will reign until the end of time, 1 Cor. 15:24-28.
- D. The kingdom and the church are the same institution, Matt. 16:18-19.
- E. The kingdom of Jesus Christ is powerful, Mark 9:1; Rom. 1:16; Acts 2:1-4.

V. The Happy Future, Jesus Is Coming Again!

- A. Jesus will appear a second time, Heb. 9:27-28.
- B. Jesus is coming to gather his saints, 1 Thess. 4:13-18.

Conclusion:

1. The Bible is all about Jesus Christ.
2. Our lives need to be all about Jesus Christ.
3. Our lives should revolve around Jesus.
4. He should be the basis of our “way of life.”

Invitation:

1. Jesus isn’t your everything if he is not your Savior!
2. Look back to the cross for salvation through Jesus, Luke 19:10; Mark 16:15-16.
3. Look ahead for eternal rest in Jesus Christ, Rev. 2:10; 2 Cor. 13:5.

Rebuilding the Walls

Nehemiah 6:15

Theses: To encourage heightened Christian Service.

Songs: *We'll Work Till Jesus Comes, To the Work, I Want to be a Worker.*

Introduction:

1. The account of Nehemiah and the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem are well known.
 - a. Upon Nehemiah's arrival in Jerusalem, he surveyed the **need** to rebuild the walls, 2:11-16.
 - b. Next, he apprised his fellows of the need and presented a **plan** to rebuild the walls, 2:17-18.
 - c. They met great difficulties and resistance from within and without, but they **persisted**, 2:19-20.
 - d. The walls were **restored** or rebuilt in 52 days, 6:15.
2. Whenever, wherever God's people recognize their spiritual **need**, develop a biblical **plan** and decide to **persevere** despite difficulties, they will be able to **build** for the Lord.
 - a. Many congregations formerly were more glorious in numbers, leadership, biblical knowledge, Christian living and Christian service.
 - b. Several congregations suffer a slow death, continue to dwindle in number and finally close their doors forever.
 - c. Instead, they ought to survey their **need, plan, persevere** and **rebuild** — *before it's too late!*
 - d. What will the church here do, see the need, plan, persevere and rebuild, or dwindle and die?

Body:

- I. **The need, alias the mission of the church renewed.**
 - A. Edification, 1 Cor. 14:12.
 1. Our children's children need someplace to worship tomorrow.
 2. Especially our young people need *indoctrinated* in the most holy faith and *inoculated* against religious

- error and ungodliness.
3. Each of us must allot enough time to study the Bible, assemble with the God's people and effectively equip ourselves to practice Christianity.
 4. A precursor to a strong church is qualified and dedicated leadership (elders, preachers, teachers, etc.).
- B. Evangelism — within and without, Jam. 5:19-20; Mark 16:15-16.
1. Many Christians have gone AWOL and by their absence contribute to the weakness of any congregation, Heb. 10:25.
 2. Other Christians are far from us in spirit and only sometimes with us bodily, Heb. 10:25 — precursor to AWOL.
 3. Often Christians practice immoralities or approve those who do, 1 Cor. 5; Rom. 1:32.
 4. Consequently, because a congregation's internal strength is sapped by AWOLS and weak brethren, coupled with the lack of infusion of converts from the world, they cannot sustain their numbers.

II. The Solution.

- A. Addiction to the Faith, 1 Cor. 16:15.
1. We must first give ourselves, 2 Cor. 8:5.
 2. We must practice sacrificial living, 1 Chron. 21:18-27; Rom. 12:1-2.
 3. We must practice sacrificial service, 2 Tim. 3:12; Rev. 2:10; Jesus; Stephen.
 4. We must practice sacrificial giving, 2 Cor. 8:2-3.
 5. We must immerse ourselves in the Word of God and once again become a 'Bible quot'n, Bible tot'n people,' 2 Tim. 2:15; 1 Pet 2:2.
 6. We must make time enough in our lives (i.e., use time management) to be Christians, Eph. 5:16.
 7. We must have a deep-seated, biblically based **conviction** regarding the true identity of the **one true church**, alone over which Jesus is head, Matt. 16:18; Eph. 1:22-23; 4:4.
 8. We must grow church leaders for today and

tomorrow, Eph. 4:11.

- B. Recover the Fallen, 2 Pet. 2:20-22.
 - 1. We can help prevent apostasy by fulfilling the second half of the great commission, Matt. 28:18-20.
 - 2. The best candidates, but sometimes among the most difficult to reach, are erring Christians, Jam. 5:19-20; Jude 23.
 - 3. The second law of pardon affords Christians who have sinned to receive forgiveness, Acts 8:22; 1 John 1:9; 2:1-2.
 - 4. If all else fails, we must have the courage to hand off fallen Christians to Satan, 1 Cor. 5:5; 2 Thess. 3:6, 14-15.
- C. Rescue the Pershing, Luke 19:10.
 - 1. The Great Commission is obligatory on us individually and collectively, Mark 16:15-16; Luke 24:47; Acts 1:8; 2 Tim. 2:2.
 - 2. We must turn the world upside down with the Gospel, Acts 17:6.
 - 3. We must be faithful Christians, all day, every day, everywhere practicing and telling others about the Gospel, Acts 8:1, 4.
 - 4. Christians are the only lights for a sin-darkened world, Matt. 5:14-16; 2 Pet. 1:19.

Conclusion:

- 1. We **will not** be able to **rebuild** this church if we do not ...
 - a. ... first give ourselves, practice sacrificial living, practice sacrificial service, practice sacrificial giving and immerse ourselves in the Word of God.
 - b. ... firmly believe that we are members of the one true church, alone over which Jesus Christ is head.
 - c. ... make an earnest, unrelenting effort to recover fallen brethren.
 - d. ... each of us personally acknowledge the obligatory nature of the Great Commission.
- 2. We **will** be able to **rebuild** this church if we ...
 - a. ... recognize the **need** to rebuild.
 - b. ... pull together as one (i.e., no “we” and “they”).

- c. ... each take personal responsibility for the present and future success of this congregation.
- d. ... develop qualified leadership.

Invitation:

1. Are you part of the problem or part of the solution to the spiritual health of this church?
2. Erring Christians can be part of the solution by repenting, Acts 8:22; 1 John 1:9.
3. Unbaptized believers can help build up this church, first by being baptized for the remission of sins, Acts 2:38.

Do You Love Jesus?

John 14:15, 21, 23-24

Thesis: To emphasize that if we love Jesus, we must obey him.

Song: *I Love My Savior Too*

Introduction:

1. There is ample biblical evidence that Jesus loves us.
 - a. He loved us when we were vile with sin, Rom. 5:8.
 - b. Our Lord loved us and gave himself for us that we might be saved, Eph. 5:2; Rev. 1:5.
2. We have an obligation to reciprocate and demonstrate our love toward Jesus.
 - a. Jesus loved us first, which prompts us to love him in return, 1 John 4:19.
 - b. Our love toward Jesus is demonstrated by obeying him, John 14:15, 21, 23-24.
3. Whether we obey the Word of Jesus says something about one's professed love for Jesus.
 - a. Disobedience demonstrates that one does not truly love Jesus, John 14:24.
 - b. Jesus asked the pertinent question in the face of disobedience, Luke 6:46.

Body:

I. Do you love Jesus — enough to assemble regularly with his church, Heb. 10:25-31?

- A. Do you love Jesus — enough to worship according to divine instruction, Col. 3:17?
 1. Lord's Supper reverently and weekly, 1 Cor. 11:26-29; Acts 20:7.
 2. Purposeful giving according to one's prosperity weekly, 2 Cor. 9:7; 1 Cor. 16:1-2.
 3. Singing as the type of worshipful music stipulated in the New Testament, Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16.
 4. Bible filled preaching, sound in doctrine, Titus 2:1; 2 Tim. 4:1-8.

5. Prayer, Acts 2:42; 1 Cor. 14:15.
- B. Do you love Jesus — enough to accept God’s assignment of male and female roles in the church, including the assembly?
 1. Both men and women enjoy equality through the Gospel regarding redemption, Gal. 3:27-28.
 2. However, women must remain silent in the assembly except for singing and confessing Christ to be saved, 1 Cor. 14:34; 1 Tim. 2:11-12.

II. Do you love Jesus — enough to practice Christian living, Rom. 12:1-2?

- A. Christians are set apart or sanctified for use by God, 2 Tim. 2:19-26.
- B. Christians must avoid every kind of sinful practice, 1 Thess. 5:22; Gal. 5:19-21.
- C. Christian living isn’t merely not sinning, but it also requires positive activity, Jam. 2:14-26; 4:17.
- D. Christian living becomes a way of life where God is invited into every decision, Jam. 4:13-16.

III. Do you love Jesus — enough to practice Christian service?

- A. Evangelism cannot occur without individual participation in the execution of the Great Commission, Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16; Luke 24:46-47; Acts 1:8.
- B. Benevolence is an opportunity to exhibit love toward brethren and non-Christians, Gal. 6:10.
- C. Christians have the responsibility to prepare themselves and serve if they can as preachers, teachers, deacons, elders, etc., 1 Cor. 12:12-30; Heb. 5:12-14..

IV. Do you love Jesus — enough to make him the Lord of your life?

- A. Jesus can be the Captain of your salvation if you will obey him, Heb. 5:8-9; Matt. 7:21-23; 2 Thess. 1:7-9.
- B. Jesus, like the Father and the Spirit, are anxious for souls to be saved and not perish, 2 Pet. 3:9; Matt. 18:11-14.
- C. We cannot divide our affections between God and earthly matters or even our families, Matt. 22:37; 10:37.

Conclusion:

1. Jesus loved us enough to die for us that we might be saved.

2. We ought to love Jesus in return.
3. We must demonstrate our love of Jesus by obeying him.
4. Since we love Jesus, we will assemble with the saints at every appointed time if it is possible, and worship according to divine instruction.
5. Since we love Jesus, we will earnestly endeavor to practice Christian living.
6. Since we love Jesus, we will do our best to practice Christian service.

Invitation:

1. Finally, since we love Jesus, we will make him Lord of our lives.
2. We will happily be baptized into Christ for the remission of our sins, Gal. 3:27; Acts 2:38.
3. Erring children of God will repent and follow the Chief Shepherd, 1 Pet. 5:4; Acts 8:22; 1 John 1:9; 2:1.

The Great Baptism Battle

Romans 6:3-5

Thesis: There may be no more controversial biblical topic among *Bible-believers* than “baptism.”

Introduction:

1. Once, I had a discussion about baptism with one of my college instructors.
 - a. He was a “Lay” Baptist preacher and about to accept a congregation in Alaska.
 - b. To my surprise, every passage concerning baptism to which we turned, he said was *spirit baptism*, not *water baptism*.
 - c. When he ascribed *spirit baptism* to 1 Pet. 3:21, I asked him respecting the “water” of verse 20 and the words “like figure” in verse 21.
 - d. When he defined “like figure” as “opposite to,” I knew it was time to close my Bible and go home — because he was not honest with himself, the Bible or me — and there is no point continuing a study with anyone who purposely is dishonest with the Word of God, Matt. 7:6.
2. More New Testament passages address baptism than any other facet of the Lord’s redemptive plan.
 - a. This represents **divine anticipation** that baptism more than any other part of God’s plan for our salvation would come under attack.
 - b. Similarly, any besieged **fort** will see the greatest concentration of defenders mustered precisely at the point most fiercely under attack.
3. Numerous aspects of Bible baptism could be addressed because of the more than ample biblical material about baptism, but we will direct our attention just now to three considerations:
 - a. Bible baptism is immersion in water,
 - b. Bible baptism is for the remission of sins, and
 - c. Only Bible baptism correctly cleanses one’s conscience from sins.

Body:

I. Bible baptism is immersion in water.

- A. Bible baptism for today is in *water*.
 - 1. The apostle Paul announced that one baptism remained from Eph. 4:5 onward.
 - 2. The apostle Peter identified that baptism as water baptism, 1 Pet. 3:20-21.
- B. Many passages allude to baptism as immersion but stop short of stating precisely that:
 - 1. John the Baptist baptized where there was “much water,” John 3:23.
 - 2. The baptizer and the baptizee both went down into and came up out of the water of baptism, Acts 8:38-39.
- C. Two passages state in so many words that Bible baptism is immersion.
 - 1. Baptism is compared to the death and **burial** of Christ, i.e., a watery grave, Rom. 6:3-4.
 - 2. The apostle Paul penned the same message to the Colossian Christians, Col. 2:12.
 - 3. Further, Paul styled Bible baptism as a planting into the death of Christ, Rom. 6:5.
- D. Observations:
 - 1. Passages that allude to immersion mesh perfectly with immersion and are antagonistic to pouring and sprinkling under the guise of baptism.
 - 2. Though the Greek words for *baptize* and *baptism* literally mean to immerse, our English translations are sufficient to uphold Bible baptism as immersion.
 - 3. Don’t neglect to preach the Gospel, including baptism, to our congregations, Rom. 1:15; I had the quizzical privilege once to baptize one of our longtime Bible class teachers who somehow had slipped into fellowship years before with a *sprinkling*.

II. Bible baptism is for the remission of sins.

- A. The phrase “for the remission of sins” does not mean, as some claim, “because of the remission of sins.”

1. Peter in Acts 2:38 stated in the first recorded Gospel sermon in his **command** to be baptized that baptism was for the remission of sins.
 2. In a similar passage, Jesus speaking, he was **not** about to be crucified 'because we already had the remission of sins,' Matt. 26:28.
- B. Other passages associate baptism with forgiveness of sins.
1. The baptism that Peter said was for the remission of sins, he wrote in 1 Pet. 3:21 that it **saves**.
 2. Saul of Tarsus (Paul) was instructed to wash away his sins in baptism, Acts 22:16.
- C. Bible baptism is a matter of **urgency**, since Scripture connects it with forgiveness.
1. Therefore, we are not surprised that candidates for baptism chose to be baptized **immediately**.
 2. The Philippian jailer was baptized in the middle of the night, Acts 16:33.
 3. The Ethiopian treasurer was baptized along the way in a long journey, Acts 8:26-40.

III. Bible baptism correctly cleanses the conscience.

- A. Humanly devised schemes of redemption cannot save souls.
1. Man cannot direct his own steps, Jer. 10:23.
 2. God will not accept human plans of salvation at the Judgment, Matt. 7:21-23.
 3. Therefore, humanly devised schemes of redemption cannot correctly cleanse the conscience of sin.
- B. Former divine laws were never intended nor could they cleanse the conscience of sin.
1. Patriarchy provided nothing more than atonement and the **promise** of future redemption, Gen. 12:1-3.
 2. Judaism was incapable of cleansing the conscience from sin, Heb. 10:1-4.
 3. Therefore, the apostle Paul taught that anyone resorting to the Law for salvation is lost, Gal. 3:11; 5:4.
- C. Bible baptism, under the New Testament, does cleanse

the sinner's conscience.

1. The parenthetical expression in 1 Pet. 3:21 attributes to baptism the capacity to cleanse the human conscience.
2. The apostle Peter contrasts the outward appearance of baptism (a bath or physical cleansing) with its real purpose (an inner, spiritual cleansing).
3. Bible baptism cleanses the conscience because it is a burial into the death of Christ for the **remission of sins**.

Conclusion:

1. Bible baptism is immersion in water for the remission of sins.
2. Only immersion in water for the remission of sins (in conjunction with other elements to which the Bible attributes saving power) can correctly cleanse the sinner's conscience of sin.
3. All other baptisms and all other reasons for which people propose to be baptized neither save souls nor correctly cleanse the human conscience.

Invitation:

1. It is either Bible baptism, immersion in water for the remission of sins, or it is not truly baptism at all.
2. Have you been baptized for the remission of sins?
3. It is an urgent matter!

Pronouncing Judgment

James 4:11-12

Thesis: Exposition and application

Introduction:

1. The world seems to have an endless propensity to sin with the tongue.
2. Even Christians have a tremendous temptation to sin with the tongue, for which there are numerous warnings in the Bible.
3. The Book of James repeatedly addresses sinning with the tongue, 1:26; 3:1-12; 4:11-12; 5:12.
4. For the next few moments, we will make some **observations** regarding the text of James 4:11-12 and make offer some contemporary **applications**.

Body:

I. “Speak not evil one of another, brethren. He that speaketh evil of *his* brother, and judgeth his brother, speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law: but if thou judge the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge,” Jam. 4:11.

A. *Present Tense:* The words for “speak” and “judge” in verse 11 are present tense and indicate continuing action, which is prohibited.

1. “The tense of the verbs here used indicates, not an occasional lapse into this sin, but a constant and habitual addiction thereto.” (Woods)
2. “The plural [first appearance of *speak evil*] implies that this sin was rife among the readers.” (Lenski)

B. *Speaking Evil:* or “speaking against” from *katalalos*.

1. “Speaking evil” is the same as “**backbiting**,” Rom. 1:30; 2 Cor. 12:20, as the Greek word *katalalos* is sometimes translated.
2. Evil speaking is what non-Christians do toward Christians, 1 Pet. 2:12; 3:16.
3. “The evil here referred to is that of talking against

others-against their actions, their motives, their manner of living, their families, etc. Few things are more common in the world; nothing is more decidedly against the true spirit of religion.” (Barnes)

4. “...we must not speak evil things of others, though they be true, unless we be called to it, and there be some necessary occasion for them; much less must we report evil things when they are false, or, for aught we know, may be so. Our lips must be guided by the law of kindness, as well as truth and justice.” (Henry).
 5. “...there is certainly no more common sin among ‘saints’ and sinners today... One may speak evil of another by unjustly criticizing his actions, words, life; by taking up evil reports originated by others against a brother and giving them further circulation. All such censorious activity is sinful and wrong. ...It would be well for all of us to remember that if there is such a thing as *evil-speaking*, there is also *evil-hearing*, a necessary accompaniment of evil-speaking.” (Woods)
 6. Evil speaking is condemned in the Old Testament: “Thou shalt not go up and down as a talebearer among thy people...” Lev. 19:16; Psa. 15:1-3; “Let not an evil speaker be established in the earth...” Psa. 140:11.
 7. Especially Christians are forbidden to continue “evil speaking,” Eph. 4:31-32; 1 Pet. 2:1-2.
- C. *Another & Brethren*: “another” means another of the same kind, which corresponds to a disagreement among “brethren” in Christ.
- D. *The Law*:
1. In this context, James is speaking of the “royal law” (Jam. 2:8) or “law of liberty,” Jam. 1:25; 2:12, i.e. the Gospel of Christ.
 2. “Both are protected by the law; in fact, this equal protection makes them brothers.” (Lenski)
 3. Hence, to attack a brother who is protected by the

law is to attack the law that made us brothers in Christ.

E. *Judging One's Brother*: the act of **pronouncing judgment**.

1. It is always wrong to judge one's motives, when doing so would require God-like omniscience on our part.
2. "The Christians to whom James wrote were apt to speak very hard things of one another, because of their differences about indifferent things..."
(Henry)
3. The New Testament repeatedly addresses unrighteous, unqualified judgment, Rom. 14:4, 11; 1 Cor. 4:3-5; Jam. 2:8-13; 5:9.

F. *Judging the Law*:

1. "Not a few of the **harsh judgments** which one class of religionists pronounce on others, are in fact **judgments on the laws of Christ. We set up our own standards, or our own interpretations, and then we judge others for not complying with them, when in fact they may be acting only as the law of Christianity, properly understood, would allow them to do.** They who set up a claim to a right to judge the conduct of others, should be certain that they understand the nature of religion themselves. It may be presumed, unless there is **evidence** to the contrary, that others are as conscientious as we are; and it may commonly be supposed that they who differ from us have some reason for what they do, and may be desirous of glorifying their Lord and Master, and that they may possibly be right. It is commonly not safe to judge hastily of a man who has turned his attention to a particular subject, or to suppose that he has no reasons to allege for his opinions or conduct."
(Barnes)
2. "It is implied here that it is the simple duty of every Christian to obey the law. He is not to assume the office of a judge about its propriety or fitness; but

he is to do what he supposes the law to require of him, and is to allow others to do the same. **Our business in religion is not to make laws, or to declare what they should have been, or to amend those that are made; it is simply to obey those which are appointed**, and to allow others to do the same, as they understand them.” (Barnes)

3. In the context of James 4, ‘judging the law’ may refer to or would include the Judaizing problem with which much of the New Testament is concerned, Col. 2:16-18.

G. *Making Oneself a Judge*: When mankind self-elevates himself to a position where he assumes to pass judgment on inferiors.

II. “There is one lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy: who art thou that judgest another?” Jam. 4:12.

A. *Lawgiver*:

1. This term refers to Christ and appears only here.
2. “Lawgiver” means legislator.
3. “The King James Version fails to note the emphatic position of ‘one.’ The English Revised Version (1885) is better: ‘one only is the lawgiver.’” (Vincent)
4. The ASV reads: “**One only** is the lawgiver and judge...”
5. “But it is a fundamental principle in Christianity that **no laws are binding on the conscience, but those which Christ has ordained**; and that all attempts to make other laws pertaining to religion binding on the conscience is a **usurpation** of his prerogatives. The church is safe while it adheres to this as a settled principle; it is not safe when it submits to any legislation in religious matters as binding the conscience.” (Barnes)

B. *To Save & to Destroy*:

1. “Compare Matt 10:28. The idea here would seem to be, that **he is able to save those whom you condemn, and to destroy you who pronounce a judgment on them.**” (Barnes)

2. “James himself states the kind of judging he refers to, namely katalalein, running down a brother. To think that this refers to all judging would destroy the entire apostle as well as all apostolic denunciation of the sins of the readers. Preachers are to voice God’s law and God’s judgment on evil conduct in no uncertain terms (II Tim. 4:2; II Sam. 12:7), and brethren must likewise correct each other. But the judging that goes beyond this and aims only at tearing down the good name of a brother by imputing to him false motives and intents is an entirely different matter. It is a flagrant usurpation as if we had the power to send to heaven or to hell according to any law which we may be pleased to set up.” (Lenski)
- C. *Judget*: A certain kind of judgment is prohibited in this context, as well as in companion texts throughout the New Testament.
1. Compare the harsh and hypocritical judgment of Matt. 7:1-5; Rom. 2:1.
 2. “Often harsh words about the absent.” (Robertson)
 3. “Who art thou who darest to usurp the office and prerogative of the supreme Judge?” (Clarke)
 4. “There is nothing more decidedly condemned in the Scriptures than the habit of pronouncing a judgment on the motives and conduct of others. There is nothing in which we are more liable to err, or to indulge in wrong feelings; and there is nothing which God claims more for himself as his peculiar prerogative.” (Barnes)
- D. *Another*: Here the Greek word used means *neighbor*.

III. Applications.

- A. James 4:11-12 applies to Christians before any secondary application applies to anyone in the world around us!
1. As verse 11 suggests, judging our brethren in a way that God prohibits has become **habitual** with the people of God.
 2. The activity condemned in our context is the very type of sin seen in the world and by the world

against Christians!

- B. Not any of us has divine permission to assume the prerogative of passing final judgment on anyone.
 - 1. Final judgment and assignment to heaven or hell is the sole prerogative of the only Lawgiver and Great Judge, Jesus Christ!
 - 2. There is a difference between fruit inspection and passing final judgment on our peers, Matt. 7:15-20; 1 John 4:1.
- C. We attack “the law” whenever we elevate our ideas to equality with the Gospel of Christ.
 - 1. Far more disruptions of fellowship among us have occurred over personal differences than doctrinal matters.
 - 2. Far more disruptions of fellowship among us have occurred over indifferent matters (i.e., antism, tighter and tighter self-drawn circles of fellowship).
- D. We have a primary responsibility to be ‘doers of the law.’
 - 1. If we spend all our time **fruit inspecting** and then **passing judgment** on our peers, precious little, if any time, remains to do the will God, “see your good works,” Matt. 5:16; “zealous of good works,” Titus 2:14; “maintain good works,” 3:14; “provoke...to good works,” Heb. 10:24; ‘behold good works,’ 1 Pet. 2:12.
 - 2. The local congregation as well as the brotherhood of Christ desperately needs to train its vision for the now and the future on being ‘doers of the law.’

Conclusion:

- 1. As Christians, **we must stop** the debilitating practice of backbiting or speaking evil against each other.
 - a. “...it is impossible to be in a right relationship with God, without sustaining the proper relation with our brethren.” (Woods)
- 2. We must **diligently practice** the law of Christ.
- 3. We must chiefly be **doers of the law**.

Invitation:

- 1. We must allow God to do his part and we must be about doing

our part this side of eternity.

2. Our part includes obeying the Gospel of Christ, Heb. 5:8-9; 2 Thess. 1:7-9.
3. Are you a baptized believer? If not, why not? Acts 22:16.

Beautiful Feet

Romans 10:13-18

Thesis: To examine some of the responsibilities of both the preacher and his auditors.

Song: *Tell Me the Old, Old Story*

Introduction:

1. Preaching demands participation by both the **proclaimer** and the **auditor** or listener.
 - a. Church leaders (e.g., elders, teachers and preachers) possess no *original authority of themselves*, but they have *divine authorization* and the inalienable **responsibility** to teach and preach only the unadulterated Word of God, Gal. 1:6-9; Rev. 22:18-19; Prov. 30:6; Deut. 4:2.
 - b. Those who hear preaching have the duty to critically compare it to the Gospel, 1 John 4:1.
 - c. Incidentally, only mature Christians can effectively discern between good and evil, Heb. 5:14.
 - d. Both proclaimers and hearers of the Gospel have the sober responsibility to obey the Word of God, but unfortunately, not all auditors of the Gospel obey it, Matt. 1:14-17.
2. The Gospel or the Word of God is the proper subject of preaching today.
 - a. In the strictest sense, **all religious authority** today rests with Jesus Christ, Matt. 28:18-20 ASV; John 12:48; Matt. 17:1-6; Acts 3:19-26; Deut. 18:15-18; Heb. 1:1-2; 2:3; John 20:30-31.
 - b. The apostles and other inspired writers of the first century also preached by the authority of Christ and had their preaching confirmed by miracles, Matt. 18:18; Mark 16:20; Heb. 2:3-4.
 - c. There is only one proper response to the preaching of Christ, Heb. 2:1.

Body:

I. Preachers and Preaching.

- A. Some preachers about whom we read in Scripture seem to have had little success at times in their preaching of God's Word.
 - 1. Noah, a preacher of righteousness, only saved eight souls, 2 Pet. 2:5; 1 Pet. 3:20-21.
 - 2. The apostle Paul converted few people in Athens, though some believed but most mocked him, Acts 17:16-34.
 - 3. People still mock preachers and preaching today.
- B. Even if a preacher's message is poorly received, he must always endeavor to please God rather than man.
 - 1. Paul repeatedly affirmed that he purposely pleased God and not men, Gal. 1:10-12; 1 Thess. 2:3-5.
 - 2. Even when our auditors prefer fables, we must preach the Word of God only, 2 Tim. 4:1-4.
- C. Personal traits of preachers are less important than the holy message they proclaim.
 - 1. Moses admitted that he was slow of speech, Exod. 4:10-12.
 - 2. The apostle Paul said that he was rude or unpolished in speech, whereas others said his speech was contemptible, 1 Cor. 2:1; 2 Cor. 11:6; 10:10.
 - 3. Paul, however, used "great plainness (boldness) of speech," 2 Cor. 3:12.
- D. The primary responsibility of preachers is twofold.
 - 1. First, preachers more than most other members must have an intimate familiarity with the Word of God, 2 Tim. 2:15.
 - 2. Second, preachers must affirm the Word of God constantly and exhort brethren to maintain good works, Titus 3:8.
 - 3. Preachers are also warned to avoid foolish questions and strife, 2 Tim. 2:16; Titus 3:9.
 - 4. Of course, preachers also share the responsibilities that fall on every church member.

II. Preaching and Its Auditors.

- A. All preaching ought to be compared to the Bible to determine that it is indeed the Word of God, 1 John 4:1; 1 Pet. 4:11; Acts 17:11.
 - 1. When found to be God's Word, preaching ought to be acknowledged as the Word of God and **obeyed**, 1 Thess. 2:3.
 - 2. Eternal judgment is personal, which places responsibility on individuals to ascertain between truth and error, good and bad, 2 Cor. 5:10; Rev. 20:12-15; Heb. 5:14.
- B. Auditors of the Gospel should not despise the messenger of God.
 - 1. Paul found himself the enemy of his Christians as well as his Jewish brethren when he preached truth, Gal. 4:16.
 - 2. The apostle instructed the young evangelists not to permit anyone despise their youth, Titus 2:15; 1 Tim. 4:12.
 - 3. The Old Testament prophet Elijah was accused by King Ahab of being a troubler in Israel when actually Ahab was the true troubler of the people of God, 1 Kings 18:17-18.
- C. All people and especially the children of God ought to acknowledge the Word of God when it is presented and obey it, irrespective of whether they concur with God regarding his message.
 - 1. There is no nobler example than the Bereans who determined from Scripture that the preaching of Paul was true, which preaching they obeyed, Acts 17:11.
 - 2. The Thessalonians received the Word of God, not as the opinion of men, but as the very Word of God, which they applied to their lives and heralded near and far, 1 Thess. 2:13; 1:8.
 - 3. Romans 10:13-18 portray the Word of God as God's choice for how to disseminate is will to mankind, whereby men can be saved.

Conclusion:

1. The only business a Gospel preacher has in the pulpit is preaching the pure, unadulterated Word of God.
 - a. The pulpit is not the place for opinions, theories or false doctrine.
 - b. If a preacher persists in presenting anything other than the Gospel of Jesus Christ from the pulpit, he should be quickly relieved from his duties as a Gospel preacher.
 - c. If, however, a preacher faithfully preaches the Word of God, his auditors should readily receive and obey that Word.
2. The faithful preacher is no more than a messenger or mailman sent from God.
 - a. Retaliation against a faithful Gospel preacher is misdirected.
 - b. If a message with which there is disagreement is in fact God's Word, any dissatisfaction should rightfully be expressed toward its author, God.
3. I require those before whom I preach to scrutinize my words.
 - a. If I teach and preach God's Word, believe and obey it irrespective of whether you wish it were otherwise.
 - b. If I innocently falter in my presentation of God's Word, kindly correct me as Priscilla and Aquilla did Apollos, Acts 18:24-26.
 - c. If I teach for the truth personal opinion or false doctrine, remove me from the pulpit and relieve me of teaching duties — for the sake of the church.

Invitation:

1. Preachers and their auditors are equally responsible to obey God's Word; have you obeyed the Gospel of Christ, 2 Thess. 1:8-9.
2. Jesus is the author of eternal salvation to all who obey him, Heb. 5:8-9; Mark 16:16?
3. If already a child of God, have you sinned publicly for which you have not yet repented publicly, Acts 8:22; Jam. 5:16?

Deacons Deke

1 Timothy 3:8-13

Thesis: To examine what the New Testament reveals concerning the qualifications, appointment, work and office of deacons.

Introduction:

1. The **English** words “deacon” and “deacons” appear only **five times** in the Bible.
 - a. *Deacon*: 1 Tim. 3:10, 13.
 - b. *Deacons*: Phil. 1:1; 1 Tim. 3:8, 12.
2. The two related **Greek** words translated “deacon” and “deacons” together appear about **67 times**.
 - a. The Greek diakonos is translated “minister” (20), “servant” (8) and “deacon” (3).
 - b. The Greek diakoneo is translated “minister unto” (15), “serve” (10), “minister” (7) and misc. (5).
3. Greek definitions of these two words assign persons so described to **service activities**.
 - a. The Greek diakonos means **to run errands, to perform menial duties, table-server, supplier of material needs, a servant of someone, a helper**.
 - b. The Greek diakoneo means **to wait upon, to care for** and shares many of the same definitions of diakonos.
4. There is sufficient information within the New Testament to ascertain the qualifications, appointment, work and office of deacons.
 - a. Numerous passages use the Greek words sometimes translated “deacon” to describe service activity when they do not refer to special servants called deacons.
 - b. Qualifications for special servants called deacons appear in 1 Tim. 3:8-13.

Body:

I. Deacons Deke!

- A. All of the original language definitions for our English word “deacon” pertain to **actively working**.

1. To run errands, to perform menial duties, table-server, supplier of material needs, a servant of someone, a helper, to wait upon, to care for.
 2. Consequently, the words “minister” and “servant” or some form of these words is used to convey what they **do**.
- B. Diakonos differs from doulos (slave).
1. **Doulos** emphasizes one’s **relationship to his master**.
 2. **Diakonos** emphasizes one’s **activity in his work**.
- C. Each office in the church is an **office of responsibility** rather than a position of honor.
1. Preachers preach!
 2. Teachers teach!
 3. Elders ‘eld.’
 4. Deacons ‘deke.’
- D. Deacons have **work to do** in the church.
1. It would be as useless and unbiblical for deacons not to serve in some particular activity, as it would be for a preacher not to actually preach or for a teacher not to actually teach.
 2. The nature of that work is primarily service orientated.

II. Other usages of the Greek words for deacon in the New Testament demonstrate the biblical meaning of the “deacon.”

- A. Domestic servants, John 2:5, 9.
- B. Civil ministers, Rom. 13:4.
- C. Jesus Christ (minister), Rom. 15:8; Gal. 2:17.
- D. Christians as servants to each other, Matt. 20:26; 23:11.
- E. Gospel ministers, Eph. 3:7; 6:21; Col. 1:7, 23, 25; 4:7, 1 Cor. 3:5; 2 Cor. 3:6; 6:4; 11:23; 1 Thess. 3:2; 1 Tim. 4:6.
- F. Servants of the church, Rom. 16:1.
 1. The RSV translates (transliterates) diakonos as deaconess.
 2. Though it is apparent that Phebe was a special servant of the church, no woman can meet the marital specification of 1 Tim. 3:11.
- G. Servants to a king, Matt. 22:13.

III. Qualifications of Deacons.

- A. Strictly speaking, biblical qualifications for deacons only appear in 1 Tim. 3:8-13.
1. “Grave” serious and dignified; sober minded; conduct commanding respect.
 2. “Not doubletongued” not talking two ways to suit the person with whom one is at the time; speaking one thing and meaning another; not using words deceitfully.
 3. “Not given to much wine” not to engage in alcohol or acting like under the influence of it.
 - a) It is erroneous to conclude from 1 Tim. 3:3 that elders must abstain from all alcohol, but that deacons can have some alcohol and that other Christians have not restriction regarding alcohol.
 - b) Rather, these and other passages forbid the pleasurable consumption of alcohol (so-called social drinking).
 4. “Not greedy of filthy lucre”
 - a) Not seeking ill-gotten gain; is the type of character who can faithfully manage money.
 - b) Opposite trait of Judas, John 12:6.
 5. “Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience”
 - a) Has a clear understanding of God’s Word and conducts himself accordingly; dependable to faithfully practice Christianity.
 - b) The Gospel was called a “mystery,” Eph. 3:3-11.
 - c) Other writers refer to a “pure conscience,” 1 Pet. 3:21; Heb. 9:14; 10:22.
 6. “First proved” experienced in Christian service; has a history of being a good worker for Jesus Christ.
 7. “Blameless”
 - a) Not deserving of public rebuke; unimpeachable; irreproachable.

- b) All Christians are to be blameless, 1 Cor. 1:8; Col. 1:22.
 - 8. “Husband of one wife”
 - a) Not a polygamist.
 - b) It is erroneous to conclude from this verse that a biblically remarried widower or divorced person does not qualify to be a deacon.
 - c) The verse merely teaches that a man who would be a deacon could only have had one wife at a time — not a polygamist.
 - 9. “Ruling their children and their own houses well” rightly governing his family — inclusive of one or more children.
- B. Servants of Acts 6:1-7.
 - 1. One of the two Greek words translated “deacon” appears in this account, “serve tables” or diakoneo.
 - 2. The qualifications for selection of those chosen in Acts 6 differs from the qualifications for deacons in 1 Tim. 3:8-13 — honest and full of the Holy Spirit.
 - 3. It is clear
 - a) Regarding the caliber of men to be chosen to serve the church in an official capacity and that they must be guided by God’s Word.
 - b) The nature of the work of special servants or deacons pertains to physical activity (irrespective of what else they may do, e.g., teaching or preaching, Philip in Acts 8).
 - c) The congregation is to choose men from among itself to serve.

IV. Sub-Qualifications of Deacons.

- A. A man’s wife may help him qualify or disqualify him from being a biblically acceptable deacon, 1 Tim. 3:11.
 - 1. This principle is also true regarding other servants of the church.
 - 2. For instance, elders and preachers can be greatly hindered in their respective works if their wives prove to be detriments to their labors for the Lord.

- B. The qualifications for wives of potential deacons are fewer than the number of qualifications for deacons.
1. “Grave” same as for the deacon — serious and dignified; sober minded; conduct commanding respect.
 2. “Not a slanderer” does not slander.
 3. “Sober” not intoxicated; temperate; abstains from alcohol.
 4. “Faithful in all things” trustworthy; not a revealer or confidences.

Conclusion:

1. Deacons must deke or serve.
2. One cannot be a deacon unless
 - a. He meets the qualifications of 1 Tim. 3:8-13.
 - b. His wife also meets specific qualifications.
 - c. He is the head of his wife and children.
 - d. He has a history or ‘track record’ of Christian service.
 - e. There is a work for him to do and he is willing and able to perform it.
3. A special reward is reserved for faithful deacons, 1 Tim. 3:13.
 - a. “a good degree” or dignity.
 - b. “boldness” confidence or cheerful courage.

Invitation:

1. All accountable souls ought to commit themselves to faithful, Christian service, but especially deacons must strive well in Christian service.
2. Before anyone can serve Christ, he must become a child of God, Mark 16:16.
3. Also, unfaithful Christians are unable in their sinful condition to be of acceptable service to our Lord, Acts 8:22.

The Forgotten Command: Repent

Acts 17:30-31

Thesis: To emphasize the biblical concept of repentance and to encourage especially public repentance where appropriate.

Introduction:

1. In the pre-Christian, preparatory ministries of both John the Baptist and Jesus Christ, each emphasized and preached repentance, Matt. 3:1-2; 4:17; Luke 13:3; Mark 1:4; Acts 19:4.
2. Repentance was a prominent aspect of the Great Commission that Jesus uttered immediately before his Ascension, Luke 24:47.
3. Repentance was a focal point of the first recorded Gospel sermon on the birthday of the church, Acts 2:38.
4. Repentance continued to be an important feature of Gospel preaching, Acts 3:19; 17:30; Rom. 2:4; 2 Cor. 7:10; 2 Pet. 3:9; Rev. 2:16.
5. Repentance requires reformation of life, Matt. 3:8; Acts 26:20.
6. Repentance takes two forms, private for private sins and public for publicly known sins, Matt. 18:15-17; Acts 8:22; Jam. 5:16.
7. Repentance is not optional, 1 John 1:8-10.

Body:

- I. Some private sins for which we must repent privately (not all inclusive list; see NT).**
 - A. Internal sins.
 1. Vain imaginations and darkened heart, Rom. 1:21.
 2. Unjustified anger versus righteous indignation, Matt. 5:22; Mark 3:5; Eph. 4:26.
 3. Lust, Matt. 5:28.
 4. Hate, Matt. 5:43-47.
 5. Ungodly pride, Rom. 1:22, 30.
 6. Covetousness, Rom. 1:29; 1 Cor. 6:10.
 7. Envy, Rom. 1:29; Gal. 5:21.

8. Hater of God, Rom. 1:30.
9. Faithless, Rev. 21:8.
- B. Sinful deeds that may be secret sins, 2 Sam. 12:12.
 1. Homosexuality, Rom. 1:24-27; 1 Cor. 6:9.
 2. Disobedient to parents, Rom. 1:30.
 3. Fornication (all illicit sexual activity, including adultery), Rom. 1:29; 1 Cor. 6:9; Gal. 5:19; Rev. 21:8.
 4. Stealing, 1 Cor. 6:10.
 5. Drunkards, 1 Cor. 6:10; Gal. 5:21.
 6. Lying, Rev. 21:8.

II. Some public sins for which we must repent publicly (not all inclusive list; see NT).

- A. Anything listed under our discussion of *private sins* could be a *public sin* if generally known.
- B. Sins against God (really, all sins are against God, 2 Sam. 12:13).
 1. Idolatry, 1 Cor. 6:9; Gal. 5:19.
 2. Witchcraft (occult), Gal. 5:20; Rev. 21:8.
 3. Taking God's name in vain, Exod. 20:7; Matt. 5:33-37.
 4. Blasphemy, Mark 7:22; Col. 3:8.
 5. Filthy communication, Col. 3:8.
 6. Absent from worship without cause (different from excuse), Heb. 10:25-32.
 7. Changing biblical doctrine, Matt. 15:9; Rev. 22:18-19.
- C. Sins against mankind.
 1. Murder, Rom. 1:29; Gal. 5:21; Rev. 21:8.
 2. Covenant breakers, Rom. 1:30.
 3. Extortion, 1 Cor. 6:10.
 4. Strife, Gal. 5:20.
 5. Reveling (dancing), Gal. 5:21.
 6. False teaching, Rom. 16:17-18; 1 John 4:1.
 7. Taking over the church, 3 John 9.

Conclusion:

1. True repentance comes before baptism, Acts 2:38.
2. Erring Christians **must** truly repent before they can receive forgiveness, Acts 8:22.

3. Private and public sins respectively require private and public repentance.

Invitation:

1. Are there sins in your life, perhaps about which you have forgotten, for which you have not repented?
 - a. God forgets the sins he forgives, Heb. 10:17-18.
 - b. However, God remembers the sins against us for which we have not been forgiven, Rev. 18:5.
2. The apostle Peter plainly instructed unbaptized believers how to receive forgiveness, Acts 2:38.
 - a. Will you put Jesus on today in baptism, Gal. 3:27?
 - b. Or, will you spurn your precious Lord who died for you, Rom. 5:8; 1 Cor. 15:3?
3. Erring Christians.
 - a. Every member of the church here this morning who is guilty of *private* or *secret* sins needs to repent in his or her heart and word a silent prayer for forgiveness right now — we'll pause and wait for you.
 - b. Every member of the Lord's church here this morning who is guilty of publicly known sin needs to heartily repent and come forward right now as we stand and sing.

In the Bosom of Abraham

Luke 16:19-31

Thesis: To paint a picture of comfort respecting the departed soul whereby those who remain may also find relief.

Introduction:

1. The Bible adequately defines death so that we can understand its role in mankind's eternal journey.
2. Death is not the end, but the beginning of a whole new phase of one's existence.
3. Jesus Christ has made it possible that one can be victorious over death.
4. Whatever adverse circumstances may accompany our earthly existence are overcome beyond the threshold of death.

Body:

I. What is death?

- A. Death is the separation of the soul of a person from his body, Jam. 2:26.
 1. One's soul returns to God and his body returns to the earth, Ecc. 12:7.
 2. Rachel's death is described as her soul departing from her body, Gen. 35:18.
- B. Death is an appointment, regardless of how long or short one's life may be, that we know we cannot avoid, Heb. 9:27.
 1. Usually, a person lives about 70 years on this earth, barring tragedy, Psa. 90:10.
 2. Only two souls who ever lived avoided death (Enoch and Elijah), Gen. 5:24; 2 Kings 2:11.

II. Death is a new beginning.

- A. It is desirable for the child of God to go to be with Jesus, Phil. 1:21, 23-24.
 1. The apostle Paul looked forward to exchanging his life for a crown in heaven, 2 Tim. 4:6-8.
 2. The child of God has a new dwelling place after

death, 2 Cor. 5:1.

- B. This new beginning is possible through Jesus Christ.
 - 1. Jesus destroyed the devil's hold over death whereby there can be a resurrection from the grave, Heb. 2:14-15.
 - 2. Though all will be resurrected, the children of God will be raised to eternal life, John 5:28-29.

III. Those who serve Lord Jesus in this life are victorious over death.

- A. Through Jesus Christ, the children of God are fitted for heavenly habitation, 1 Cor. 15:50-58.
 - 1. While Jesus is preparing mansions in heaven, we must prepare ourselves for his return, John 14:2-3.
 - 2. Summarized, this means we must obey Jesus who is the captain of our salvation, Heb. 5:8-9.
- B. Specifically, Jesus Christ and the inspired writers of the New Testament have promised spiritual blessings, chief of which is salvation, to Christians.
 - 1. In giving the Great Commission, Jesus said to believe and be baptized for salvation, Mark 16:16.
 - 2. Failure to obey Christ will result in severe and everlasting punishment, 2 Thess. 1:7-9.

IV. Adverse circumstances that may accompany us to the grave are immaterial respecting our *afterlife*, Luke 16:19-31.

- A. Lazarus in this narrative was a sickly beggar.
 - 1. He entertained no hope that life would ever be better for him as long as he lived.
 - 2. The reward he enjoyed in the bosom of Abraham sufficiently offset his prior misfortunes.
- B. Noticing the rich man and the beggar in the biblical narrative provide several useful bits of information concerning what lies beyond the grave.
 - 1. The dead are conscious and aware of both the states they occupy as well as the condition of their loved one's left behind.
 - 2. For the righteous dead, Hades permits a foretaste of eternal heaven with God.

Conclusion:

1. Only the Bible affords mankind a glimpse beyond the grave.
2. For the child of God, beyond death one enjoys comfort in anticipation of the eventual admission to heaven.
3. Jesus Christ has made it possible for accountable souls to be victorious over death.
4. The burdens of this life are removed on the other side of death's threshold.
5. As far as mortal man can ascertain, the departed has faithfully prepared himself for entrance into eternity, and each of us would do well to do likewise.
6. God's Word alone provides us the information by which we can confidently navigate from this life beyond death to the very shores of heaven.
7. Each person present this day must, with King David of old, realize that the dead will not return to us, but we can make preparation in this life whereby we can go to them when we also pass from the scenes of life, 2 Sam. 12:23.

Elders Eld

Titus 1:5-9

Thesis: To ascertain what the New Testament teaches about elders.

Introduction:

1. God did not leave the church without appropriate direction in religion.
 - a. Jesus Christ is the head of the church for which he died, Eph. 5:23-25.
 - b. The Word of God is the authority to which we must appeal, by which we must live and by which we will be judged, Matt. 28:18-20; Luke 6:46; Rev. 20:11-15.
 - c. Elders (also biblically known as bishops, pastors, overseers, shepherds and the presbytery) have Christ's **authorization** and **responsibility** to guide the churches over which they are appointed, Acts 20:28.
2. Elders, therefore, possess the greatest responsibility in the world, watching for the souls of others, Heb. 13:17.
 - a. Consequently, the New Testament contains qualifications that must be met by prospective elders, 1 Tim. 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9.
 - b. Even the terms that the New Testament applies to them indicate something about their qualifications and function.
3. There often is confusion regarding elders (and comparable terms) because the biblical description of them differs widely from typical denominational application of them.
 - a. One denomination dubs as elders unmarried boys who go about the nation through the neighborhoods, two by two, to promote that denomination's doctrine; however, according to the Bible, elders are married!
 - b. Another manmade religion styles as bishops unmarried men who rule over an extended geographical area; however, according to the Bible, bishops ruled together over a single congregation, and were married men.

- c. Most denominations equate a pastor with a preacher, whereas the New Testament does not make that correlation, but uses the term pastors interchangeably with the word elders.

Body:

I. Various terms are applied in the New Testament to the office of elders.

A. Elders (presbuteros)

1. The Greek presbuteros is translated “presbytery,” 1 Tim. 4:14.
2. The word means elder or older, senior, more advanced in years.
3. It denotes dignity, maturity and experience.
4. The word relates to the practice under Judaism of selecting judges and rulers from among the elderly men.
5. The word “elder” or “elders” appears 69 times in the New Testament: 19 for elders of the church; 34 for Jewish elders; 4 referring to age; and 12 times in Rev. to elders in heaven.
6. Examples of elders in the New Testament church include: Acts 11:30; 14:23; 15:2, 4, 6, 22-23; 16:4; 20:17; 21:18; 1 Tim. 5:17, 19; Titus 1:5; Jam. 5:14.

B. Bishops and Overseers (episkopas)

1. The word means an inspector, overseer, watcher, guardian, a man charged with the duty of seeing that things to be done by others are done rightly, to superintend, guardian of souls, one who watches for others’ welfare.
2. The Greek word denotes the function or the nature of the work.
3. Originally, the word was used regarding Greek institutions.
4. Episkopas is translated as “bishop” or “bishops,” referring to elders in the church in 1 Tim. 3:1-2; Titus 1:7; Phil. 1:1 and is applied to Jesus Christ in 1 Pet. 2:25.
5. Episkopas is translated as “overseer” in Acts 20:28 KJV; “bishop” ASV.

- C. Pastors and Shepherds (poiman)
 - 1. Poiman means herdsman, shepherd, pastor, manager, director or superintendent.
 - 2. This word denotes tender care and vigilance.
 - 3. Commonly, this word was applied to the shepherd of sheep.
 - 4. Poiman is translated once as “pastors” referring to the offices of elders, Eph. 4:11.
 - 5. Otherwise (outside the Gospel accounts), it is translated as “Shepherd” and applied to Jesus Christ, the Chief Shepherd under whom there are subordinate shepherds.

II. Qualifications of Elders, 1 Tim. 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9.

- A. “Blameless,” not under accusation, irrefragable, unimpeachable.
 - 1. “Blameless” does not mean sinlessly perfect.
 - 2. It means not worthy of public rebuke, a good citizen in the community and the church.
- B. “Husband of one wife” literally means one wife at a time or not a polygamist.
- C. “Vigilant” and “temperate” mean not given to extremes.
- D. “Sober” means of sound mind, under self-control or discreet.
- E. “Of good behavior” means orderly.
- F. “Given to hospitality” comes from a word from which we get brotherly love.
- G. “Apt to teach” and ‘holding fast the faithful word to convict gainsayers’ comes from the Greek word that means to teach or preach in the public assembly.
- H. “Not given to wine” means to be abstinent, not given over to alcohol.
- I. “No striker” and “not a brawler” come from different Greek words with the same definitions, not quarrelsome or violent, not prone to smite men.
- J. “Not greedy of filthy lucre” means to not be greedy for base gain.
- K. “Patient” means gentle, mild and reasonable.
- L. “Not covetous” means not a lover of money.
- M. ‘Rules his own house well with children in subjection

with all gravity' means his children are not accused of riot, not unruly or insubordinate; gravity equals honor and dignity.

- N. "Not a novice" means experienced, aged as a Christian, not newly planted or a recent convert.
- O. "A good report of them which are without" means that non-Christians would commend him for his goodness.
- P. "Having faithful children" means trustworthy followers of Jesus; they are Christians.
- Q. "Not self-willed" means not arrogant.
- R. "Not soon angry" means not overcome by passion, not prone to anger.
- S. "Lover of good men" means a lover of goodness.
- T. "Just" means to exhibit righteousness.
- U. "Holy" means pious and sanctified.

III. The Work of Elders.

- A. Elders are to exhort and convict gainsayers, Titus 1:9-11.
- B. They are to watch or guard souls as well as to rule, Heb. 13:17.
 - 1. To rule implies authority or authorization.
 - 2. They are to be examples, but they are to be more than examples.
- C. Elders are to feed or edify the church, Acts 20:28.
- D. They are to serve as examples worthy of imitation by the rest of the church, 1 Pet. 5:3.
 - 1. Elders are forbidden to "lord" themselves over the church.
 - 2. Elders are not dictators who run roughshod over everyone to please themselves.
 - 3. Elders must be about the business of providing for the spiritual welfare of each member.

Conclusion:

- 1. Elders, the presbytery, bishops, overseers, shepherds and pastors are synonymous or interchangeable terms coming from three Greek words: presbuteros, episkopas and poiman, e.g., Acts 20:17, 28; Titus 1:5, 7.
- 2. A plurality of elders always serve together over each fully organized congregation, Acts 14:23; 20:17; Phil. 1:1; 1 Tim. 5:17; Titus 1:5.

3. There is no greater office of responsibility and service than that belonging to elders.

Invitation:

1. Every accountable soul ought to be all that he can be before God.
 - a. The child of God ought to strive to be the most useful servant he can be.
 - b. Non-Christians ought to become children of God first.
2. Jesus gave the Great Commission, which is still valid today, Mark 16:16.
3. The words of the apostle Peter, likewise, are still valid toward erring Christians, Acts 8:22.

The Cost of Discipleship

Luke 14:25-35

Thesis: To provide a biblical definition of Christian discipleship and to encourage the enthusiastic embracing of Christian discipleship.

Song:

Introduction:

1. Our Lord addressed the *cost of discipleship* in Luke 14:25-35.
 - a. However, one has to know what the Bible means by *discipleship* and what it means by *cost* before anyone could possibly embrace it enthusiastically or knowledgeably.
 - b. Both English and Greek dictionaries provide relevant definitions respecting Christian discipleship and its costs.
2. The *cost of discipleship* has been adequately demonstrated and recorded upon the pages of the New Testament.
 - a. No one better demonstrated what the cost of discipleship involves than Jesus Christ himself.
 - b. Also, the lives of our Lord's apostles and other faithful disciples, and much of the New Testament demonstrates what is involved in the cost of discipleship.

Body:

I. Luke 14:25-35.

- A. "If any *man* come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple," Luke 14:26.
 1. The word "hate" can mean, as it usually does, malicious feelings toward another or it can mean "relative preference for one thing over another."¹
 2. Here the word "hate" means the latter and is used for the purpose of emphasis, cf. Matt. 10:37.
 3. We must have our priorities in proper order, Christ first, Matt. 6:33.
- B. "And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after

me, cannot be my disciple,” Luke 14:27.

1. Each who would follow Jesus must carry a cross, not representative of a handsome piece of jewelry, but representing all of the peril and pain involved in crucifixion.
 2. No one is called upon to carry the cross of Christ, but each must carry his own cross.
 3. Being a disciple involves activity in the face of peril.
- C. Luke 14:28-35, three illustrations, with an emphasis on *counting the cost* (28).
1. Planning ahead is essential to construct a fortification such as a tower and to achieve victory in war.
 2. Like useless salt, pursuits lightly undertaken, such as being a disciple of Christ are useless, too.
 3. Anyone who would propose to be a disciple of our Lord must **predetermine to pay the cost**.

II. Defining *Discipleship*.

- A. Defining “disciple,” some English definitions.
1. “One who accepts and assists in spreading the doctrines of another.”²
 2. “A follower of a particular teacher: an adherent of the principles of some leader of thought.”³
 3. “One who professes to have learned certain principles from another and maintains them on that other’s authority.”⁴
- B. Some Greek definitions for “disciple.”
1. “To learn, be taught, to learn by practice or experience, acquire a custom or habit.”⁵
 2. “To learn, to understand, to know, to be informed, to comprehend.”⁶
- C. The words “disciple” and “disciples” appear 221 times in the New Testament.
1. A faithful disciple of Jesus Christ adheres to the Lord’s teaching, practicing the same until it becomes a daily habit.
 2. The Lord’s disciple understands and is informed of his divine will in order to present one’s body as a

living sacrifice and to disciple the nations, Rom. 12:1-2; Matt. 28:19, ASV.

3. True discipleship is maintained only by the divine authority of Christ and not by the authority of men, John 8:31; Matt. 15:9.
4. Furthermore, effective disciples of the Lord are fruitful workers and good stewards, who have anticipated and acknowledged the cost of discipleship, Matt. 7:15-20; John 15:1-8; Matt. 25:14-30; Luke 14:25-35.

III. Defining *Cost*.

- A. Defining “cost,” some English and Greek definitions.
 1. “That which must be given to acquire, produce, accomplish or maintain anything.”⁷
 2. “The outlay or expenditure (as of effort or sacrifice) made to achieve an object. Loss or penalty incurred in gaining something. To stand firm, constant. To require effort, suffering or loss.”⁸
 3. “To devour, hence expense, as something which eats up resources.”⁹
- B. “Cost” appears in the New Testament once (Luke 14:28).
 1. *The cost of discipleship* mandates the investment of effort, labor, money and time in the service of our Lord and Savior.
 2. This is most easily and properly accomplished when Christians first give themselves fully to the Lord as the Macedonians did, 2 Cor. 8:1-5.

IV. The Cost of Discipleship is Demanding.

- A. One is not a fruitful disciple who professes discipleship without actively assisting in the spreading of the teaching of Christ, Mark 16:15; Acts 8:4; 1 Thess. 1:8.
 1. True discipleship is maintained by faithful service and is governed by the authority of Christ alone, 1 Cor. 15:58; John 8:31.
 2. It should be a habitual part of life and must be practiced, Luke 6:46.
- B. Discipleship does not simply happen, but is learned, Heb. 5:12-6:2; 1 Pet. 2:2.

1. The basis upon which Christian discipleship rests and is built must be an intense familiarity with the Christ and his Word.
2. This familiarity occurs as the calculated result of earnest study of the Bible and imitation of Christ, Acts 17:11; 2 Tim. 2:15; 1 Cor. 11:1, ASV; 1 Pet. 2:21.

V. Demonstrating the Cost of Discipleship.

- A. Jesus Christ suffered the most anyone could suffer for the spiritual welfare of others.
 1. Jesus left the glory of heaven, lived on the world he created, was rejected, beaten mercilessly and experienced an agonizing execution by ungrateful mankind on the cross.
 2. Our Lord assured his disciples that the world would treat them in similar fashion, Matt. 10:25; John 15:20.
- B. The apostles and other disciples of Jesus Christ suffered greatly in the first century.
 1. The apostles were threatened, imprisoned and beaten, Acts 4:17; 5:17-41.
 2. Stephen was stoned to death, Acts 7:57-60.
 3. The apostle James was executed, Acts 12:1-2.
 4. The apostle Paul suffered countless persecutions for the cause of Christ, 2 Cor. 11:23-27.
- C. Encouragement in the face of persecution is a frequent biblical topic.
 1. Jesus encouraged his band of disciples, Matthew 10:28.
 2. The apostle Paul forewarned of persecution from the ungodly world, 2 Tim.3:12.
 3. The apostle Peter addressed persecution of Christians, 1 Pet. 3:14; 4:16.
 4. The apostle John offered encouragement in the face of severe persecution and death, Rev. 2:10.
- D. Faithful discipleship in the face of persecution spread the Gospel throughout the world in the first century.
 1. Persecution was the catalyst that took the Gospel beyond Jerusalem, Acts 8:1, 4.

2. *Foxe's Book of Martyrs* chronicles the torturous deaths of many disciples beyond what the biblical record mentions.
3. The more Christians were killed, the more Christians there were; it was said that, "The blood of martyrs is the seed of the kingdom."
4. The cost of discipleship was not too great for Christians in the early centuries to endure, while taking the Gospel to the world.

Conclusion:

1. That many Christians never carefully examine the ramifications of faithful discipleship is self-evident from the absence of fruitful activity among large numbers of our brethren.
2. The more overlooked sin among us is probably that of omission, the dilution of our discipleship, Jam. 1:22.
3. The apathy and indifference, which for many brethren has replaced dedicated discipleship, is the sin for which the Laodicean church was condemned, Rev. 3:15-16.
4. Probably more of the church in this generation will be lost, not for overt commission of sin, but for omissions in Christian duty and *careless discipleship*

Invitation:

1. Individual, self-examination of personal discipleship now can save souls from the perils of an individual, divine examination (judgment) in which unprofitable disciples will be cast into hell, 2 Cor. 13:5; Matt. 25:30, 41, 46.
2. Unfaithful, unfruitful disciples can recommit themselves to Christian living and Christian service, Luke 15:7, 10.
3. Unbaptized believers can begin a life of discipleship by putting Christ on in baptism, Gal. 3:27.

¹Vine, W. E., *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Fleming H. Revell) 1981.

²Anonymous, "Disciple," *Webster's Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary*, 1972 edition, p. 237.

³Anonymous, "Disciple," *The Living Webster Encyclopedic Dictionary of the English Language*, p. 284.

⁴John M'Clintock and James Strong, "Disciple," *Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological and Ecclesiastical Literature*, II, p. 815.

⁵Anonymous, *The Analytical Greek Lexicon*, p. 257.

⁶George Ricker Berry, *The Interlinear Literal Translation of The Greek New Testament*, p. 62.

⁷Anonymous, "Cost," *The Living Webster Encyclopedic Dictionary of the English Language*, p. 230.

⁸Anonymous, "Cost," *Webster's Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary*, p. 189.

⁹Marvin R. Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament*, I, p. 381.

Holy Communion

1 Corinthians 10:16-22

Thesis: To emphasize the sacred nature of observing the communion or the Lord's Supper.

Song: *When I Survey the Wondrous Cross*

Introduction:

1. Following the **last** God-sanctioned Passover meal, our Lord instituted and observed the **first** occasion of a memorial feast that we usually call the Lord's Supper, Matt.26:17-30; Mark 14:22-26; Luke 22:19-20.
2. Luke, the author of the Book of Acts, called this memorial feast "breaking of bread," Acts 2:42; 20:7.
 - a. Sometimes, though, "breaking bread" refers to common meals, Acts 2:46.
 - b. The context determines what is meant.
3. The apostle Paul called that memorial feast the 'communion of the blood and body of Jesus,' 1 Cor. 10:16.
4. The apostle Paul called that memorial meal the Lord's Supper, 1 Cor. 11:20.
5. Through a number of questions regarding the Lord's Supper, for which we seek biblical answers, we propose herein to emphasize the sacred nature of communion or the Lord's Supper.

Body:

I. Why did Jesus institute the Lord's Supper?

- A. Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper as a **memorial** in which he participates with Christians.
 1. Our Lord partakes of the Supper with all those in his kingdom, Matt. 26:29; Mark 14:25.
 2. Jesus said that the Supper was to be performed in remembrance of his sacrificial death, Luke 22:19.
 3. The apostle Paul quoted Jesus saying that the Lord's Supper was to be done in remembrance of Christ's death, 1 Cor. 11:24-25.

4. Paul also wrote that the communion ought to be observed until the Lord returns, 1 Cor. 11:26.
- B. Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper to **symbolize** and emphasize his sacrifice for the remission of sins.
1. When Jesus said of the bread "this is my body" and when he said of the fruit of the vine "this is my blood," our Lord used the part of figurative language we call a metaphor, Matt. 26:26-28; Mark 14:22, 24; Luke 22:19-20.
 2. The Lord's Supper emphasizes one of the cardinal doctrines of Christianity, the death of the sinless Son of God as the ransom price to purchase lost souls, Heb. 4:15; Rom. 3:25.
 3. It is appropriate, therefore, that Christians continue to remember the sacrifice of Christ for humanity, and precisely in the way that our Lord appointed we remember him.
- C. The use of "communion" to portray the Lord's Supper refers to the unity enjoyed between Christians and with God when observing the Lord's Supper.
1. The word for "communion" comes from the Greek words (koinonia and koinonos) that also are translated "fellowship," "contribution" and "communication."
 2. These words means partnership and sharing; they reflect the unique unity that exists between mortals and the Godhead through the observance of the communion, 1 Cor. 10:16-22.

II. In what manner are Christians obligated to observe the Lord's Supper?

- A. It is possible to observe the Lord's Supper in such a way as to bring condemnation upon one's soul.
1. The apostle Paul rebuked the Corinthian church for corrupting the Lord's Supper, 1 Cor. 11:20-34.
 2. It ought to be apparent to every thoughtful soul that the Lord's Supper is a Holy Communion with Christ that must not be observed lightly or without sober concentration on what it means.
 3. Therefore, Christians are obliged by Scripture to

- “examine” themselves respecting the manner in which they partake of the Lord’s Supper, to avoid being condemned with the world, 1 Cor. 11:28-32.
- B. Christians will observe the Holy Communion on the first day of each week.
1. Acts 20:7, by apostolic example, shows that the Lord’s Supper was observed on the first day of the week, at the same assembly where preaching occurred.
 2. Likewise, 1 Cor. 16:1-2, shows that the contribution aspect of our worship occurs on the first day of each week.
 3. Whereas there are abundant Scriptures to show that several aspects of God-authorized worship (i.e., prayer, giving, preaching, singing) can occur on various days of the week, Scripture only **authorizes** the Lord’s Supper on the first day of the week.
- C. The only emblems **authorized** for observance of the Lord’s Supper are unleavened bread and fruit of the vine.
1. Since Jesus instituted the Lord’s Supper on the Jewish Passover, and no leaven bread was permitted in the home, therefore, Jesus used unleavened bread.
 2. Since the Old Testament disallowed the consumption of intoxicating beverages, Jesus used “fruit of vine” or grape juice in the Lord’s Supper, Matt. 26:29; Mark 14:25; Luke 22:18.
 3. Twinkies and Dr. Pepper or steak and shakes or anything else on the Lord’s Table would fail to symbolize or memorialize our Lord’s death and would not be authorized!
- D. The Lord’s Supper essentially is a funeral service for Jesus Christ.
1. It commemorates the death of Christ, much the way we commemorate the death of anyone who passes away, only Christ’s life and death have far greater and eternal ramifications.
 2. Since the Lord’s Supper is a funeral service, the

way we dress, the reverence we express and our attention to the memorial service should equal if not exceed the same we ordinarily grant in the funerals of our fellows.

3. Whatever would be inappropriate in a funeral service for a mere mortal certainly is inappropriate during the Lord's Supper as we commemorate the death of Christ.

Conclusion:

1. First century Corinth defiled the Lord's Supper by the manner that they observed it.
2. Likewise, we today can defile the Holy Communion by talking or doing things not associated with or otherwise preventing us from concentrating on the Lord's Supper.
3. Any right thinking child of God certainly would not want to observe any part of the worship to God, and especially the memorial feast, in a lighthearted manner.
4. Faithful Christians will observe the communion every first day of the week (weekly) and only on the first day of the week, because that is what the New Testament authorizes.
5. We cannot hope to get by in our worship to God by discarding what is authorized in favor of what we want to do or by mindlessly going through the motions of worship, Mal. 1:13.

Invitation:

1. In similar fashion, how one can honestly expect to get by in preparation for eternity by discarding what is authorized for our redemption in favor of what we want to do or by mindlessly going through the motions of obedience, Heb. 5:8-9?
2. Non-Christians are afforded forgiveness of their past sins by following the Lord's plan of redemption, Mark 16:16.
3. Likewise, erring Christians, though they do not need to be baptized again, do need to repent and pray for forgiveness, Acts 8:22; 1 John 1:9.

Conditions of Acceptable Prayer

John 9:31 & Proverbs 28:9

Thesis: To thoroughly examine acceptable prayer.

Song: *Sweet Hour of Prayer*

Introduction:

1. God speaks to man today through the Bible.
 - a. Man can speak to God through prayer.
 - b. However, God does not hear all prayers.
 - c. Therefore, it is important to learn from the Bible how to pray to God acceptably.
2. Prayer can be variously defined:
 - a. An act of homage to and adoration of God.
 - b. An expression of the heart to God.
 - c. A supplication, entreaty, petition, intercession or thanksgiving.
3. Man has a universal tendency to believe in a Divine Being.
 - a. So, men everywhere also try to pray to God.
 - b. However, one can know nothing of God or how to pray acceptably to him without the Bible.
 - c. It is not prayer per se that is acceptable to God, but prayer offered according to his divine will.

Body:

I. Acceptable prayers are sincere.

- A. Jesus taught sincerity in prayer, Matt. 6:5.
- B. Hypocritical prayers are unacceptable; prayers are hypocritical when there is:
 1. No consciousness of the presence of God.
 2. No desire to commune with God.
 3. An attempt to attract the attention of men.
 4. An effort to merely ease the conscience.
 5. A contrast between one's prayer life and his daily living, Isa. 29:13.

II. Acceptable prayers are humble.

- A. Jesus used a parable to teach humility in prayer, Luke 18:9-14.
- B. James also taught humility, Jam. 4:6, 10.
- C. Humility ought to characterize a Christian's whole life, but it is a must in his prayers.

III. Acceptable prayers are frequent.

- A. Our Lord condemned the "lukewarm" nature of the church at Laodicea, Rev. 3:15-16.
 - 1. The scope of Christ's condemnation of the church at Laodicea was broader than prayer alone.
 - 2. Doubtless, though, Jesus is no happier with lukewarm prayers.
- B. There are many biblical examples of fervent prayers.
 - 1. Jesus Christ is the best example of fervent prayer as he prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane, Luke 22:41-45.
 - 2. The disciples prayed fervently while Peter was imprisoned, Acts 12:5, 12.
 - 3. The apostle Paul prayed one of the most heartfelt prayers ever prayed, Rom. 10:1.
 - 4. Epaphras was noteworthy for his prayers, Colossians 4:12.
- C. The Christian's prayer must be fervent, not half-hearted.

IV. Acceptable prayers are persistent.

- A. Jesus taught persistency in prayer by parables.
 - 1. The Friend at Midnight, Luke 11:5-8.
 - 2. The Unrighteous Judge, Luke 18:1-8.
- B. Christians ought to pray frequently.
 - 1. We should always be in an attitude of prayer so that we could be found praying at anytime in any place, 1 Thess. 5:17.
 - 2. The apostle Paul prayed always, especially for the brethren, Phil. 1:3-4.

V. Acceptable prayers are watchful.

- A. The apostle Paul taught watchfulness in prayer.
 - 1. He taught regularity in prayer, vigilance in prayer and thankfulness in prayer, Col. 4:2.
 - 2. He taught attentiveness in prayer for fellow saints,

Eph. 6:18.

- B. Jesus instructed his disciples to be watchful.
 - 1. They were to watch and pray to avoid succumbing to temptation, Mark 14:38.
 - 2. Our Lord urged watchfulness and prayer respecting the sudden return of the Lord someday, Mark 13:33.
- C. The apostle Peter commanded watchfulness.
 - 1. The word for “be vigilant” means “watchful” and in the context pertains to temptation by Satan, 1 Pet. 5:8.
 - 2. Peter commanded a sobriety and prayerfulness regarding the end of this age with the return of Christ, 1 Pet. 4:7.

VI. Acceptable prayers are thoughtful.

- A. Paul taught thoughtfulness in prayer, 1 Cor. 14:15.
- B. Jesus also taught thoughtfulness in prayer, Matt. 6:7.
- C. Prayers lacking thoughtfulness are unacceptable to God; among such prayers are:
 - 1. The published denominational prayers intended for recitation (e.g., Hail Mary, Our Father, Act of Contrition, etc.).
 - 2. Prayers printed on everything to fine paper to china, if merely recited.
 - 3. Repetitious public and private prayers mouthed out of habit instead of forethought.

VII. Acceptable prayers require godly living.

- A. Prayer is not a substitute for godly living.
 - 1. Wicked persons are distant from God, but his faithful children’s are gladly received, Prov. 15:29.
 - 2. There is a direct correlation how God answers prayers and godliness, 1 John 3:22.
 - 3. Only those who abide in the Word of God can have their prayers answered accordingly, John 15:7.
- B. Obedience and conformity to the Bible are necessary for God to accept prayer.

VIII. Acceptable prayers require self-denial.

- A. Sometimes, first century Christians fasted and prayed.
 - 1. When important decisions were about to be made,

first century Christians fasted and prayed, Acts 13:3.

2. Christians fasted and prayed, for instance, when they were about to appoint elders, Acts 14:23.
- B. The Christian's entire life should be one of sacrifice, Rom. 12:1-2.

IX. Acceptable prayers are according to the will of God.

- A. God hears our prayers that are prayed according to his will, 1 John 5:14.
- B. Our wills and the will of God must be the same for our prayers to be answered accordingly, Matt. 6:10.
1. We should not pray in an effort to change God's will, but in an effort to conform our wills to God's will.
 2. Incidentally, it is not enough that we pray God's will be done; we must do our parts to fulfill God's will on earth, Luke 6:46; Jam. 4:17.

X. Acceptable prayers are prayed in the name of Christ.

- A. Several passages address praying in the name of Christ.
1. Praying in the name of Christ is a requisite to having the prayer answered as we pray it, John 14:13-14; 16:23.
 2. Really, everything the Christian does, including his prayers, are to be done in the name of Christ or by his authority, Col. 3:17.
- B. One cannot pray successfully "in the name of Christ" while in rebellion to God.
1. A mere recitation "in the name of Christ" will not cause God to heed one's prayers.
 2. There must be a correlation between pledging one's allegiance to Christ and doing the will of our Lord, Luke 6:46.
- C. Jesus Christ is the only mediator and the only one through whom prayers can be offered to God.
1. The intercessory position of Christ between ourselves and God makes prayer possible, 1 Tim. 2:5.
 2. Jesus Christ is the undisputed mediator of the New Testament covenant with God, which provides for

our prayers, Heb. 8:6.

XI. Acceptable prayers must be prayed in faith.

- A. Faith is a requisite to having prayer answered, Matt. 21:22; Mark 11:24.
- B. It is senseless to pray if we do not believe that God answers prayer.

Conclusion:

- 1. Man needs the avenue of prayer with God.
- 2. Therefore, man needs to know how to pray acceptably to God.
- 3. There is more to acceptable prayer than one might first think.
- 4. All that can be known about acceptable prayer to God is ascertained in the Bible.

Invitation:

- 1. One must be in Christ before he can pray acceptably to God.
- 2. Therefore, penitent believers need to be baptized into Christ, Gal. 3:27; Rom. 6:3-5.
- 3. Baptized believers need to remain faithful to Christ and repent and pray when they falter in sin, Rev. 2:10; 1 Cor. 15:58; Acts 8:22.

Conditions of Forgiveness

Matthew 18:21-22

Thesis: To examine the divinely stipulated conditions to receive and extend forgiveness.

Introduction:

1. What can we learn from the Bible how God treats the subject of the forgiveness of sins?
2. Is it reasonable to conclude that we:
 - a. Must acknowledge the conditions of forgiveness stipulated by God, and
 - b. That we as mere mortals are powerless to make conditions of forgiveness either harder or more lenient?
3. Aside from appealing to biblical authority, we can **know nothing** about *conditions of forgiveness* (or any other divine decree).

Body:

- I. **The apostle Peter imagined that he was offering to be overly generous regarding the extension of forgiveness, Matt. 18:21-22.**
 - A. Prior to the statements by Peter and Jesus Christ in Matthew 18:21-22, the apostles were quarreling among themselves, Matt. 18:1; Mark 9:33-37; Luke 9:46-48.
 1. Jesus illustrated humility with a child in their midst, Matt. 18:2-5.
 2. Our Lord further taught his disciples to avoid offending each other and all men, Matt. 18:6-14.
 3. Next, Jesus taught his disciples how to resolve interpersonal problems, Matt. 18:15-17.
 4. Then, Jesus urged unity among his apostles, Matt. 18:18-20.
 5. These lessons were not easily learned by the diverse apostolic band, Matt. 20:20-28.
 - B. The apostle Peter discerned from the teaching of our Lord that it was his duty to forgive others, Matt. 18:15.

1. Peter was willing to go beyond the customary practice of mortals toward each other and forgive someone **seven times**.
 2. The Jews taught that one was obligated to forgive one three times, but not the fourth time.
 3. Peter assumed that others would sin against him, for whom he was willing to extend his mercy toward forgiveness a little, but he failed to realize that he might sin against others and need mercy and forgiveness from others.
- C. Jesus Christ, though, taught in response that one ought to forgive another **infinitely**.
1. Our Lord followed his statement in Matt. 20:22 with a parable about forgiveness (The Parable of the Unmerciful Servant), Matt. 18:21-35.
 2. In Matt. 18:22, our Lord's reply to Peter, "seventy times seven," is comparable to someone today saying, "a million times," indicating without end or not having a limit.
 3. Essentially, then, we ought always to have the spirit or willingness to forgive others.
 4. We need to imitate Deity respecting the willingness to forgive.

II. There are **divinely stipulated conditions for extending and receiving forgiveness**.

- A. Jesus clearly taught that a requisite to receiving or extending forgiveness is *repentance*, Luke 17:3-4.
1. It is contrary to the revealed will of God to expect to receive forgiveness for sins of which we have not repented.
 2. It is equally contrary to the revealed will of God to offer forgiveness to those who have not repented, and therefore, to those to whom God himself has not forgiven.
 3. The children of God need to imitate Deity respecting the extension of forgiveness to those who repent.
- B. Jesus clearly taught that a requisite to receiving forgiveness is the willingness to forgive others, Luke

6:37.

1. Forgiving others is so important that if we do not forgive others, we will not be forgiven by God, Matt. 6:14-15.
2. The principle is that the forgiven must forgive or else they will impeach their own forgiveness!

III. The doctrine of forgiveness is prominently taught throughout the New Testament.

- A. The Christian's forgiveness of others imitates the forgiveness by God of repenting sinners.
 1. The sacrificial death of Jesus Christ makes forgiveness by God possible and forgiveness of mankind toward his fellows obligatory, Eph. 4:32.
 2. Jesus Christ, by extending forgiveness, set the example of how Christians ought to be forgiving, Col. 3:13.
- B. The Christian's forgiveness is obligatory toward those who repent.
 1. The Corinthian church was instructed to forgive the penitent, incestuous brother of 1 Corinthians 5 in Paul's next correspondence to it, 2 Cor. 2:7-11.
 2. Usually not so bold as to publicly deny forgiveness toward penitent persons (though I have witnessed it), often brethren, by their actions, refuse to forgive the penitent.
 3. With what treatment we treat others, God will likewise treat us regarding our own sins, Matt. 7:2.
- C. Additional passages about forgiveness of sins in the New Testament.
 1. Forgiveness of sins is possible through grace and the blood of Christ, Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:14.
 2. Jesus Christ came to give repentance and forgiveness of sins to the Jews, Acts 5:31; 13:38.
 3. Jesus Christ also came to bring forgiveness of sins to the Gentiles, Acts 26:17-18; Col. 2:13.
 4. Blessedness or happiness follows those who sins are forgiven, Rom. 4:7.
 5. The erring child of God can seek forgiveness through penitence and prayer, Acts 8:22.

Conclusion:

1. As imitators of Christ, we ought to always possess the spirit or willingness to forgive.
2. However, like God, we can only forgive those who are willing to repent.
3. Forgiveness must never be refused when sought with repentance.

Invitation:

1. Each of us must periodically inspect our own lives to see if repentance is required of us to receive the forgiveness of God, 2 Cor. 13:5.
2. Unbaptized believers were called upon by Peter to repent and submit to baptism, Acts 2:38.
3. Erring Christians must repent and pray, Acts 8:22; 1 John 1:9.

Accountability to God

John 9:21-23, 41

Thesis: To examine one's accountability to God, including when that accountability begins.

Introduction:

1. It has always been the case with God that individuals bear *personal responsibility* for sins and do not inherit the sins of others, Ezek. 18:20.
2. Jesus established a principle that they who have the *capacity to understand and to comply* with Divine Law and do not comply are guilty of sin, John 9:41.
3. It has always been the case with God that individuals who bear the guilt of sin must turn away from or repent of that sin to avoid eternal, spiritual ruin, Ezek. 18:30.

Body:

I. Who is accountable to God?

- A. Young children are not accountable to God for their conduct.
 1. Children do not inherit the sin of Adam and Eve or anyone else, Ezek. 18:20.
 2. Children are born innocent and without sin, suitable examples for imitation in this regard, Matt. 18:2-6.
 3. Besides having no sins of which to repent, babies and young children lack the mental capacity to respond to the Bible's plan of salvation, Rom. 10:17; John 8:24; Luke 13:3; Acts 8:37; 10:48.
 4. The age of 12, though, as a rough number, is often thought to be about the time children usually become accountable for themselves, Luke 2:40-52;
 - a) Under Judaism, boys could marry or make religious vows at 14-years-old and girls at 12-years-old, both only with parental permission, which was required until both boys or girls were

21-years-old, “Adult Age,” *McClintock and Strong Encyclopaedia*.

- b) *New Manners and Customs of Bible Times* states that a Jewish boy was considered entering manhood at age 13 and at 13-years-old could be counted as one of the ten males required to constitute a synagogue.
5. In the context of John 9 where Jesus healed a man blind from birth, fearful parents appearing before the Pharisees deferred response to their son who they said was “of age,” John 9:21-23.
- a) Adam Clarke notes that the “of age” could refer up to 30-years-old, which is when the Jews considered one fully an adult.
 - b) The formerly blind man of John 9:21 was old enough to be legally and religiously responsible for himself, but the specific age of this person cited in Scripture is indefinite.
6. Age alone is not a suitable benchmark to ascertain when someone is accountable to God as we are individuals who each develop at our own paces.
- B. Persons, irrespective of their chronological ages, who *have always been* mentally incompetent, are not accountable to God for their actions.
- 1. Persons who irrespective of age have always been children in their minds are innocent souls for the same reasons babies and small children are not guilty of sins — they cannot understand the Word of God, develop faith, repent, profess Jesus as Christ and consciously submit to baptism.
 - 2. However, persons who have become accountable souls and afterward due to injury, disease or agedness do not have the same innocent status of babies if the now accountable souls did not obey the Gospel and faithfully practice Christianity when they were accountable, Rom. 3:23.
- C. Children and adults who have the capacity to comprehend the guilt of sin are accountable to God.
- 1. When a person consciously desires to live for

Christ and to share the joys as well as the hardships of the Christian faith, he ought to seek the removal of his sins through the blood of Christ, 1 John 1:7.

2. When a person consciously realizes that he cannot escape damnation if he ignores the “great salvation,” he ought to obey the Gospel, Heb. 2:3; 5:8-9.
3. When a person *consciously chooses* to be disobedient to parents, Rom. 1:30, or God, 1 Pet. 2:7-8, he is guilty of sin as an accountable person.

II. What are the consequences of accountability to God?

A. Accountable souls who comply with Divine Law enjoy blessings in this life and anticipate unspeakable joys in the world to come.

1. First, those who become Christians enjoy the forgiveness of past sins, Rom. 3:25.
2. Second, everyone who becomes a Christian and continues to practice Christianity faithfully can legitimately anticipate an eternity in heaven with God, 2 Tim. 4:8.

B. Accountable souls who *do not* comply with Divine Law *do not* enjoy the special blessings in this life reserved for Christians and *cannot* anticipate a pleasant eternal habitation.

1. Christianity fosters the greatest manifestations of love, hope and fellowship this world affords, Phil. 2:1; 1 John 1:3; Titus 3:7.
2. Eternal torment is reserved for disobedient souls, 2 Thess. 1:7-9.

Conclusion:

1. The transition from child to adult is difficult physically, psychologically, emotionally and spiritually.
2. Each person develops at his or her own pace
3. No one else can ascertain when a child has made that transition in comprehension from child to adult respecting the guilt of sins.
4. Eventually, though, individuals and others sense that this transition is past and we are mutually accountable to God for our sins.

5. Whenever we realize that we are lost in sin is precisely the time that we need to repent and serve God.

Invitation:

1. Ask yourself this question, “If I were to die suddenly today, where would I wake up in eternity — in the custody of a loving God, or in torment at the hands of an angry God?”
2. If the latter is the case, and you have never been baptized to remove your past sins, seize the moment and respond this hour, Mark 16:16.
3. If the latter is the case, and you have become an unfaithful or erring Christian, seize the moment and respond this hour, Acts 8:22; Rev. 2:10.

How to Preach a Moving Sermon

Joshua 24:15-16, 31

Thesis: To consider what it means to preach a sermon without compromise and the effect such preaching may have on preacher and audience.

Introduction:

1. For a few moments, let's muse as to what's involved in preaching a *moving sermon*.
2. At first consideration, someone hearing reference to a *moving sermon* may imagine a preacher whose eloquence and persuasion motivates his hearers to great activity for God.
3. However, another perspective of preaching a *moving sermon* might rather pertain to an angry reaction by people to physically remove the preacher of God.

Body:

- I. **The Bible records several Bible characters who preached God's Word without compromise and successfully motivated souls to greater service to God.**
 - A. God's preachers who preached the Word of God boldly, without compromise and motivated their hearers to greater service to God are worthy of imitation today.
 1. Joshua was such a leader of God's people, Josh. 24:1-31.
 2. He challenged Israel in verse 15 to choose between God and dumb idols.
 3. The people responded repeatedly that they would follow God alone and be faithful to him, 24:16, 21, 24.
 4. The godly influence of Joshua outlived him, Josh. 24:31.
 - B. Not everyone, though, always preached God's Word without compromise.

1. Balaam *wanted* to have it both ways, to be God's preacher but *desiring* to compromise the Divine message for earthly gain, Num. 22-24.
2. He tried to put curses on God's people, but God turned the curses into blessings, Deut. 23:4-5; Josh. 24:9-10; Neh. 13:2.
3. Balaam's mischief was rewarded with his death among the rest slain by Israel in its march to the Promised Land, Josh. 13:22.
4. The apostle Peter wrote that false teachers in the Christian Age imitate Balaam "who loved the wages of unrighteousness," 2 Pet. 2:1-16; Jude 4-13.

II. The Bible records several Bible characters who preached God's Word without compromise and suffered retribution from their audiences.

- A. God's preachers didn't flinch, but preached God's Word faithfully despite personal peril.
 1. Jeremiah was beaten and imprisoned for delivering God's message to his fellows, Jer. 37:15; 38:6.
 2. Stephen was stoned to death for preaching the same Gospel message preached earlier by the apostle Peter, to which 3,000 souls responded in obedience, Acts 7:57-60.
 3. Paul suffered numerous and torturous hurts from heathen *and brethren* for his tireless efforts to preach the Gospel, 2 Cor. 11:23-28.
- B. We as preachers, elders, deacons, teachers and other Christians must not flinch when we tell people about and stand firm in true Christianity.
 1. Jesus warned his disciples that friends and family (among others) would resist us, Matt. 10:16-39.
 2. The apostle Paul warned that to the degree we uncompromisingly practice pure Christianity, to the same degree the world will persecute us, 2 Tim. 3:12.
 3. All Christians must stand fast even in the face of persecution, 1 Thess. 3:3-4; Heb. 3:14.

III. There are a number of biblical topics that when preached boldly but truly from the Word of God today often result in motivating some to move the preacher.

- A. One might say these are *pack-your-bag* sermons!
1. Preachers are obligated to preach the whole counsel of God, Acts 20:27, ASV.
 2. One deceased preacher of renown verbalized 2 Tim. 4:2 to mean, “Preach it when they like it and preach it when they don’t!”
 3. We, like the apostle Paul, must not be concerned as much with pleasing men, but in pleasing God, Gal. 1:10-12.
- B. Uncompromisingly preaching the Gospel of Christ today includes preaching the simple Bible truth about a number of unpopular topics.
1. **Marriage-divorce and remarriage:** Jesus’ words *still* permit divorce and remarriage of the innocent party only in a divorce because of adultery, Matt. 19:9.
 2. **Modesty:** The Bible *still* teaches modesty versus wearing sexually provocative attire, 1 Tim. 2:9; Prov. 7:10.
 3. **Alcohol:** Drunkenness, which is defined as intoxication, is *still* forbidden, Gal. 5:21.
 4. **Dancing:** The Bible *still* forbids unrestrained behavior that is usually associated with drinking and dancing, Gal. 5:21, “reveling.”
 5. **Gambling:** The Bible *still* authorizes working for what we obtain and condemns taking from others what is theirs, Eph. 4:28.
 6. **Salvation:** Immersion in water for the remission of sins is *still* the point at which God through his Word has determined that one’s sins are removed, Acts 2:38; 22:16.
 7. **Christian unity:** It is *still* the case that we can only entertain religious fellowship with those who are in fellowship with God, 1 John 1:3; 2 John 9-11.
 8. **Church attendance:** Christians are *still* required to attend all the appointed assemblies of the church

they possible can, Heb. 10:25-27.

9. **Giving:** Freewill offerings are *still* the only biblically authorized means of financing the work of the church, 2 Cor. 8:12; 1 Cor. 16:1-2.
10. **Christian service:** Every member of the church *still* has personal responsibility to do good works, Titus 3:8.

Conclusion:

1. Preachers must preach the truth in love without compromise, and Christians ought to demand no other type of preaching, Eph. 4:15; Acts 20:27.
2. Not everyone appreciates “sound words,” 2 Tim. 1:13, but preachers and faithful Christians must pursue “sound words” nevertheless, Matt. 10:16-39; 2 Tim. 3:12.
3. Preachers and the auditors of their sermons must concern themselves with pleasing God, not men or even themselves, Gal. 1:10-12.
4. There will always be unpopular topics about which preachers must preach and that all must apply to themselves.

Invitation:

1. Irrespective of its popularity with humanity, only God’s plan for saving man can take away sins and provide for an eternity in heaven, Matt. 7:21-23.
2. Baptized believers who remain faithful have a sure hope of heaven with God, Mark 16:16; Rev. 2:10.
3. Are you heaven bound; if not, let us help you begin that journey or resume that journey if you once began but stopped.