

Preaching
the Whole
Counsel of God
Volume 3

Sermon Outlines
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How Obedience Saves

Hebrews 5:8-9

Thesis: To show conclusively from the Bible that obedience is essential to salvation.

Introduction:

1. Many religious people outside and within the Lord's church despise the thought of associating *obedience* with *salvation*.
2. Many would defend with their lives some *manmade doctrine*, but they refuse to obey God's Word and they would not die for it, Rev. 2:10.
3. It is no secret that we live in a *disobedient society* where disobedience manifests itself variously: failure to obey speed limits, disobedience to parents and teachers, cheating on taxes, widespread immorality, stealing, robbery, assault, murder, etc.
4. At the risk of being viewed as unpatriotic, I remind you that this nation was conceived in disobedience to the government of England.
5. Mankind in general has a long history of disobedience toward God.
6. However, man can obey God, and he must obey God to receive God's grace and mercy, resulting in salvation.
7. Obedience has always been essential to be saved.

Body:

I. Obedience to God was essential under Patriarchy.

- A. Cain was disobedient whereas Abel was obedient to God, Gen. 4:3-5; Heb. 11:4.
 1. Faith results from the Word of God, Rom. 10:17.
 2. Therefore, Scripture implies that Cain was disobedient to God's instructions pertaining to worship, but Abel was obedient to the same instruction from God.
- B. The wicked world was disobedient whereas Noah and his family were obedient to God, Gen. 6-9.
 1. God chose a righteous man named Noah to build

the ark to save him and his family from the universal flood.

2. Noah obeyed God regarding the construction of the ark and was saved from the impending disaster that enveloped the rest of the world and all of humanity not on the ark with Noah.
 3. It is evident that had Noah disobeyed God respecting the building of the ark that he, too, would have perished with the wicked world.
- C. Enoch, Abraham and Moses also demonstrated an obedient faith in God under Patriarchy, Heb. 11.

II. Obedience to God was essential under Judaism.

- A. The Old Testament is replete with instances of human disobedience to God, which God severely punished.
1. Fortunately for fallible man, God provided for the forgiveness of ignorant sin, but God severely condemned willful disobedience, Num. 15:27-31.
 2. A man violated the Sabbath Day by gathering sticks, for which God commanded that he be stoned to death, Exod. 20:8-11; Num. 15:32-36.
 3. Korah and 250 leaders among the Israelites challenged God's choice of Aaron's family to be the priestly family, for which God burnt the disobedient with fire and caused the earth to swallow their families and personal property, Num. 16.
 4. Moses and Aaron were accused by God of disbelief or disobedience for striking a rock to provide water for Israel, which prevented them from entering Canaan, Num. 20:7-12; 22-29; Deut. 34:1-6; Rom. 11:30-31, cf. KJV & ASV.
 5. King Saul disobeyed God and was rejected by God from continuing as king, 1 Sam. 15:3-4, 7-28.
- B. God also rewarded obedience under Judaism.
1. Joshua and Caleb obeyed God and alone among the adults who left Egypt were permitted by God to enter Canaan, Num. 14:22-24, 29-38; 32:11-13; Josh. 14:6-14.
 2. David obeyed God for which God raised up our

Savior through his descendant, Jesus of Nazareth, 1 Kings 15:5; Acts 13:22-23.

3. King Hezekiah obeyed God for which God added 15 years to his life and spared Jerusalem from the Assyrians, Isa. 38:3-6.

III. Obedience to God is essential under Christianity.

- A. It is abundantly clear from the New Testament that disobedience to God results in condemnation.
 1. Every accountable soul who refuses or neglects to obey the Gospel will be lost, 2 Thess. 1:7-9.
 2. The disobedient will be barred from heaven, Matt. 7:21-23.
 3. Jesus will reject everyone who does not obey his words, John 12:48.
- B. Obedience is a requisite to receive salvation.
 1. The faith that saves is an obedient faith, Rom. 5:1; 1:5; 16:26; Acts 6:7.
 2. Not only our actions, but also every thought must be brought to “the obedience of Christ,” 2 Cor. 10:5.
- C. Jesus Christ saves those who obey him, Heb. 5:8-9.
 1. **Obedience is not perfection**, but the attempt to do what Jesus says, Luke 6:46.
 2. **Only when we obey Christ by obeying the Gospel does God’s mercy and grace make up what lacks between our obedience and our sinlessly holy God, Eph. 2:8; Titus 3:5.**

Conclusion:

1. Each period of religious history (i.e., Patriarchy, Judaism and Christianity) demonstrates the role of obedience in human salvation and that disobedience toward God results in severe condemnation, 2 Thess. 1:7-9.
2. Especially Judaism proved that mankind is incapable of achieving sinless perfection, even by those who otherwise are considered obedient to God, Heb. 10:1-4.
3. Yet, human obedience to the laws of God prompts him to extend his grace and mercy toward us, Eph. 2:8; Titus 3:5.
4. The human ideas of “If it feels good, do it” or “situation ethics” or “the ends justifies the means” or “a new morality” or

“relative truth” or human creeds, etc. are *mottos of disobedience* and will not prompt God to save us with his grace and mercy.

Invitation:

1. Obedience on our parts whereby God will save us with his grace and mercy includes our response to his redemptive plan.
2. Unbaptized believers must be immersed in water for the remission of their sins, Rom. 10:17; Luke 13:3; Rom. 10:10; Acts 2:38.
3. Erring Christians must repent and pray, Acts 8:22; 1 John 1:9.
4. Finally, we must obey the faith **even if it kills us**, Matt. 10:28; Rev. 2:10.

The Young Prophet

1 Kings 13:1-6

Thesis: To learn from the Old Testament a valuable lesson respecting obedience to God, which principle is equally applicable today.

Song: *Trust and Obey*

Introduction:

1. The Old Testament is no longer the law of God to which mankind is to turn for divine direction in religion, Eph. 2:15; Col. 2:14; Rom. 7:6-7; Heb. 8:6-13.
 - a. All people living in this final dispensation are to turn to Jesus Christ (rather than Moses) for religious leadership, Matt. 17:1-8; John 12:48.
 - b. Every person will be judged in the last day by the law of God under which he lived, Ecc. 12:13-14; Rev. 20:11-15; 2 Cor. 5:10.
2. Yet, the Old Testament is the basis on which the New Testament rests, besides containing biblical *principles* that remain valid today, Rom. 15:4.
 - a. Much of the New Testament would be unintelligible without knowledge of the Old Testament, e.g., Book of Hebrews.
 - b. The Old Testament is essential to the confirmation of Old Testament prophecies and New Testament fulfillment, Gospel records, Acts 2:16-21; 3:13; 7:1-53; 8:26-35; 9:22; 13:16-41.
3. The lesson at hand is the source of several lessons that contemporary man can use.
 - a. There are consequences for sinning, Rom. 6:23.
 - b. Sin must be condemned and repentance required.
 - c. Faithful servants may resist temptation and yet fall prey to another onslaught by Satan.
 - d. Sincerity alone is not enough, John 4:24.
4. Background to 1 Kings 13:1-32 includes:

- a. The Jewish nations of Israel (or Samaria) and Judah resulted from division of the nation of the Jews after the death of Solomon.
- b. Jeroboam became king over the northern kingdom of Israel and established calf worship with golden calves in Dan and Bethel to prevent the people from returning to Jerusalem to worship.

Body:

I. A young prophet from Judah announced God’s judgment against Israel because of her idolatry, 1 Kings 13:1-10.

- A. God’s judgment of condemnation was proclaimed, vss. 1-2.
 1. Jeroboam was in the very act of idolatrous worship when the prophet arrived and spoke.
 2. The prophet uttered a stunning prophecy that a man not yet born named Josiah would destroy idolatry in Israel. “This is one of the most remarkable and most singular prophecies in the Old Testament. It here most circumstantially foretells a fact which **took place 340 years after the prediction...**” (“1 Kings 13:2,” *Adam Clarke's Commentary*, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 1996 by Biblesoft)
 3. The prophecy was fulfilled, 2 Kings 23:15-25.
- B. A miraculous sign was immediately delivered to validate or confirm the prophecy, vss. 3-5.
 1. The purpose of miracles has always been to confirm the Word, Mark 16:20.
 2. Not even a powerful king was able to thwart the pronouncement of God.
 3. The sign was a sample of the later destruction of idolatry announced by the prophet of God.
 4. Imagine the great courage needed by the young prophet to challenge a powerful king who certainly desired to kill him, Matt. 10:28.
- C. King Jeroboam addressed the prophet again, meekly this time, seeking the restoration of his withered hand, vs. 6.
 1. Jeroboam remained unchanged in his heart and afterward continued to do evil, vs. 33.

2. The young prophet humbly petitioned God to restore Jeroboam's hand, which he did.
- D. The young prophet rejected Jeroboam's offer of a reward and hospitality, vss. 7-10.
1. This prophet determined to leave that place **according to God's instruction**, without even pausing to eat anything, vs. 9.
 2. Likewise, Christians today are called upon to reprove rather than fellowship the ungodly world, Eph. 5:11.

II. The young prophet succumbs to a second, more subtle temptation, vss. 11-19.

- A. There was an old prophet of God in town who heard about the young prophet.
1. If this prophet of God had been doing his job, perhaps there may have been no need for the young prophet to journey from Judah to Israel.
 2. The old prophet identified with the young prophet and doubtless desired some social interaction.
 3. We, like the old prophet, ought to reprove the wicked world in which we live rather than silently meld into it.
- B. The old prophet searched for and found the young prophet, vss. 12-14.
1. Apparently of his own accord and not at the direction of Jeroboam, but nevertheless in the employ of Satan, he found the young man of God.
 2. Non-idolatrous people in Israel were scarce and one might appreciate the old prophet's desire to fellowship another prophet of God.
- C. The old prophet tells a lie, which the young prophet believes, vss. 15-18.
1. The old prophet offers hospitality to the young prophet, of itself a noble gesture, vs. 15.
 2. The young prophet kindly declines the overture, vs. 16.
 3. He explains the instructions of God that he must obey, vs. 17.
 4. The old prophet lied, saying God sent an angel to

advise him to bring the young prophet home with him, vs. 18.

- D. Deceived, the young prophet violated God's instructions, vs. 19.
 - 1. The old prophet had proved his inefficiency as a messenger of God, which explains why the young prophet rather than the old prophet was sent to king Jeroboam in the first place.
 - 2. Irrespective of whether the young prophet was sincerely deluded, anyone who violates the Word of God is guilty of sin, Matt. 7:21-23.
 - 3. Historically, even the simplest of infractions have catastrophic consequences, e.g., eating forbidden fruit, Gen. 3; using unauthorized fire, Lev. 10; striking a rock instead of merely speaking to it, Num. 20:1-12.

III. A second judgment by God is rendered, this time against the young prophet.

- A. God's judgment was pronounced against the young prophet in the very act of disobedience, vs. 20.
 - 1. The young prophet was eating and drinking while still in Bethel, contrary to what God had commanded him.
 - 2. God used the old prophet as his spokesman of doom.
- B. The young prophet was condemned to death for his disobedience, vss. 21-22.
 - 1. Sincerity alone is insufficient to please God, Luke 6:46.
 - 2. Disobedience to God will be punished, Rom. 6:23; 2 Thess. 1:7-9.
 - 3. Even useful servants of God must continue to serve God faithfully and obediently, e.g., Aaron and Moses, Num. 20:7-12, 23-24; Deut. 32:48-52; 34:4; 1 Cor. 15:58.

IV. God executed the young prophet through the agency of a wild beast, vss. 23-32.

- A. The young prophet prepared a second time to leave Bethel and return to Judah, vs. 23.

1. The parting of the old and new prophets must have been awkward at best, the older prophet being responsible for tempting the younger prophet to disobey God.
 2. The young prophet doubtless could hardly believe that he had accomplished the difficult part of his mission to confront Jeroboam and failed in the simple instruction to return home.
 3. Both prophets knew that there was no escape from the judgment of God.
- B. God's judgment came to pass, vss. 24-28.
1. A lion attacked and killed the young prophet, vs. 24.
 2. His death was not happenchance as the lion killed the prophet but did not eat him and did not attach the donkey, vss. 24-28.
 3. The old prophet confirmed that the young prophet's death was the judgment of God due to the young prophet's disobedience, vs. 26.
- C. The old prophet recovered the body of the young prophet and buried it, vss. 29-32.
1. The old prophet's sorrow and remorse was evident by his actions and attitude, vss. 29-30.
 2. Burying the young prophet's body in his own tomb, the old prophet expressed deep affection toward the fallen prophet.
 3. The old prophet made affectionate lamentation over the young, slain prophet: "Alas, my brother!" vs. 30.
 4. The old prophet instructed his sons to bury him with the young prophet when he died because the old prophet knew the young prophet's prophecy against Bethel would be fulfilled, as it later was, 2 Kings 23.

Conclusion:

1. Sincerity alone is insufficient before God, John 4:24.
2. Disobedience will be punished, Lev. 10:1-2.
3. Obedience will be rewarded with salvation, Heb. 5:8-9.
4. The Word of God and *what someone says is the Word of God*

may not be equal, Acts 17:11; 1 John 4:1.

5. *Little sins* are weighty, Rom. 6:23; Rev. 21:8.
6. Satan uses several devices to allure souls into sin; if one attempt fails, he tries something else, 1 Pet. 5:8.
7. Even the most useful servants are capable of falling, Gal. 2:11-21; 1 Cor. 9:27.
8. Satan will use even the children of God for his evil purposes if he can.
9. The judgments of God are certain, 2 Pet. 3:7, 9-12.
10. False prophets or teachers present a real threat to the children of God, Gal. 1:6-9; 1 Tim. 4:1-3; 2 Tim. 3:13; 2 Thess. 2; Rom. 16:17-18; 1 John 4:1.

Invitation:

1. We must exercise obedient faith to be saved, Rom. 1:5; 16:26; 5:1.
2. A great company of priests obeyed the faith, Acts 6:7.
3. Erring Christians must repent, Acts 8:22.

No King in Israel

Judges 17:6

Thesis: To demonstrate the urgent need for divine authority in religion by which we must direct our lives.

Song: *O Worship the King*

Introduction:

1. The period of the judges spanned about 300 troubled years in Jewish history, during which time the Hebrew people often turned away from God.
 - a. God did not leave the Hebrew people without religious instruction: Law of Moses, leadership of Joshua, 15 Judges.
 - b. However, the Israelites frequently disregarded the servants of God and committed the vilest sins, for which God repeatedly allowed them to be oppressed by other nations.
2. Since the Jews had no king like the nations around them, they considered themselves without a sovereign to whom they owed their allegiance.
 - a. Every person was his own authority without regard to any other authority.
 - b. The consequences of such a ruinous attitude were chaos, confusion and unrest.
 - c. This sinful attitude to the Jews is duplicated in such modern philosophies as: "If it feels good, do it!"
3. Finally, the Jews clamored for a king to be like the other nations around them, 1 Sam. 8:5-6.
 - a. God permitted them to have a king, though their demand amounted to a rejection of God as king over them, 1 Sam. 8:7.
 - b. However, God never desired them to have an earthly king, Hos. 13:11.
 - c. **Until the establishment of a monarchy among the Jews, Israel had been ruled by a theocracy.**

Body:

I. To the nations of the world, ‘there is no king in Israel.’

- A. The nations of the world and their leaders seem completely unaware of a higher sovereign to whom they are amenable.
 - 1. Really, civil authority originates with God, Romans 13:1-2.
 - 2. God removes and establishes kings and rules in the nations of men, Dan. 2:21; 2 Chron. 20:6.
 - 3. God is the only eternal King, Psa. 29:10.
 - 4. God is King over the whole earth, irrespective of whether mankind realizes it, Psa. 47:2.
- B. The consequences have always been severe for those nations who spurn God.
 - 1. Whereas God blesses nations that practice righteousness, he punishes wicked peoples, Prov. 14:34.
 - 2. Wicked persons and nations of persons will be sent to hell, Psa. 9:17.
 - 3. God’s punishment of wicked Israel occupies much of the Old Testament.
 - 4. God also brought judgment for evil on Egypt, nations of old Canaan, Assyria and Babylon.
- C. Even our beloved nation of America seems to be ignorant of a higher sovereign to which it is amenable.
 - 1. For instance, our nation has legalized several sins: abortion, gambling, unscriptural divorce and remarriage, prostitution in some places, beverage alcohol, homosexuality, etc.
 - 2. Further, our government has made illegal some biblical behavior: prayer in many public places, references to the Bible (e.g., 10 commandments) in public buildings, publicly speaking against some sins (e.g., homosexuality), privately refusing to rent property to homosexuals and other unmarried couples, exercising church discipline.
 - 3. Political and other national figures, who are before the nation, are often immoral and dishonest.
 - 4. Evolution is required to be taught in public schools

and creation, as well as biblical morality, is disallowed in public schools.

- D. America and the nations of the world must come to recognize a higher sovereign, God.
 - 1. Failure to acknowledge God his rightful place will condemn a world of lost souls to a devil's hell and ruin the nations.
 - 2. Turning America from a course of doom must begin with those who know 'there is a King in Israel'; if Christians do not endeavor to change the course of America toward God, no one else will, or can!

II. To denominationalism and world religions, 'there is no King in Israel.'

- A. Remarkably, denominationalism appears to be ignorant of the Almighty Sovereign it purportedly worships and serves.
 - 1. Denominationalism denies the Lord preeminence and gives it to popes, modern-day apostles, councils, conventions, preachers, patriarchs, etc., Col. 1:18.
 - 2. Denominationalism robs God of his kingly authority to fallible men and conventions of fallible men, John 12:48.
 - 3. Denominationalism will perhaps be as much or more responsible for a larger number of lost souls in hell than any other single cause; denominationalism offers enough Christianity to promise a false hope but it is enough unlike true Christianity to be unable to lead souls to heaven, Rev. 22:18-19.
- B. Other world religions oppose Christianity and therefore do not serve the one, true God who authored Christianity.
 - 1. Buddhists, Moslems, Jews, etc. have little to nothing in common with Christians.
 - 2. These religions teach of other gods, different eternities, different salvations, etc., Eph.4:6.

III. The church of the Lord must acknowledge a ‘King in Israel.’

- A. There is a King in spiritual Israel, King Jesus, Isa. 9:7; Jer. 23:5.
 - 1. He is the Prince of kings, Rev. 1:5.
 - 2. He is King eternal, 1 Tim. 1:17; Dan. 7:14.
 - 3. He is King of kings, 1 Tim. 6:15; Rev. 17:14; 19:16.
- B. As King in spiritual Israel, Jesus Christ rules.
 - 1. He has all authority, Matt. 28:18.
 - 2. He rules now, 1 Cor. 15:24-28.
 - 3. He will pass final judgment on all his subjects, 2 Cor. 5:10; Matt. 25:32; John 5:22; Acts 10:42; 17:31; Rom. 2:16; 14:10; 2 Tim. 4:1; etc.

Conclusion:

- 1. God is King today as much as he was when misguided Israel said “there was no king in Israel.”
- 2. Nations, world religions, denominations, any persons and Christians who cry ‘there is no king in Israel’ are lost!
- 3. To practice, tolerate or teach doctrinal error echoes the notion that ‘there is no king in Israel.’
- 4. Man thinks too much of himself when he supposes that he can direct himself religiously, Jer. 10:23; Prov. 3:5-6.
- 5. There is a King in Israel to whom we must devote our allegiance to be saved.

Invitation:

- 1. Dear Friend, don’t be guilty of saying or acting like you believe ‘there is no King in Israel,’ Judges 17:6; 21:25.
- 2. King Jesus wants you to be baptized for the remission of your sins, Acts 2:38; 22:16.
- 3. King Jesus wants you to repent if you are an erring child of God, Luke 13:3.

The Fruit of the Spirit

Galatians 5:22-26

Thesis: Exposition and Application.

Introduction:

1. “The fruit of the Spirit” (vss. 22-23) is contrasted with “the works of the flesh” (vss. 19-21).
 - a. The Bible uniformly portrays only two possible spiritual conditions for accountable souls and only two possible eternities (i.e., righteous and unrighteous, heaven and hell).
 - b. Also, “the fruit of the Spirit” and “the works of the flesh” are *mutually exclusive*”!
2. “The fruit of the Spirit” falls into four categories.
 - a. **Love:** the proper Christian motivation.
 - b. **Joy and peace:** the state of mind afforded Christians.
 - c. **Longsuffering, gentleness, goodness and faithfulness:** the Christian’s relationship with others.
 - d. **Temperance:** the Christian’s self-control.
3. The way to avoid “the works of the flesh” and enjoy “the fruit of the Spirit” is twofold.
 - a. We must learn to ‘be led by the Spirit’ (vs. 18).
 - b. Further, we must “live in the Spirit” and “walk in the Spirit” (vs. 25).
4. Relinquishing “the works of the flesh” and adopting “the fruit of the Spirit” reduces antagonism among Christians and promotes Christian cooperation (vs. 26).

Body:

I. Fruit of the Spirit

A. Fruit

1. “The phrase occurs only here in the New Testament.” (*Vincent’s*)
2. By saying “fruit of the Spirit” rather than ‘work of the Spirit,’ the apostle immediately shows the superiority to the activity of those guided by the Spirit as opposed to those guided by carnal lusts.

(MacKnight)

3. “Fruit,’ metaphorical, frequent in the New Testament, as Matt 3:8; 7:16; John 4:36; 15:8; Rom 1:13; 6:21, etc. We find fruit of ‘light’ (Eph 5:9); of ‘righteousness’ (Phil 1:11); of ‘labour’ (Phil 1:22); of ‘the lips’ (Heb 13:15). Almost always of a good result.” (Vincent’s)
4. “...fruit as the normal out-cropping of the Holy Spirit in us.” (Robertson’s)
5. “Trees that produce fruit are cultivated on the account of the fruit. b. Glorious things in our lives will be produced as fruit, if we choose to be spiritual...” (College Press)
6. Whereas the “**lusts** of the flesh” are plural, the “**fruit** of the Spirit” is *singular*, noting that there are *nine facets* of **the fruit** of the Spirit, rather than nine fruits. (Merideth’s Galatians Commentary)
7. The NT is literally full of references to fruit, Matt. 12:33; 7:18; Col. 1:6; John 15:5; Heb. 13:15; Jam. 3:18; Luke 8:15.

B. Spirit

1. The reference to the “Spirit” stands in opposition to “the flesh (vs. 19).
2. In either case, an accountable person surrenders his control to either “the flesh” or “the [Holy] Spirit.”
3. “...the manner in which the Spirit leads us to exhibit such characteristics is through the teaching of the New Testament.” (Merideth)

II. Love (the proper Christian motivation).

- A. “Agapee (NT:26). An intense desire to please God and to do good to mankind; the very soul and spirit of all true religion...” (Clarke)
1. “It is the love that seeks the highest good.” (Merideth)
 2. Agape love is the noblest and most selfless expression of love.
 3. Other Greek words for love include *storge* (natural affection as of parents toward their children) and *philia* (warm friendship or brotherly love).

- B. The Bible is filled to overflowing with references to love, 1 Cor. 13:1-13; 1 John 4:16, 20.
1. Our love must be directed toward God first, Matt. 22:37.
 2. After all, God first loved us, John 3:16; Rom. 5:8; 1 John 4:19.
 3. Christian love manifests itself even to one's enemies, Matt. 5:44.
 4. Love is the Christian's badge of discipleship, John 13:35.
 5. One of love's responsibilities is to obey God, John 14:15, 21.

III. Joy and Peace (the state of mind afforded Christians).

- A. Joy (*chara* meaning gladness)
1. "The exultation that arises from a sense of God's mercy communicated to the soul in the pardon of its iniquities, and the prospect of that eternal glory of which it has the foretaste in the pardon of sin." (*Clarke*)
 2. "This is radiance, a bubbling forth, like a mountain spring that has an eternal source. a. There is no room for complaint of one's portion. b. Listen to Paul in prison—in need of cloak, and parchments. 1) 'Finally my brethren, rejoice in the Lord.' Phil. 3:1 2) 'Rejoice in the Lord always: again I will say, Rejoice.' Phil. 4:4" (*College Press*)
 3. "Joy lifts us above all the trials, troubles, and disappointments..." (*Gospel Advocate Commentary*)
 4. Joy is a frequent topic in the Bible, especially at the pen of the apostle Paul, Phil. 3:1; 4:4, 12; Rom. 14:17.
- B. Peace (*eirene* meaning calmness or tranquility)
1. Peace derives from reconciliation with God, Rom. 5:1.
 2. "The calm, quiet, and order, which take place in the justified soul, instead of the doubts fears, alarms, and dreadful forebodings, which every true penitent less or more feels, and must feel until the

assurance of pardon brings peace and satisfaction to the mind.” (*Clarke*)

3. “This peace we have or enjoy through Christ...it is not peace in the sense of exemption from the troubles of this world; it is peace of conscience, peace of soul.” (*Gospel Advocate*)
4. Heavenly wisdom is peaceable, Jam. 3:17.
5. Christians are to pray that they may lead peaceful lives, 1 Tim. 2:2.

IV. Longsuffering, Gentleness, Goodness, Faith, Meekness (the Christian’s relationship with others).

A. Longsuffering (*makrothumia*)

1. “Long-mindedness, bearing with the frailties and provocations of others, from the consideration that God has borne long with ours; and that, if he had not, we should have been speedily consumed: bearing up also through all the troubles and difficulties of life without murmuring or repining...” (*Clarke*)
2. Longsuffering is one of the stipulated characteristics of love, 1 Cor. 13:4.
3. “Love leads the Christian to bear with the mistakes and wrongs that grow out of weaknesses, infirmities, and evil designs of others.” (*Gospel Advocate*)
4. “...to be of a long spirit, not to lose heart, hence, patience, forbearance, long-suffering, slowness in avenging wrongs.” (*Merideth*)
5. Where would mankind be without the longsuffering of God, 1 Pet. 3:20; 2 Pet. 3:9.

B. Gentleness (*chrestotes*, kindness, ASV)

1. Sometimes translated “kindness,” 2 Cor. 6:6; Eph. 2:7; Titus 3:4.
2. Gentleness or kindness is a description of love, 1 Cor. 13:4.
3. “The word means goodness, kindness, benignity; and is opposed to a harsh, crabbed, crooked temper. It is a disposition to be pleased; it is mildness of temper, calmness of spirit, an unruffled

disposition, and a disposition to treat all with urbanity and politeness. This is one of the regular effects of the Spirit's operations on the heart. Religion makes no one crabby, and morose, and sour. It sweetens the temper; corrects an irritable disposition; makes the heart kind; disposes us to make all around us as happy as possible. This is true politeness..." (*Barnes*)

- C. Goodness (*agathosune*)
1. "The sense is, that a Christian must be a good man." (*Barnes*)
 2. "...a kindly activity for the true good of others." (*Gospel Advocate*)
 3. Sometimes, others may not realize and appreciate the good we do on their behalf.
- D. Faith (*pistis*, faithfulness, ASV)
1. "The Christian is faithful as a man; faithful as a neighbor, friend, father, husband, son. He is faithful to his contracts; faithful to his promises. No man can be a Christian who is not thus faithful, and all pretensions to being under the influences of the Spirit when such fidelity does not exist, are deceitful and vain." (*Barnes*)
 2. "...it also means remaining loyal and faithful to the church." (*Coffman*)
 3. "...means trustworthiness...reliable." (*Merideth*)
 4. Faith and faithfulness are among the most often addressed topics in the Bible, Matt. 10:22; Rev. 2:10; etc.
- E. Meekness (*prautes*).
1. "Mildness, indulgence toward the weak and erring, patient suffering of injuries without feeling a spirit of revenge, an even balance of all tempers and passions, the entire opposite to anger." (*Clarke*)
 2. "...the opposite of domineering and blustering. b. It means mild of temper, patient under injuries." (*College Press*)
 3. *Meekness* is not *weakness*, but is a descriptor of some of the most courageous servants of God,

Num. 12:3; Matt. 11:29.

4. “Meekness is a quiet and forbearing spirit, that suffers wrong without resentfulness; but firmness and unyielding devotion to right.” (*Gospel Advocate*)
5. “The Greek word for meek was used of animals which had been tamed. They had plenty of strength but had learned to accept discipline and control. The meek are those who have strength and energy, but this is under control.” (*Merideth*)
6. Meekness is a frequent biblical topic, Psa. 37:11; Matt. 5:5; 2 Tim. 2:25; Eph. 4:2; Col. 3:12; Titus 3:2; Jam. 1:21; 1 Pet. 3:15.

V. **Temperance (*egkrateia*, the Christian’s self-control, ASV).**

- A. “...self-government, or moderation, principally with regard to sensual or animal appetites. Moderation in eating, drinking, sleeping, etc.” (*Clarke*)
 1. “...one holding control or holding in.” (*Robertson*)
 2. Through temperance or self-control, one controls his *emotions and actions*.
- B. Mature Christians practice self-control, Titus 2:2.
 1. The temperate have control of their minds, bodies by mastery of the intellect, emotions and willpower.
 2. Self-control enables one to consciously direct his life while the love for God gives it proper direction.

VI. **Crucified the lusts (vs. 24).**

- A. Christians are supposed to have put “the works of the flesh” behind them when they became Christians, Rom. 6:1-6; 2 Cor. 5:17.
- B. Christian living, though, is a quest that must ever be defended from the temptations of Satan, 1 Pet. 5:8; Jam. 1:14-15.

VII. **Walk in the Spirit (vs. 25).**

- A. Christians, that is, those who are *animated* by the Holy Spirit, have no business living as though they are motivated by the pleasures of sin, Rom. 8:9; Heb. 11:25.
 1. “Our claims to a life after the Spirit will be

demonstrated only through conformity to the teaching of the Spirit in the Word of God.”

(Merideth)

2. Walking in the Spirit is not an irresistible condition; one may and many do walk otherwise.
- B. Walking is commonly used to represent ongoing compliance or refusal to comply with divine instruction.
 1. One cannot walk in two different directions at the same time, Amos 3:3.
 2. A Christian’s walk ought to imitate the walk of Christ, 1 John 2:6.
 3. Christian’s must walk in the light of righteousness, Eph. 5:8.
 4. Faithful Christians continue to walk in the light of Christ, 1 John 1:7.

VIII. Not provoking one another (vs. 26).

- A. “This word is found nowhere else in the N.T.” *(College Press)*
 1. “...to challenge to combat.” *(Robertson)*
 2. Other words translated “provoke” appear in the Bible, sometimes in the sense of encouragement, Heb. 10:24.
- B. Relinquishing “the lusts of the flesh” and adopting “the fruit of the Spirit” should eliminate antagonism between Christians.
 1. We are to “love the brotherhood,” 1 Pet. 2:17.
 2. Christians have a special duty to love each other, Rom. 12:10; Heb. 13:1.

Conclusion:

1. Whole sermons or even books could be devoted to each of the subtopics noted in this sermon, owing to the volumes of information and biblical references available.
2. Everyone, especially Christians, needs to discard “the works of the flesh” and fully embrace “the fruit of the Spirit; they are mutually exclusive.”
3. The only way one can avoid “the lusts of the flesh” and enjoy “the fruit of the Spirit” is to submit to the leading of the Holy Spirit through the Word of God.
4. Developing “the fruit of the Spirit” will go a long way to

reducing antagonism between one another, including Christians, and bring about peace between man and God.

Invitation:

1. The “fruit of the Spirit” will continue to be elusive as long as one does not seek justification through obedient faith, Rom. 1:5; 5:1; 16:26.
2. That faith coupled with baptism saves, Mark 16:16.
3. A dead, inactive faith can neither save those outside of Christ or erring Christians, Jam. 2:17-18, 20, 26.

The Origin and Mission of Satan

1 Peter 5:8

Thesis: To identify the origin and activities of Satan whereby souls can know of the certainty of his existence and to be wary of him.

Introduction:

1. Like most biblical topics (e.g., God), information about Satan does not appear in a single location, but must be gleaned from numerous passages throughout the Bible.
2. With a little effort, certain truths can be ascertained from the Word of God regarding the origin and mission of Satan.
3. Yet, there are many areas of inquiry about Satan that the Bible does not supply as well as many unfounded myths and theories regarding Satan.
4. The Bible is the only source to which one can turn to learn about Satan, and we can be assured that God has caused to be recorded in the Bible everything he wants us to know about him.

Body:

I. The origin of Satan.

- A. **Satan** is introduced in both testaments of the Bible.
 1. The name “Satan” appears 55 times in KJV (19 OT, 36 NT).
 2. The Hebrew word for Satan means “adversary” and hence it is used in some contexts where it does not refer to Satan: **Jehovah**, Num. 22:22, 32; **David**, 1 Sam. 29:4; **various men**, 2 Sam. 19:22; 1 Kings 5:4; 11:14, 23, 25.
 3. Every time the Aramaic word for Satan appears in the NT, it is translated as Satan; it means “the accuser” or “the devil” and is related to the corresponding Hebrew word for Satan.
- B. Satan is also prominently known in the Bible as **the**

devil.

1. The word “devil” appears 61 times in the KJV from two different root words: “diabolos” 35 times, meaning “false accuser, slanderer” and referring to Satan; “daimonion” or “daimonizomai” meaning “demon” and “demon possessed,” respectively.
 2. Additional references to Satan include: **Abaddon**, Rev. 9:11; **the accuser of our brethren**, Rev. 12:10; **adversary**, 1 Pet. 5:8; **angel of the bottomless pit**, Rev. 9:11; **Apollyon**, Rev. 9:11; **Beelzebub**, Matt. 12:24; Mark 3:22; Luke 11:15; **Belial**, 2 Cor. 6:15; **the Devil**, Matt. 4:1; Luke 4:2, 6; Rev. 20:2; **old serpent**, Gen. 3:4; 2 Cor. 11:3; Rev. 20:2; **the dragon**, Rev. 20:2; **the enemy**, Matt. 13:39; **father of all lies**, John 8:44; **a murder from the beginning**, John 8:44; **prince of this world**, John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11; **prince of the devils**, Matt. 12:24; **the prince of the power of the air**, Eph. 2:2; **the tempter**, Matt. 4:3; 1 Thess. 3:5; **the god of this world**, 2 Cor. 4:4; **the wicked one**, Matt. 13:19, 38.
 3. Incidentally, Satan **is not** referred to as “Lucifer” in the Bible, Isa. 14:12 (means morning star and in context Babylon is compared to a falling star).
- C. Satan is **not deity**.
1. Satan’s powers are overpowered by God (i.e., Satan must submit to God), Job 1:12; 2:6; 1 Cor. 10:13; 1 John 4:4; Rev. 20:2, 7; Satan is *not omnipotent*.
 2. Satan demonstrated his *lack of omniscience* in his futile attempt to tempt the Christ and his prompting Judas to betray Christ to be crucified, through that death fulfilling Scripture and providing for the victorious resurrection.
 3. No traits that alone belong to deity are attributed to Satan.
- D. Therefore, Satan is a **created being**.
1. Deity is *eternal*, whereas all other beings are *immortal* and the product of creation by God, Col.

- 1:16.
2. All created beings were created morally good, in the image of God, with the power of choice, Gen. 1:26.
3. “Satan is immortal, but not eternal; neither omniscient nor omnipresent, but raised high above the human race in knowledge and power.” (McClintock and Strong).
4. “He is superhuman, but not in any sense divine. ... He is a created being.” (*ISBE*).
5. The Bible, though, does not reveal **when** the angels, of whom Satan and his coconspirators, were created other than to indicate their creation before the creation of the earth and everything on it, Job 38:6-7.

II. When and how Satan became foe of God and man.

- A. Several passages mention the fall of Satan and his followers from among the angelic host, Job 4:18.
 1. “For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment,” 2 Pet. 2:4.
 2. “And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day,” Jude 6.
 3. “And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him,” Rev. 12:9.
 4. Precisely **when**, though, Satan and his wayward companion angels fell is not revealed in the Bible, but it is clear that Satan grievously afflicted humanity from man’s earliest habitation of earth, Gen. 3; Job.
- B. Though little is revealed in the Bible regarding the nature of Satan’s sin for which God rejected him, some information can be gleaned from Scripture.

1. “The Scriptures are explicit as to the apostasy of some, of whom Satan was the chief and leader. But of the time, cause, and manner of his fall, Scripture tells us scarcely anything. It limits its disclosures, as always, to that which we need to know.”
(McClintock and Strong)
 2. However, pride appears to have been the primary offense of Satan and his followers, 1 Tim. 3:6.
 3. Pride is one of the three avenues by which sin occurs, 1 John 2:16.
 4. God especially hates ungodly pride, Prov. 8:13; 16:18; 6:16-19.
- C. It is abundantly clear from the Bible that Satan is the foe of God and great enemy of mankind.
1. “The witness of the NT then is clear. Satan is a malignant **reality**, always hostile to God and to God’s people. But he has already been defeated in Christ’s life and death and resurrection, and this defeat will become obvious and complete in the end of the age.” (*The New Bible Dictionary*)
 2. Satan is as real a person, howbeit without flesh and blood, as Jesus Christ whom he tempted, Matt. 4:1.
 3. Satan is not merely an influence or the representation of evil in principle, but has an influence as he tempts, speaks, lies, etc., Matt. 4:1; John 8:44.
 4. Satan is unquestionably a real person since God has prepared an eternal habitation for him, something hardly necessary if Satan were not a real person, Matt. 25:41.

III. The mission of Satan.

- A. Satan became unfaithful to his original mission.
 1. Satan and his angels were once apart of the heavenly host of angels, created to minister to God and mankind.
 2. Satan and perhaps a third of the angels became revolted against God, Rev. 12:4-9.
- B. Thrust from heaven and destined to an eternal abode in “everlasting fire,” Satan’s personal agenda is to get back

at God through the crown of his creation — mankind, Matt. 24:41.

- C. Satan uses superhuman powers.
- D. Satan's personal mission to destroy mankind is inhibited by the power of God.
- E. Satan's methods to further his malicious mission are many.
 - 1. The devil takes captives, 2 Tim. 2:26.
 - 2. The devil lays traps for his victims, 1 Tim. 3:7.
 - 3. Satan consciously determines to attack specific persons, Luke 22:31.
 - 4. Satan motivated Judas to betray Christ, Luke 22:3; John 13:2, 27.
 - 5. Satan looks for chinks in the Christian armor where he can tempt one to sin, 1 Cor. 7:5.
 - 6. Satan persuaded Ananias and his wife to lie regarding their contribution, Acts 5:3.
 - 7. Satan is responsible for hindering good works, 1 Thess. 2:18.
 - 8. Satan sometimes fashions himself as an angel of light, 2 Cor. 11:14.
 - 9. Satan can be seen as a slanderer in his false representation of God to man in Gen. 3:4-5 and of man to God in Job 1:9-11; 2:4-5 (McClintock and Strong).
- F. Why did God not annihilate Satan?
 - 1. Since Satan and his host are angels, they are *immortal* — they will never die or cease to exist, Luke 20:33-36.
 - 2. The same text teaches that *human beings are immortal, too*, and will never cease to exist.

IV. How does Satan tempt mankind today?

- A. First, why does God not prevent Satan from tempting mankind today?
 - 1. It may be, in part, that the temptations of Satan, in a sense, provide a valuable service to God in the testing of the human race and purifying the children of God, readying both the ungodly and the godly for their respective eternal habitations.

2. The devil's existence and activity has provided God the opportunity to demonstrate his supreme power over all things spiritual as well as physical, John 9:1-3.
- B. By what mechanisms does Satan tempt humanity?
1. "The whole description of his power implies **spiritual nature** and **spiritual influence**. We conclude, therefore, that he was of angelic nature, a rational and spiritual creature, superhuman in power, wisdom, and energy; and not only so, but an archangel, one of the 'princes' of heaven." (McClintock and Strong)
 2. Yet, God has restricted Satan since the close of the first century that with the passing of the prophets (who worked miracles), neither can Satan exercise obvious supernatural power today, Zech. 13:1-2.
 3. Satan has also been restricted as in the days of Job that he cannot directly and physically harm anyone.
 4. His devices are limited to influence and behind the scenes activities that provide enticement to sin (e.g., stings).
 5. Satan's efforts against humanity cannot override man's freewill, Jam. 1:14-15.

V. How can mankind defend itself from Satan?

- A. Satan accuses mankind of sin before God in the divine court of law.
1. As "our adversary," Satan or the devil is the **prosecuting attorney** against sinful men, Job 1:6-12; 2:1-7.
 2. "The  is basically the enemy (cf. 1 Sam. 29:4; Ps. 71:13), but specifically the **legal accuser** (Zech. 3:1) who is placed at the right hand of the accused (cf. Ps. 109:6)." (*Little Kittel*)
 3. Jesus Christ acts as the **legal advocate** or **defense attorney** for faithful children of God, 1 John 2:1.
- B. We must be proactive against Satan's attacks.
1. We must not allow ourselves to be ignorant of his devices, 2 Cor. 2:11.
 2. We must not provide opportunity to the devil to

tempt us, Eph. 4:27.

3. We must put on the whole armor of God to resist the onslaught of the devil against us, Eph. 6:10-18.
4. We must resist the devil, Jam. 4:7.
5. We must watch and pray that temptation not overcome us, Matt. 26:41.

Conclusion:

1. Since pride was responsible for the fall of Satan and his angels, man must also guard himself respecting it.
2. Satan tempted the sinless Son of God, and doubtless he can and will tempt each of us as well, Matt. 4:1-11.
3. The mission of the Gospel preacher is to turn sinners from “the power of Satan unto God,” Acts 26:18.
4. Happily, there is a way of escape for everyone who seeks it, 1 Cor. 10:13.

Invitation:

1. Everyone who lives a life of sin is a servant of Satan, 1 John 3:8.
2. When even the servants of Christ, perhaps unintentionally, do things contrary to the purposes of the Lord and his kingdom, they are acting on behalf of Satan, Matt. 16:23, “...Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.”
3. The devil has power over death, which through the resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ destroyed, Heb. 2:14-15; followers of Jesus Christ have no reason to fear death, but everyone outside of Christ had better dread the doom of death! Gal. 3:27.

An Overview of Biblical Canonicity

Philippians 3:16

Thesis: To demonstrate that God's Word is preserved as what we call the Bible, and that we, then, ought to have unfailing confidence in the Bible.

Song: *The Precious Book Divine*

Introduction:

1. Biblical canonicity has to do with what books belong in the Bible.
 - a. Therefore, biblical canonicity is of paramount importance, though most people probably never even think about it.
 - b. God's Word (the Bible) must be complete and reliable to permit mankind to confidently prepare for entering eternity.
 - c. The Bible must be free from corruptions that might adversely affect one's preparation for eternity.
2. Fortunately, sufficient evidence demonstrates that man has no need to become alarmed pondering which books belong in the Bible.
 - a. First, God is powerful enough to preserve his Word.
 - b. Second, ample evidence overwhelmingly confirms that the Bible with which modern man is familiar is the complete and uncorrupted Word of God.
 - c. It is true, though, that not all translations of the Bible are accurate and some of them are especially defective.
3. The word "canon" (kanon) appears in the Greek New Testament five times and its meaning has been applied to the inspired body of Scriptures that comprise the Bible, 2 Cor. 10:13, 15-16; Gal. 6:16; Phil. 3:16.
 - a. It is translated "line" and "rule" and means a standard of faith or practice or a boundary.
 - b. Therefore, the word canon is applied to the books of the Bible to mean a collection of inspired books that have been

critically tested and found to be the complete and wholly divine standard by which men must live and by which they will be judged someday.

Body:

I. Which books belong in the Old Testament?

- A. The Old Testament as we know it has never been seriously doubted.
 - 1. The Old Testament books claim to be divinely inspired, e.g., “Thus saith the Lord.”
 - 2. The prophets quoted each other and recognized each other as inspired of God, e.g., Micah 4:1-4; Isa. 2:2-4; Daniel verified Jeremiah as a prophet of God, Dan. 9:2.
 - 3. Joshua received Moses (who wrote the first five books of the Bible) as a prophet of God, Josh. 24:1-27.
 - 4. The Bible lists some of the writing prophets, 1 Chron. 29:29.
 - 5. Historically, the Old Testament can be traced back to the time period in which it was supposed to have been written.
 - 6. Historically, the Old Testament books agree with all known facts characteristic of the time of their purported writing; they contain no mistakes regarding historical or geographical information.
 - 7. The Jewish people have always received the books that comprise the Old Testament; the inspiration of the Old Testament was never in doubt by God’s people.
- B. Confirmation of the Old Testament is found abundantly in the New Testament.
 - 1. All of the Old Testament books are quoted in the New Testament except Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Ecclesiastes and the Song of Solomon; all that proves is these books lacked opportunity for use in the New Testament.
 - 2. The New Testament claims that the Old Testament is inspired, 2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Pet. 1:20-21.
 - 3. Jesus Christ placed his stamp of approval on the

Old Testament, John 10:31-36; Luke 24:44.

4. The early church, first under the leadership of the apostles, recognized the Old Testament as inspired and true, Acts 13:16-41.
5. In a single sweeping statement, Jesus endorsed the entire Old Testament, from Gen. 4:10 to 2 Chron. 24:20-21, the last book according to the Hebrew arrangement of the Old Testament, Matt. 23:35.

II. Which books belong in the New Testament?

- A. God's people never doubted the vast majority of New Testament books.
 1. Some books, though accepted by some Christians, were for a time rejected by others.
 2. Some Christians also had for a time interjected uninspired books into the collection of inspired books.
- B. The determining factor as to whether a book belonged in the Bible rested with the integrity of the book, not with the integrity of the church.
 1. Hence, the uninspired church was not charged with the responsibility of officiating a list of inspired books or New Testament canon.
 2. The merit and divine qualities of the New Testament books themselves determined the New Testament canon.
- C. The proof of the validity of the New Testament as we know it is abundant.
 1. The books claim inspiration for themselves.
 2. The New Testament writers believed their writings were inspired Scripture and accordingly commanded that they were to be circulated, 1 Thess. 5:27; Col. 4:16; Rev. 1:3.
 3. The apostle Peter recognized the writings of the apostle Paul as Scripture, 2 Pet. 3:16.
 4. Warnings appear in the New Testament not to deviate from or corrupt the New Testament, which attests its divine origin, Gal. 1:6-9; Rev. 22:18-19.
 5. The basis of the New Testament is the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy, chief of which is the

resurrection of Jesus Christ; the resurrection could not be refuted 2,000 years ago nor since.

6. The New Testament is historically correct in all its facts and geography.
7. The New Testament was accepted as Scripture from the time it was first written, at least initially by those to whom various parts of it were written.
8. Uninspired writers who knew some of the inspired writers personally verified the validity of many of the New Testament books.
9. Since miracles were slated to last until the “unity of the faith” or “perfect” revelation was received, doubtless the apostles and others upon whom the apostles had laid their hands to enable them miraculously participated in the collection of the New Testament books, Eph. 4:11-13, 1 Cor. 13:8-13.

III. Which ancient books do not belong in the Bible?

- A. First, there is a vast amount of literature that never claimed nor was thought to be biblical.
 1. This includes poetry and other such verse.
 2. Also, there are legal documents and histories that do not claim to be inspired.
- B. The apocrypha are extra-biblical books and do not belong in the Bible.
 1. No apocryphal books is quoted or cited by the biblical books.
 2. The Old Testament apocryphal books were written between the testaments during the 400 years of divine silence when there were no prophets of God.
 3. Some of the apocryphal books do not claim to be inspired.
 4. The apocryphal books contain factual errors about events and geography.
 5. The oldest catalog of canonical books of the Old Testament does not include the apocryphal books.
 6. The Jews never accepted the Old Testament apocryphal books as inspired.
 7. The New Testament apocryphal books are

biblically inaccurate and conflict with inspired books that are unquestionably inspired.

- C. How many apocryphal books are there?
 - 1. There are about 15 apocryphal books that were written between the testaments, which once even the Catholic Church did not accept.
 - 2. There are also about 15 New Testament apocryphal books in addition to about 20 pseudepigraphal books.
- D. Pseudepigraphal books do not belong in the Bible.
 - 1. These are books that are falsely ascribed to Bible times or to inspired writers.
 - 2. They were never accepted as inspired.
 - 3. The apocrypha and the pseudepigrapha are spurious writings and are sometimes both are called the apocrypha.
 - 4. The same criticisms leveled against the apocrypha largely apply to the pseudepigrapha.

IV. How can one know that the Bible text has been preserved?

- A. There are sufficient *copies* of the original texts in their original languages to verify both the Old and New Testament texts.
- B. Further, a sufficient number of ancient translations of the Old and New testaments have survived to verify the Bible text.
 - 1. Some of these versions are even older than the surviving manuscripts.
 - 2. The Septuagint or Greek version of the Old Testament was in use in the first century and Jesus quoted from it.

Conclusion:

- 1. The Old Testament canon was accepted as it is at least by the second century B.C.
- 2. The New Testament canon was accepted within one generation after the death of the apostle John.
- 3. The Bible canon has stood the tests applied to it by critics throughout the centuries.
- 4. Counterfeit books of the Bible have been discovered to be false when compared to the genuine books of the Bible.

5. The inspiration of the Bible books is inherent and does not rest upon the verification by an outside source; i.e., the Bible books are self-evident in their divine origin and distance from books of mere human ingenuity.

Invitation:

1. The Bible, then, contains reliable information respecting the peril that sin poses to our immortal souls, as well as the necessary information by which we can rescue ourselves from impending doom in a devil's hell.
2. Jesus commanded that the message of salvation be preached in every nation, Matt. 28:18-20.
3. Our benevolent God also affords erring Christians the opportunity to save themselves from eternal doom, 1 John 1:9.

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New Testament Apocrypha

Teaching of the Twelve Apostles, Epistle of Barnabas, First Epistle of Clement, Second Epistle of Clement, Shepherd of Hermas, Apocalypse of Peter, Acts of Paul, Epistle of Polycarp to the Philippians, Seven Epistles of Ignatius, Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew, Protevangelium of James, Gospel of the Nativity of Mary, Gospel of Nicodemus, Gospel of the Saviour's Infancy, History of Joseph the Carpenter

New Testament Pseudepigrapha

Gospel of Andrew, Gospel of Bartholomew, Gospel of Barnabas, Gospel of Matthias, Gospel of Thomas, Gospel of Peter, Gospel of Philip, Acts of John, Acts of Paul, Acts of Peter, Acts of Andrew, Acts of Thomas, Acts of Matthias, Acts of Philip, Acts of Thaddaeus, Epistle of Paul to the Laodiceans, Apocalypse of Peter, Apocalypse of Paul, Apocalypse of Thomas, Apocalypse of John the Theologian

The Benefits of Hell

Luke 16:19-31

Thesis: To encourage brethren to consciously avoid hell by more enthusiastically embracing Christian worship and Christian service.

Introduction:

1. Apparently, some outside the Lord's church as well as some brethren must desire *the benefits of hell*.
2. It is also much easier to travel the broad way through the broad gate to hell than it is to travel the narrow way through the narrow gate to heaven, Matt. 7:13-14.
3. Further, most or all of some people's friends will be in hell, and to be with them eternally, they will have to go there, too.
4. There is no restrictive law filled with prohibitions by which one must order his life on earth in order to arrive in hell someday.
5. In addition, note some of *the benefits of hell*.

Body:

I. There will be no preaching in hell.

- A. For some folk, even Christians, no preaching in hell will be a definite advantage.
 1. Often mankind considers Bible preaching as mere foolishness, 1 Cor. 1:18-21.
 2. Non-Christians and Christians alike sometimes consider distasteful biblical doctrines as merely the opinions of men, 1 Thess. 2:13.
 3. God's preachers must preach the whole counsel of God, Acts 20:27; 2 Tim. 4:1-2.
 4. Many consider preaching as meddlesome in their personal lives, too tedious and boring and unnecessarily long, Matt. 14:1-12; Acts 6:8-7:60; 20:7; Eph. 4:15.
- B. Though there will be no preaching in hell, there will be preachers in hell.

1. Many false prophets, preachers and teachers will be in hell, Rev. 20:10; 1 John 4:1; Rom. 16:17-18; James 3:1.
2. The rich man of Luke 16:19, in the part of Hades that is a foretaste of hell, illustrates that the inhabitants of hell will desire to hear preaching with the subsequent opportunity to respond, but there will be no preaching and no further opportunities to respond to it.

II. There will be no praying in hell.

- A. Prayer seems to occupy a very low priority for many today and is dismissed by still others, despite the regularity and urgency with which the Bible teaches man ought to pray, 1 Thess. 5:17; Jam. 5:16.
 1. Those who absent themselves from the appointed assemblies also forgo the public prayers that occur there, 1 Cor. 14:15.
 2. Jesus also instructed his followers to pray privately, Matt. 6:6.
 3. One does not have to pray privately or publicly, if his eternal goal is hell.
- B. However, once in hell, should a soul decide to pray, it will be far too late.
 1. The rich man of Luke 16 made petitions that could not be fulfilled since he had already passed from life.
 2. God does not acknowledge the prayers of sinners while alive, and obviously neither will he hearken to the prayers of departed sinners, John 9:31; Prov. 28:9.

III. There will be no paying in hell.

- A. Some Christians find it distasteful to regularly support the church and its labors for Christ.
 1. The church seems to want money all the time, 1 Cor. 16:1-2.
 2. Preaching that announces the Christian has financial responsibilities regarding the church and its work irritate some of the children of God, 2 Cor. 9:6-7.

3. Surely, they will be delighted that there will be no collections in hell!
- B. It is also true, though, that no one will possess anything in hell from which one could give.
1. This earth and everything on it will be *melted*, 2 Pet. 3:10.
 2. It is obvious from the parable of the rich farmer that no one can take this earth's goods into the afterlife, Luke 12:16-21.
 3. The only treasures in eternity will be those laid up in heaven ahead of time, Matt. 6:19-21.

IV. There will be no programs or projects in hell.

- A. Church work, programs or projects require the investment of time, which many Christians covetously reserve for themselves.
1. There will be no Bible classes, Gospel meetings, lectureships, evangelistic programs and other special functions in hell to irritate the reluctant disciple of Christ.
 2. God did not create any *no talent* people and everyone really has the same number of hours in a day, Matt. 25:14-30.
- B. There will be no programs in hell.
1. Any good that needs to be accomplished can only be done in this life, Ecc. 9:10; John 9:4.
 2. Hence, we must use the time now prudently and wisely, Eph. 5:15-16; Col. 4:5.

V. There will be no pious people in hell.

- A. Many people in the world and sometimes brethren do not prefer the company of godly souls, Rom. 12:10; 1 Pet. 2:17.
1. Often the world calls Christians names, such as “squeaky clean,” “goody-goody” or some other derision to hurt our feelings.
 2. Therefore, many in the world and some Christians prefer the corrupting influence of ungodly people to the blessing of company with faithful Christians, 1 Cor. 15:33; 2 Cor. 6:14-18.
- B. All the future inhabitants of hell will be sinners.

1. Luke 16:19-31 indicates that the lost and the saved will not be allowed to commune with each other.
2. The various lists of sins throughout the New Testament reveal the type of souls who will inhabit hell for eternity, Rom. 1:19-32; 1 Cor. 6:9-10; Gal. 5:19-21; Rev. 21:8.

VI. There will be no prohibitions in hell.

- A. Many souls today feel anguish and pain whenever they are required to submit to authority, Matt. 28:18.
 1. They feel burdened with “Thou shalt” and “Thou shalt not.”
 2. The Gospel of Christ, however, is also the law of God, Jam. 1:25; 2:12.
- B. There will be no consolation in hell to be free from law.
 1. The inhabitants of eternal hell will be in the company of others just like them who disregarded the laws of God while they were alive.
 2. The rich man of Luke 16:19-31 desperately wanted his family to obey the laws of God to avoid arriving in hell.

Conclusion:

1. On balance, the disadvantages far outweigh the benefits of hell. Hell is a place ...
 - a. ... of *flaming fire*, Luke 16:24; Rev. 20:10-15; Matt. 13:41-42, 50; 25:41.
 - b. ... of *unquenchable thirst*, Luke 16:24.
 - c. ... that will be populated with the *most deeply depraved* of mankind and angelic beings, Rev. 21:8; 22:15; Gal. 5:19-21; 1 Cor. 6:9-10; Matt. 25:41.
 - d. ... “*afar off*” from God, Luke 16:23; 2 Thess. 1:7-9.
 - e. ... of “*outer darkness*,” Matt. 25:30.
 - f. ... of *unrelieved pain*, Luke 16:23-25, 28; Rev. 20:10; 14:10-11.
 - g. ... of *unending punishment*, Matt. 25:46; Heb. 10:27-29.
 - h. ... of *sad memories*, Luke 16:25.
 - i. ... of *eternal regret*, Luke 16:27-28.
 - j. ... where *heavenly happiness* can only be viewed from far off, Luke 16:23; Rev. 14:10.
 - k. ... where *prayers* are *not answered*, Luke 16:24-31.

- l. ... where men *plead for mercy and receive none*, Luke 16:24.
- m. ... men will want to leave, but it is *inescapable*, Luke 16:26; Rev. 20:10; Matt. 25:41, 46.
2. There will be no leisure times, recreation, rest periods, recess, passes, graduations, retirements, vacations or paroles — hell is forever!
 - a. Hell was not prepared for man, but for the devil, Matt. 25:41.
 - b. God does not want anyone to spend eternity in hell, 2 Pet. 3:9.
 - c. No one has to spend forever in hell if he will follow the narrow road, through the narrow gate of the city of life, Matt. 7:13-14.
 - d. Every soul can choose life and live with God forever, Deut. 30:19; Josh. 24:15; Phil. 2:12; Rom. 6:16-18.
 - e. Jesus Christ came into the world for the purpose of saving souls from a devil's hell, John 3:16; Luke 19:10.

Invitation:

1. No one in his right mind, knowing the awfulness and eternity of hell, could possibly want to spend forever in hell.
2. However, Christians must be faithful practitioners of all the counsel of God to avoid hell and arrive in heaven at time's end, Jam. 4:17; Rev. 2:10; 1 John 1:7, 9.
3. Unbaptized believers must repent of their sins and submit to immersion in water for the remission of sins to avoid hell and begin the Christian walk, the end of which if faithfully pursued is heaven with God, Acts 2:38.

A Chance, a Change and a Challenge

Romans 5:6-11; 6:11-13

Thesis: To portray Christianity from the perspectives of what it offers and what it requires of mankind.

Song: *Just As I Am*

Introduction:

1. The word *chance* may mean luck or refer to gambling.
 - a. However, it is not used in that sense in this sermon.
 - b. Rather, by *chance*, in this study, is meant an opportunity.
2. The title of our lesson today suggests, then, that
 - a. Christianity provides an **opportunity**,
 - b. requires **change** and
 - c. further **challenges** mankind.
3. Romans 5:6-11; 6:11-13...
 - a. ...indicate that God through Jesus Christ afforded mankind a **chance** or opportunity to be saved,
 - b. refer to a **change** that takes place when one becomes a Christian and
 - c. **challenge** Christians to act as though that chance and change has transpired.
4. When in other areas of life we may sometimes feel that we neither have a chance, cannot change nor feel that life is challenging, we can know and be joyful that Christianity offers all three: *A Chance, a Change and a Challenge*.

Body:

I. Christianity is a religion of another chance (or opportunity).

- A. The family relationship is a good illustration of the mind of God toward mankind.
 1. Loving parents sometimes must chastise their children for their misconduct.
 2. Yet, the same loving parents extend to their

- children another chance to do better.
 - 3. Further, parents offer their penitent children additional chances or opportunities to become obedient children.
 - B. Likewise, our heavenly Father offers chances or opportunities to his children to become obedient.
 - 1. God's favor directed toward humanity is called his **mercy** and **grace**, Eph. 2:1-13.
 - 2. The extension of God's grace toward his creation unfolded according to God's **eternal purpose** for human redemption, Eph. 3:10-11.
 - 3. That grace is manifest in the **vicarious sacrifice** of Jesus Christ for fallen humanity, John 3:16; Rom. 5:6-11; 6:11-13.
 - 4. The chance or opportunity to be saved is revealed through the **proclamation of the Gospel**, Mark 16:15-16; Matt. 28:18-20.
 - 5. Likewise, **erring Christians** also are afforded chances or opportunities to save themselves, Luke 17:3-4; Jam. 5:19-20; Acts 8:22; Phil. 2:12; Rev. 2-3.

II. Christianity is a religion of change.

- A. If no change were necessary, God would not have sacrificed so greatly that men could change, and men would not change.
 - 1. Without the shed blood of Jesus Christ, mankind would have been forever doomed and separated from God, Isa. 59:1-3; Rom. 5:8; Eph. 1:7.
 - 2. If change were not possible and desirable, our Lord would not have had to trouble himself preparing mansions in heaven, John 14:1-3.
- B. Approved religious change whereby one's life is brought into alignment with God's Word is called **repentance**.
 - 1. **Hearing** God's Word exclusively and developing a saving **faith** necessarily precedes biblical repentance, Rom. 10:17; John 8:24.
 - 2. Publicly professing allegiance to Jesus Christ and the obedient action of immersion in water for the remission of one's sins follows repentance, Rom.

- 10:9-10; Acts 8:37; Rom. 6:3-5; 1 Pet. 3:21; Acts 2:38; 22:16.
3. The New Testament contains several examples and commands urging repentance, Luke 13:3, 5; Acts 17:30; 2:38; 3:19.
 4. Avowed repentance that is not based on the Word of God only, based on a Bible faith, resulting in professing Christ and acts of obedience is not biblical repentance and does not save.
- C. There are valid reasons why all men ought and many do change or repent.
1. Those who gratefully acknowledge that God through Jesus Christ **first loved** humanity and gave our Lord to die for us accept the chance to change and do change, 1 John 4:19.
 2. The anticipation of **eternal doom** is a sobering reason to accept the chance to change, Acts 17:30-31; 2 Cor. 5:10-11; Rev. 20:11-15.
 3. The temporal pleasures of sin are inferior and not comparable to the eternal joy in heaven, Heb. 11:25; Rev. 21:4; 1 Pet. 1:8-9.

III. Christianity is a religion of challenge.

- A. Christians are challenged to **remain faithful**.
1. The Bible is replete or filled with warnings to the children of God to remain faithful, Matt. 24:13; Rev. 2:10.
 2. The Bible demonstrates examples of failure to remain faithful, 2 Pet. 2:20-22; 1 Tim. 1:19-20.
 3. With personal diligence Christians must work out their own salvation and run well the Christian race, Phil. 2:12; 1 Cor. 9:24-26; 2 Tim. 4:6-8.
- B. Christians are challenged to live **godly lives** in an ungodly world.
1. Rather than sequestering themselves in communes isolated from the world, Christians are they who with Christ in the midst of them successfully live amidst the world, John 17:14-23; Rom. 12:1-2.
 2. Godliness is a primary distinction of Christians versus the ungodly world, Titus 2:11-14; 2 Pet. 1:3,

6-7.

- C. Christians are challenged to **save souls**.
 - 1. If Christians do not proclaim the Gospel to a sin-sick and dying world, no one will, Luke 24:46-47.
 - 2. If Christians do not rescue erring Christians, no one will, Jam. 5:19-20; Jude 23.
- D. Christians are challenged to perform **good works**.
 - 1. Christians have repented of past evil works and ought to have nothing to do with evil works anymore, Rom. 13:11; Gal. 5:19-21; Col. 1:21.
 - 2. Christians must be careful to always abound in good works, with the same diligence as a scout trying to acquire a merit badge, 2 Thess. 2:17; 1 Cor. 15:58; 2 Cor. 9:8; Col. 1:10; 1 Tim. 5:10; 2 Tim. 2:21; **Titus 2:13; 3:6**; Jam. 1:25; 1 Pet. 2:12.

Conclusion:

- 1. Man does have a chance; man can change; and, man is not challenged with more than he is capable of doing.
 - a. A **chance** or opportunity is not itself salvation, but rather it levies upon each soul a responsibility to comply with the will of God.
 - b. As a free, moral agent, man can **change** or turn to God, Deut. 30:19; Josh. 24:15; Matt. 6:33.
 - c. The Gospel provides a **challenge** to humanity and Christians that is not too great, 1 Cor. 10:13; Jam. 1:12.
- 2. There are several chances, changes and challenges afforded Christians through the Gospel.
 - a. Foremost, the Gospel affords souls the opportunity to save themselves from sin and its eternal consequences.
 - b. Second, the Gospel enables Christians to rescue fallen Christians.
 - c. Third, the Gospel enables Christians to serve God who has saved them.
 - d. Fourth, the Gospel provides unparalleled purpose in life, Ecc. 12:13; 1 Thess. 4:16-17.

Invitation:

- 1. A chance to change from lost to saved and a challenge to serve God faithfully, each is useless if disregarded by the lost.
- 2. Unbaptized believers are lost now and will be lost eternally,

Mark 16:16; are you content to face eternity lost?

3. Erring Christians can only anticipate an eternal hell somehow worse than hell itself, 2 Pet. 2:20; are you content to face eternity lost?

The Origin of Evil

Isaiah 7:15

Thesis: To explain how evil (including sin and suffering) came into existence and continues despite the creation and maintenance of all things by an omnipotent and omnibenevolent Creator.

Introduction:

1. Especially the atheist endeavors to paint the picture of the logical impossibility of the existence of God, and subsequently, any law of God by which anyone must order his life.
 - a. “We are citizens of a planet cursed by evil, and we, like all others, are heir to its hardships.” (Wayne Jackson, “Is God There?” *Christian Courier*, Stockton, CA, Vol. 35, No. 2, June, 1999, p. 7)
 - b. “...one of the most important, causes of unbelief is the existence of evil, pain, and suffering in the world.” (Bert Thompson, “Causes of Unbelief, Part III,” *Reason & Revelation*, Montgomery, AL, Vol. 19, No. 7, July, 1999, p. 49)
 - c. “It was set forth by the Greek philosopher Epicurus (342-270 B.C.), who argued thusly: If God wishes to prevent evil, but cannot, then He is not all-powerful. If He can prevent evil, but will not, then He is not good; if He has both the power and the will to eliminate evil, then **why** is evil in the world?” (Wayne Jackson, “Does Human Suffering Disprove the Existence of a Benevolent God?” *The Knight Arnold News*, Memphis, TN, Vol. 21, No. 36, September 5, 1995, p. 1)
 - d. “How do we reconcile the existence of suffering with the existence of an all-loving, all-knowing God? The argument goes something like this: 1. If God is all-loving, He could do something to prevent or end suffering. 2. If God is all-loving, He would want to prevent or end suffering. 3. There is a tremendous amount of suffering in the world. Therefore, God either is not all-loving or not all-powerful.”

(Trevor Major, "The Problem of Suffering," *Reason & Revelation*, Montgomery, AL, Vol. 18, No. 7, July, 1998, p. 49)

- e. "Why could he not have made men such that they always freely choose the good?' ... The first reaction is to think that this demands a logical impossibility of God. If God creates beings who cannot sin, then He has created beings without free will." (Trevor Major, "The Problem of Suffering: Further Arguments," *Reason & Revelation*, Montgomery, AL, Vol. 18, No. 7, July, 1998, p. 54)
2. Eternal, omnipotent and omnibenevolent God created everything that was created, Gen. 1:1-31; John 1:1-3.
 - a. God created angelic beings *perfect*, Col. 1:16; Job 38:6-7; Hab. 1:13; Jam. 1:13; 1 Pet. 1:15-16.
 - b. God created the material universe *perfect*, Gen. 1:10, 12, 21, 25, 31.
 - c. God created mankind (a spirit being in a mortal body) *perfect*, Gen. 1:26.
3. The abuse of **freewill** among angels and mankind is ultimately responsible for the *corruption* of angels, mankind and the physical universe.
 - a. "...where freedom of choice is permitted, there is certainly the possibility that **finite** creatures will make wrong choices. But wrong choices must entail some adverse consequences. Think about this: If **all** actions [choices], both good and bad, produced exactly the **same** effect, how would one ever learn to choose the good and reject the bad? It is clear, therefore, that finite beings with personal will-power must be allowed to **suffer the consequences** of their wrong choices if they are to learn that the good is to be valued over the bad." (Jackson, "Does Human Suffering Disprove the Existence of a Benevolent God?")
 - b. Perhaps up to a third of the angels in heaven rebelled against God and were thrust from heaven, Job 4:18; 2 Pet. 2:4; Jud 6; Rev. 12:4-9.
 - c. Adam and Eve also disobeyed God, for which they suffered immediate spiritual and physical consequences, and all their descendants suffer physical consequences, Gen. 3:1-24.

- d. Subsequently, God altered the universe as part of the consequential punishment on humanity for the sin of Adam and Eve, Gen. 3:16-18; 7:10-12.
 - e. God did not directly create evil, but creating angels and humans with the **power of choice**, permitted angels and humans to make *wrong choices* that brought about evil.
4. Evil is usually segregated into two considerations: **moral**, pertaining to sin, and **physical** or natural, pertaining to this life (e.g., pain and suffering).
- a. Evil can refer to **sin**, which is a choice to act contrary to the revealed will of God, 1 John 3:4.
 - b. Evil also can refer to **pain and suffering**.
 - c. For the balance of our sermon, we want to focus first on sin and secondly on pain and suffering.

Body:

I. What is the origin of sin, its consequences and its remedy?

- A. Angels and humans were created by God with the ability to make choices; neither angels nor we are robots.
 - 1. Therefore, the Bible is replete with encouragement by God-inspired prophets for humans to make the right choices (i.e., choices of which God approves), Josh. 24:15; 1 Kings 18:21; Isa. 7:15; Matt. 6:33; Rom. 12:9.
 - 2. Satan and his angels made bad choices (sinned), 2 Pet. 2:4.
 - 3. Adam and Eve made a bad choice and introduced sin into the world, Rom. 5:14; 1 Cor. 15:22; 1 Tim. 2:13-14.
- B. The **consequences of sin** affect humanity and the planet on which we live.
 - 1. All have sinned, and without a remedy to sin would be separated forever from God in a devil's hell, Rom. 3:23; 6:23; 2 Thess. 1:7-9; Matt. 25:41.
 - 2. Earth was no longer a paradise after sin in the Garden of Eden, for God removed the Tree of Life from mankind, slaughtered animals (which before were not even authorized for eating) to provide adequate clothing for mankind and changed the laws of nature, Gen. 3:16-24.

- C. God provided the solution or remedy for man's sin problem in the fullness of time, Gal. 4:4; Eph. 1:10.
 - 1. Throughout Patriarchy and Judaism, God impressed upon humanity the awfulness of sin and man's separation from his infinitely holy God, Heb. 10:1-4.
 - 2. The awfulness of sin peaked in the crucifixion of Jesus Christ on the cross of Calvary, Acts 2:36; 7:52.
 - 3. However, **through the blood** of the slain Son of God, complete forgiveness of sins is afforded mankind (*conditionally*, when he avails himself of it), John 19:34; Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:14; Acts 20:28; Heb. 9:12; Rev. 1:5.

II. What is the origin of pain and suffering?

- A. A large part of the pain and suffering experienced by mankind corresponds to sin.
 - 1. The result of the sin of Adam and Eve included experiencing pain and suffering, Gen. 3:16-19.
 - 2. Others suffer for their sins, sometimes even if they repent of those sins, 2 Sam. 12:7-14 (David).
 - 3. Often, people suffer due to the sins of others, 2 Sam. 12:7-14 (Uriah).
 - 4. Even the natural catastrophes that maim and kill innocent persons came into being because of sin, Gen. 3:16-19; 7:10-12.
- B. Sometimes, pain and suffering are merely the result of violating the natural law by which the universe operates (e.g., gravity, Acts 20:9).
 - 1. Natural law would be chaotic and unreliable if God intervened every time even one of his spiritual children or an unaccountable baby was threatened by the laws of nature.
 - 2. "In the divine scheme of things, God has set limits upon Himself. ... When God created us as creatures with free wills, He opened the door to suffering. ... Free will and bad choices result in suffering." (Steven Clark Goad, "The Dilemma of Human Suffering," *Gospel Advocate*, Nashville,

TN, Vol. 137, No. 5, May, 1995, p. 25-26)

3. The perfect earthly habitation vanished because of sin and a perfect habitation for humanity will not be restored until the children of God are resettled in heavenly mansions, John 14:1-3; 2 Pet. 3:13-14.
- C. Happily, the adverse affect of suffering can be overcome.
1. God limits the capacity of any adversity to overpower a child of God, 1 Cor. 10:13.
 2. The inward man is renewed daily despite what may buffet the outward man, 2 Cor. 4:13-18.
- D. Pain and suffering, though, do have some value.
1. Sometimes, suffering merely provides an opportunity for God to be glorified, John 9:2-3; 2 Cor. 12:9-10.
 2. Suffering reminds mortals that they are not God (i.e., immune to such things) and that we because of our weakness must look beyond ourselves, Jer. 10:23.
 3. Suffering draws the sufferer to God through hope when everything earthly is hopeless, 2 Cor. 1:3-4; Psa. 18:6.
 4. Suffering helps one see the ugliness of sin, since sin brought suffering into the world and often is associated with contemporary suffering, too, Rom. 5:12; 1:27.
 5. Suffering helps sufferers see the contrast between things that really matter and things of comparatively little importance, Matt. 10:28.
 6. Suffering invites mankind to demonstrate compassion toward others who suffer, Heb. 2:18.
 7. Suffering on this earth gives sufferers a greater appreciation of the painless habitation in heaven to come, Rev. 21:4; Rom. 8:18.
 8. Suffering reminds humanity that earth was never intended by God to be man's eternal dwelling place, Heb. 11:10, 13-16; 1 Pet. 2:11.
 9. Suffering teaches sufferers to pray earnest prayers, Luke 22:44.
 10. Suffering teaches sufferers to learn contentment,

Phil. 4:11-12.

11. Suffering leads sufferers to submission and obedience to God, Heb. 5:8-9.
12. Suffering purges the sufferer of impurities through his sober attention to preparation in this life for a heavenly hereafter, 1 Pet. 1:6-7.

Conclusion:

1. Frequently, the problem of evil (including sin and suffering) is the cause and effect of mankind abusing freewill to make wrong decisions.
2. Therefore, the problem of evil (including sin and suffering) is neither the doing of God nor irreconcilable with our eternal, omnipotent and omnibenevolent God.
3. The existence of evil (including sin and pain or suffering) is not a sufficient reason to reject our Creator.
4. Mankind learns to distinguish between good and evil through the consequences of sin and the suffering which sin often causes, 1 Pet. 4:15-16.
5. The beautiful Garden of Eden was free of disease, death and other consequences of sin, **until** Adam and Eve sinned, at which time paradise was forever ruined this side of eternity, Gen. 3:22-23; Rom. 5:12.

Invitation:

1. The horrendous affect of all evil (including sin and suffering) can be invalidated by embracing the conditional redemption of our souls through the blood of Christ, effectively preparing us for the eternal paradise with God.
2. One can be immersed in water into the death of Christ where our Lord shed his blood to have sins removed, John 19:34; Rom. 6:3-5; Col. 2:12; Acts 22:16.
3. Erring Christians can also reach the shed blood of Christ through penitence and prayer, Acts 8:22; 1 John 1:9.

The Bible Is God's Treasure Map

Psalm 119:103-106

Thesis: To emphasize the critical role of the Bible in becoming Christians and readying ourselves for the eternal habitation in heaven.

Song: *Give Me the Bible*

Introduction:

1. The Bible is the most important book because it is divine in origin.
2. The Bible is the most important resource to which we ought to appeal in this life because tells us of our origin, the purpose of our existence and the eternity that lies ahead.
3. The Bible is the most important book by which one could order his life because it provides incontrovertible instructions regarding man's life on earth, how he can prepare for eternity and about the eternal abodes of heaven and hell.
4. The Bible is the most important book because it, like a treasure map, leads those who follow it to incalculable happiness on earth and eternally in heaven.

Body:

- I. The Bible is God's treasure map to forgiveness of sins.**
 - A. Mankind is incapable of saving himself from sin.
 1. Mankind is not able to direct his own steps, Jer. 10:23; Rom. 3:23.
 2. God unfolded the plan of redemption while man was oblivious to his sinful plight and otherwise helpless to extricate himself from that sin, Rom. 5:8.
 3. Until God sent Jesus Christ into the world to save humanity, sin continued to separate man from God, Isa. 59:1-3; John 3:16; Luke 19:10.
 - B. The Bible is the only resource to which humanity can

appeal for knowledge whereby forgiveness of sins can be sought.

1. The Word of God contains the answer to how one can become free of sin, John 8:32; Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38.
2. The Word of God contains the answer to how one can remain free from sin, 1 John 1:7, 9.

II. The Bible is God's treasure map to successful Christian living.

- A. Left to his own devices, mankind will fail to practice successful Christian living.
 1. Through carelessness and faulty rationalization, Christians miss worship assemblies unnecessarily and many eventually are lost to the church, Heb. 10:25.
 2. Even Christians are sometimes guilty of the most villainous sins, 1 Cor. 5; 1 Tim. 1:19; 3 John 9-10.
- B. Successful Christian living is when one's life is pleasing to God.
 1. After conversion, one must continue to refrain from sinful pursuits, 1 Thess. 5:22.
 2. To become spiritually stronger, one must feed on the Word of God, 1 Pet. 2:2; Heb. 5:11-14.
 3. Christians need to practice sacrificial, holy living and have their minds continually renewed by the Word of God, Rom. 12:1-2.

III. The Bible is God's treasure map to Christian worship.

- A. Mankind's preferences regarding worship of God leads to condemnation.
 1. Cain's offering was not of faith or according to instructions, and was rejected, Gen. 4:3-7; Heb. 11:4.
 2. Nadab and Abihu were killed by God for not worshipping God according to divine instruction, Lev. 10:1-2.
 3. Anything in worship to God that is contrary to what God has prescribed for worshipping him is vain worship and sinful, Matt. 15:9.
- B. As a New Testament people, man living today must

appeal exclusively to the New Testament for how God desires to be worship now.

1. Internally or in spirit and externally in one's conduct are both required to offer acceptable worship to God, John 4:24.
2. Giving under the New Testament is regulated according to one's prosperity and purpose of heart, 1 Cor. 16:1-2; 2 Cor. 9:7.
3. Preaching and the Lord's Supper are parts of New Testament worship, the latter only being relegated to the first day of the week alone, Acts 20:7.
4. Singing and prayer are also worshipful acts, 1 Cor. 14:15; Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16.

IV. The Bible is God's treasure map to a happy Christian family.

- A. God created the first family when he created Adam and Eve.
 1. God created mankind as male and female, Gen. 1:27; 2:21-25.
 2. Like the plant and animal kingdoms, God created mankind bearing seed to reproduce after its kind (i.e., special *creation* was replaced with ordinary *procreation*), Gen. 1:11-12, 21-22, 24-25, 26-29.
- B. God also regulated (and continues to regulate) the family.
 1. God assigned complementary (not competing) roles for husbands and wives, Gen. 3:16; Eph. 5:22-33.
 2. Parents and children, respectively, have their God-given roles, too, Eph. 6:1-4.
- C. A happy Christian family is more likely to result from following God's instructions for the home than any other course one could pursue.
 1. The husband is to rejoice with the wife of his youth, Prov. 5:18; Song of Solomon.
 2. Children in the home bring joy to the family who delights in the ways of God, Psa. 128:3-5.

V. The Bible is God's treasure map to working for God.

- A. Indifferent, apathetic and unfruitful Christianity is condemned in the Bible.

1. Jesus Christ condemned fruitlessness among the professed children of God, John 15:1-8.
 2. There are two types of fruit — good and evil; the latter will be punished with fire, Matt. 3:10; 7:15-20.
 3. Indifference and apathy among early Christians was severely condemned by Jesus Christ, Rev. 2:1-7; 3:14-22.
 4. The writer of Hebrews also chastised first century Christians for inattentiveness to pursuing their own spiritual growth, Heb. 5:11-6:2.
- B. The New Testament tells how Christians can and must serve God throughout their lives.
1. When Christians *feast on the Word of God*, they not only *fortify themselves*, but they can *teach others* as well, Heb. 5:11-14; 1 Pet. 2:2; 2 Tim. 2:2; Mark 16:15-16.
 2. Useful servants prospect (are zealous) for opportunities to be of greater service to God, Titus 2:14; 1 Cor. 15:58.
 3. Serving God certainly includes fulfilling the mission of the church to whatever extent we have opportunity, Matt. 28:18-20; 1 Cor. 14:12; Gal. 6:10.
 4. In part, we serve God by being good citizens and obeying civil law, Rom. 13:1-7; Acts 5:29.

VI. The Bible is God's treasure map to living forever with God in heaven.

- A. Mankind without God misses the goal of heaven.
1. The rich man of Luke 16:19-31 only realized after he crossed the threshold of death that he had not made adequate preparation for eternity.
 2. The saddest portrayal of judgment highlights faulty human wisdom respecting preparation for eternity, Matt. 7:21-23.
 3. Every accountable soul who has not obeyed the Word of God upon the return of the Lord will be punished forever, 2 Thess. 1:7-9.
- B. Heaven is a prepared place for a prepared people.

1. Jesus has gone to prepare mansions for the faithful children of God, John 14:1-3.
2. Jesus Christ will return to receive his faithful followers to himself and take them to heaven above, 1 Thess. 4:13-18.
3. Only the Bible contains the criteria by which *final judgment* will occur, which provides man the opportunity now to amend his conduct, Rev. 20:11-15; 2 Cor. 13:5.

Conclusion:

1. The Bible has no rivals; it is in a class of its own.
2. The Bible is truly God's treasure map to incomparable treasures:
 - a. Forgiveness of sins.
 - b. Successful Christian living.
 - c. Christian worship.
 - d. A happy Christian family.
 - e. Working for God.
 - f. Living forever with God in heaven.

Invitation:

1. The road that leads to living forever with God in heaven begins with obedience to the Christian faith, Heb. 5:8-9; Rom. 1:5; 16:26.
2. The first converts to Christianity were told by the apostle Peter to repent and be baptized for the remission of their sins, Acts 2:38; the message was the same in the second recorded Gospel sermon and throughout the New Testament, Acts 3:19; 22:16; 1 Pet. 3:21.
3. The Bible also notes that erring Christians were restored to the faith upon penitence and prayer, Acts 8:22; 1 John 1:9.

Unequally Yoked Together

2 Corinthians 6:14-18

Thesis: To caution Christians about allowing the world's corrupt influence to overpower them.

Introduction:

1. The text deals with the Christian/non-Christian relationship, 2 Cor. 6:14-18.
2. "Unequally yoked together" occurs when the Christian's influence and actions are overpowered by those with whom he associates.
3. The text uses the illustration of oxen, which when yoked together, they must move together and cannot travel in different directions.
4. Likewise, Christians yoked with unbelievers (non-Christians) travel together, either at the lead of the Christian or at the lead of the non-Christian.

Body:

I. Five contrasts appear in 2 Cor. 6:14-18 that illustrate the unequal yoke of Christians with non-Christians.

- A. "For what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness," vs. 14.
 1. The answer to this rhetorical question is, "None!"
 2. Fellowship involves religious unity of purpose, principle and action.
 3. We are only permitted to extend this fellowship or degree of association to those who abide in the doctrine of Christ, 2 John 9-11.
 4. We are, rather, called upon to have no fellowship with unrighteousness, but reprove it, Eph. 5:11.
- B. "And what communion hath light with darkness," vs. 14.
 1. Again, the answer to the rhetorical question is, "None!"
 2. Communion involves a partnership and agreement.
 3. Christians have been translated from the kingdom

- of darkness into the kingdom of light and are required to walk in the light, Col. 1:13; 1 Thess. 5:5; 1 John 1:7; Eph. 5:8.
4. Anyone outside the Christian fellowship walks yet in darkness, 1 John 1:6; Acts 26:18.
 5. Christians are not to befriend, but reprove spiritual darkness, Eph. 5:11.
- C. “And what concord hath Christ with Belial?” vs. 15.
1. Once more, the rhetorical question demands the answer, “None!”
 2. Belial or Satan and Jesus Christ are captains of two opposing kingdoms, and hence there is no agreement between them.
 3. Christians bear the Gospel armor for the spiritual war against the darkness of sin and we must be prepared to stand our ground as stalwart soldiers of Christ, Eph. 6:10-17; 2 Cor. 10:3-4.
 4. Jesus said that we are either with him or against him; we cannot have divided devotions and remain pleasing to him, Matt. 12:30.
- D. “Or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?” vs. 15.
1. Yet again, the answer to the rhetorical question remains, “None!”
 2. Believers serve God whereas unbelievers serve Satan (directly or indirectly).
 3. No one can serve God and Satan, Matt. 6:24; Rom. 6:16.
 4. Believers and unbelievers have different eternal fates awaiting them, Matt. 25:46; John 8:24; Mark 16:16.
- E. “What agreement have the temple of God with idols?” vs. 16.
1. The answer to the rhetorical questions is still the same, “None!”
 2. Just as a building dedicated to God has no room for even a single idol, Christians must be consecrated wholly to God, Rom. 12:1-2.
 3. We are the temple of God and his Spirit, 1 Cor.

6:19.

II. There are a number of ways that Christians can become unequally yoked with unbelievers.

A. Marriage.

1. There is no closer “yoke” possible than the domestic intimacy of marriage.
2. In the Old Testament, the children of God were forbidden to marry outside the family of God because of the tendency of the children of God to be led away from faithfulness, Deut. 7:1, 3-4; 1 Kings 11:1-8; Gen. 6:1-2.
3. Though the New Testament does not specifically forbid marriages between the children of God and non-Christians, the same dangers leading to unfaithfulness remain.

B. Business relationships.

1. It is possible to be bound in business with one who will override our influence and good intentions (e.g., sales tactics, choice of products, dishonesty, etc.).
2. The New Testament does not forbid us to associate with unbelievers, but the dangers are ever present, John 17:15; 1 Cor. 5:10.

C. Social ties.

1. Some social activities directly violate biblical instruction or biblical principles (e.g., dancing, drinking, gambling, adultery, etc.).
2. Often, clubs or other organizations to which one may belong will do things in which Christians cannot participate (e.g., raffles, drinking, gambling, religious overtones, etc.).
3. Aligning ourselves with the wrong crowd can lead to sin, 1 Cor. 15:33, ASV.

D. Religion.

1. We dare not extend Christian unity and fellowship beyond the biblical bounds, 2 John 9-11.
2. We cannot please God while following a contrary course than what God has revealed in his Word, Amos 3:3.

3. We must even be cautious not to be misled by erring Christians, Rom. 16:17-18.

Conclusion:

1. A close relationship with the ungodly world overshadows our relationship with God, Jam. 4:4.
2. A close relationship with the ungodly world is an **absurdity**; light and darkness, righteousness and unrighteousness, and Jesus Christ and Belial (Satan) are all opposites.
3. The admonition of 2 Cor. 6:14-18 appears in Scripture for the eternal good of the Christian.
4. The children of God are supposed to be separate and peculiar from sinners, 2 Cor. 6:17; 1 Pet. 2:5, 9.

Invitation:

1. The choices we make about relationships may very well determine where we spend our eternities.
2. Unbaptized believers need to choose Jesus, whereby they can save their souls and help their families make the trek through this life to heaven above, Acts 2:38.
3. Erring Christians need to choose Jesus, whereby they can save their souls and help their families complete the journey to heavenly mansions, Acts 8:22.

The Doctrine of Christ

2 John 9-11

Thesis: To emphasize the necessity of complying with divine instruction to garner the favor of God.

Introduction:

1. Heeding the words of Christ cannot be overemphasized, John 12:48.
2. Jesus asked a riveting question for which there can be no satisfactory answer to excuse compliance with the doctrine of Christ, Luke 6:46.
3. After all, on the basis of love alone, human obedience ought to be the natural response to Christ, John 14:15, 21.

Body:

I. The doctrine of Christ in our lives is essential to garnering divine favor in this life.

- A. Without adherence to the doctrine of Christ, we cannot have a divine fellowship with God, 2 John 9-11.
- B. Without adherence to the doctrine of Christ, whereby we have fellowship with God, we cannot have fellowship with those who have fellowship with God, 1 John 1:3, 6-7.
- C. Our worship is vain or useless if we do not abide in the doctrine of Christ, Matt. 15:9.
- D. In this life, we must follow the instructions given to the apostles and other inspired first century writers, which instruction is styled “the apostles’ doctrine,” Acts 2:42.
- E. Everything we do in life must be *authorized* by Jesus Christ, Col. 3:17.

II. The doctrine of Christ in our lives is essential to garnering divine favor for the life to come beyond our habitation of planet earth.

- A. Living outside the doctrine of Christ in this life will make for a horrific and terrifying second coming of Christ, 2 Thess. 1:7-9.

- B. Lack of compliance with the doctrine of Christ in this life will lead to the saddest of all possible eternities, Matt. 7:21-23.
- C. However, obeying the doctrine of Christ (i.e., the Gospel or NT) will prompt Jesus to save us, Heb. 5:8-9.
- D. There is only one doctrine, which if we obey, we may have the assurance of divine favor in this life and legitimately anticipate divine favor in the life to come, Rom. 6:17.
- E. We cannot hope to achieve true happiness on earth and eternally without heeding the doctrine of Christ, 1 Tim. 4:16.

Conclusion:

1. The Bible (especially the NT, today) alone is that doctrine that can lead us throughout this life and across the threshold of eternity into heaven, 2 Tim. 3:16-17.
2. Only “sound doctrine” can afford man the real hope of spending forever in heaven with God, 1 Tim. 1:10; 2 Tim. 4:3; Titus 1:9; 2:1.
3. It is the responsibility of every Gospel preacher to remind his hearers of biblical doctrine, 1 Tim. 4:6.

Invitation:

1. The doctrine of Christ is not complete without reference to the primary charge Jesus gave his apostles immediately preceding his Ascension, Mark 16:15-16.

Prepare to Meet Thy God

Amos 4:12

Thesis: To encourage brethren to continue to diligently serve God

Introduction:

1. Meet Amos.
 - a. He was a native of Tekoa in Judah, about six miles south of Bethlehem, Amos 1:1.
 - b. Amos was a herdsman and dresser of sycamore trees, not even a prophet of God, Amos 7:14.
 - c. He was called by God in about 765 B.C. to be a prophet to the northern kingdom of Israel, Amos 7:15.
 - d. Amos prophesied the death of King Jeroboam II and the destruction and captivity of the northern kingdom of Israel, Amos 5:27; 7:10-11.
 - e. The evil prophet Amaziah commanded Amos to stop prophesying and return to Judah, Amos 7:12-13.
 - f. Amos responded by delivering a prophecy of God against Amaziah, his family and the nation of Israel, Amos 7:16-17.
2. Amos was bidden by God to deliver several prophecies.
 - a. Amos delivered prophecies of doom and catastrophe in a time of prosperity, which especially made his prophecies unwelcome, Amos 8.
 - b. His prophecies were against many nations: Syria, 1:3-5; the Philistines, 1:6-8; Phoenicia, 1:9-10; Edom, 1:11-12; Ammon, 1:13-15; Moab, 2:1-3; Judah 2:4-5 and Israel, 2:6-8.
 - c. These kingdoms would suffer the punishment of God as surely as God had destroyed the Amorites whose land God had given to the Israelites, Amos 2:9-10.
3. Amos especially prophesied regarding the northern kingdom of Israel.
 - a. Amos enumerated the multiple sins of Israel throughout the Book of Amos.

- b. He also graphically announced the then forthcoming punishments of God that Israel would suffer.
 - c. The prophecies, in advance of their fulfillment, were **warnings from God**, which if Israel had heeded it would have been spared from the appointed doom, Amos 5:4.
4. However, God's patience toward the impenitent is not without end.
- a. A time comes when impenitent souls must **prepare to meet an angry God**, Amos 4:12.
 - b. Today, God is also longsuffering, but a time will come when we, too, must meet God, 2 Pet. 3:9-12.
 - c. Time will end and Jesus will come again at time of which no man is aware, Mark 13:32-33; Matt. 24:36-51; 25:13.

Body:

I. Israel was in need of much preparation to meet God.

- A. Israel had corrupted holy men.
 - 1. Nazarites were given wine to drink and prophets were forbidden to prophesy, Amos 2:12; 7:12.
 - 2. Judah likewise forbade its prophets from presenting the Word of God, Isa. 30:8-11.
 - 3. In the New Testament, the Sanhedrin tried to silence the apostles, Acts 4:18-20.
 - 4. Today, God's people must not discourage Gospel preachers from preaching the whole counsel of God, and Gospel preachers must not allow the Word of God to be silenced, 2 Tim. 4:2; Acts 20:27.
- B. Ungodly people learn how not to know to do right.
 - 1. Israel had unlearned righteous in spite of God's willingness to provide ample instruction, Amos 3:10.
 - 2. Applied to Judah, but applicable to ancient Israel, Jeremiah 4:22 cited man's knowledge to do evil, but lack of knowledge to do good things.
 - 3. Sometimes, even God's people know to do good and do not act accordingly, Jam. 4:17.
 - 4. Sometimes, people refuse to keep a knowledge of God and his Word in their minds and pursue all manner of sins, Rom. 1:28-32.

- C. Israel polluted worship to God.
1. Even God-appointed worship was refused by God since Israel also practice idolatry, Amos 5:21-27.
 2. Judah's worship likewise was despised by God because they mingled idolatry with true worship in their religious lives, Jer. 14:10-16.
 3. The remnant of the Jews that returned from Babylonian captivity cheapened their worship with defective animal sacrifices, which indicated they did not worship God with a proper attitude; God rejected this type of worship, Mal. 1:6-14.
 4. Jesus Christ also warned about **vain worship**, Matt. 15:9.
- D. Israel oppressed the poor.
1. Israel's mistreatment of the powerless poor precipitated God's announcement of judgment against the northern kingdom, Amos 2:6-7.
 2. The rich cheated the poor in the market place and became richer and lived luxuriously, Amos 4:1; 5:11-12; 8:4-6.
 3. Throughout the Book of Amos and elsewhere in the Bible, God expressed his great disdain for everyone who oppresses the poor, Prov. 17:5; 30:14.
- E. Israel had departed from the Word of God.
1. God brought all manner of calamity upon Israel in its departure, but the northern kingdom would not return to God, Amos 4:7-11.
 2. Israel no longer practiced righteousness, Amos 5:7.
 3. Israel hated good men and anyone who attempted to correct them, Amos 5:10.
 4. The apostle Paul warned that the Christians would also depart from the Word of God and desire falsehood, 2 Tim. 4:3-4.
- F. Israel had become apathetic.
1. Both Judah and Israel has set themselves at ease or become arrogant and careless as the children of God, Amos 6:1.
 2. Likewise, in the first century, the church at

Laodicea had become indifferent and self-contented, Rev. 3:15-16.

- G. Israel was guilty of fornication.
 - 1. The most repulsive kinds of sexual sins became commonplace in Israel, Amos 2:7.
 - 2. Christians in first century Corinth, perhaps imagining themselves to be open-minded, also approved the most repulsive type of fornication, 1 Cor. 5:1-2.
- H. Israel adopted dishonest business practices.
 - 1. The prophets Amos and Micah documented the dishonest business dealings of Israel, Amos 8:5-6; Micah 6:10-11.
 - 2. Judaism strictly forbade dishonest weights and measurements in the market, Lev. 19:35-36.
- I. Despite all the nation's sins, God was willing to save the penitent.
 - 1. God promised his grace to sinful men and promised that they would **live, if they would seek him**, Amos 5:4, 6, 14-15.
 - 2. Likewise, Jesus promised that mankind could find God, if he seeks him, Matt. 7:7-8.
 - 3. The writer of Hebrews also noted that God responds favorably only to those who truly seek him, Heb. 11:6.
 - 4. Both testaments record God calling upon mankind to repent, Acts 17:30.

II. God determined to punish impenitent Israel.

- A. Amos foretold that Israel would be defenseless before God, Amos 2:14-16.
 - 1. Men of valor would flee as cowards.
 - 2. All strength in Israel would become weakness.
- B. Amos announced that an invading army would destroy Israel, Amos 3:11; 6:14.
 - 1. God had determined to defeat Israel due to its sins by granting victory to another nation.
 - 2. The entire land of Israel would be overrun and Israel's palaces would be destroyed.
- C. God withheld rain to ruin their crops and sent pestilences

- against wicked Israel, Amos 4:7-10.
- D. Central to the punishment of wicked Israel was **captivity** in Assyria, Amos 5:5, 27: 6:7; 7:17.
 - E. God sent locusts to eat the crops, Amos 7:1-3.
 - F. Then, God sent fire to evaporate the water in the land, Amos 7:4-6.
 - G. God promised a great slaughter wherein the land would be littered with dead bodies and no one would be able to escape God's wrath, Amos 8:3; 9:1-3.
 - H. Amos prophesied that the sun would go down at noon in Israel, Amos 8:9.
 1. This was a figurative reference to the utter destruction of Israel's economy and sovereignty.
 2. The departing of the sun from one or from a nation illustrates the departure of God's favor, Jer. 15:9; Micah 3:6.
 3. Similar references occur in the Bible regarding other nations, Babylon, Isa. 13:1, 4, 10.
 4. Similar references occur regarding the ending of Judaism at which time the church began, Joel 2:23-3:2; Acts 2:16-21.
 5. Similar references occur respecting the destruction of Jerusalem, Matt. 24:29.
 - I. God determined to bring a famine of the Word of God on Israel, Amos 8:11-12.
 1. Israel repeatedly had refused the Word of God through his prophets.
 2. God determined that he would not send Israel any more instruction, but certain punishment instead.
 3. At times, God has determined to conceal his truth from those who would misuse it, Matt. 11:25.
 - J. All the punishments of God upon Israel would cause much mourning, many lamentations and a flood of tears, Amos 8:10; 9:5.

Conclusion:

1. Israel because of its sins was no better than other kingdoms that God destroyed, and consequently God destroyed the northern kingdom of Israel, too, Amos 6:2; 9:7.

- a. Sinning Jews were no better than sinning Gentiles, Rom. 1-3.
- b. Today, sinning Christians are no better than other sinners, Rom. 6:23.
2. God gave up on impenitent Israel.
 - a. God determined that Israel would have no more opportunities to return to God, and used a basket of spoiled fruit and a builder giving up on his construction project to illustrate his decision, Amos 7:8; 8:2.
 - b. God will reject us too if we reject him, John 12:48; Matt. 10:33.
3. God will be exalted as Sovereign — one way or another!
 - a. He prefers our willing submission with adoration, Matt. 22:37-38.
 - b. However, God will humble even the disobedient, Rom. 14:11.
4. All of the warning in the Book of Amos ought to be warnings to each of us as well.
 - a. The Old Testament contains valuable information suitable for our learning, Rom. 15:4.
 - b. Examples of righteousness and especially wickedness are lessons from which we can learn, 1 Cor. 10:6, 11.

Invitation:

1. Self-examination is always in order to assure ourselves that we are pleasing to our God, 2 Cor. 13:5.
2. Unbaptized believers and erring Christians alike must obey God to be saved, Acts 6:7.

Let's Go To Heaven – Together!

Phil. 3:17, 20

Thesis: Teamwork (fellowship) is a valuable resource to help God's children successfully journey to heaven.

Song: *Here We Are But Straying Pilgrims*

Introduction:

1. Jesus is preparing a place in heaven, John 14:1-3.
2. Now is the time for God's children to prepare themselves to go to heaven, 2 Cor. 13:5.
3. God will separate the prepared from the unprepared, Ecc. 12:13-14; 2 Cor. 5:10; Matt. 7:21-23; 25:31-46.
4. There is little time to make preparation, Jam. 4:13-14.
5. Opportunity for preparation will end suddenly, Matt. 24:36-51; 2 Pet. 3:10.

Body:

- I. God's messengers said to the WORLD, "Let's go to heaven, together," 2 Cor. 5:18-20; Matt. 7:13-14.**
 - A. God destroyed the old world with a universal flood, Gen. 6-7; 1 Pet. 3:19-20; 2 Pet. 2:5.
 - B. God will destroy the world a second time with fire, 2 Pet. 3:5-7, 10-12.
- II. Joshua said to the NATION of Israel, "Let's go to heaven, together," Josh. 24:14-25, 31.**
 - A. Previously, during the Exodus, Israel repeatedly turned away from God.
 - B. Later, the Israelites also refused to obey God, Jer. 6:16-17.
- III. Noah said to his FAMILY, "Let's go to heaven, together," Gen. 6-9.**
 - A. Lot lost his family.
 - B. Adam & Eve lost their family.

IV. Aquila & Priscilla (HUSBAND & WIFE) said “Let’s go to heaven, together,” Acts 18:2, 26; 1 Cor. 16:19.

- A. Joseph & Mary said, “Let’s go to heaven, together,” Matt. 1-2.
- B. Zacharias & Elizabeth said, “Let’s go to heaven, together,” Luke 1:5-6.
- C. Ananias & Sapphira are an example of failed husband & wife team, Acts 5:1-10.

V. The apostles said to the CHURCH, “Let’s go to heaven, together,” PHIL. 3:17, 20.

- A. Five of the seven churches of Asia stood condemned, Rev. 2-3.
- B. The church at Corinth was marching away from heaven, 1 Cor.
- C. The Jewish congregations were turning from Christianity back to Judaism, Heb.

Conclusion:

- 1. Let’s go to heaven together as:
 - a. a congregation
 - b. a brotherhood
 - c. husbands & wives
 - d. families
 - e. friends
 - f. community
 - g. nation
 - h. the world
- 2. Teamwork or fellowship is required in order to go to heaven together!
 - a. One has to plan to go to heaven together!
 - b. We need to help each other.
 - c. We need to pray for each other.
 - d. We need to fellowship each other.
 - e. We need to consciously try to take brethren & non-Christians with us to heaven.
 - f. We must develop a heightened zeal.
 - g. We must actually work to convert the lost.
 - h. “Let’s go to heaven, together” is a worthy motto or theme.

Invitation:

- 1. Let’s go to heaven together!

2. Non-Christians.
3. Christians.

The Grace of God

Ephesians 2:8-9

Thesis: To sweep away the denominational fog and confusion regarding the grace of God by resorting to the Bible for God's definition and divine instruction about grace.

Introduction:

1. The English word "grace" occurs 170 times in the Bible (KJV), 39 times in the Old Testament and 131 times in the New Testament.
 - a. The Greek word for "grace" appears 156 times in the Greek New Testament, and besides "grace" is translated as 'thanks,' "pleasure," "joy," "benefit," "acceptable," "favour" and "liberality"; Jesus Christ used the Greek word for "grace" four times (translated as 'thanks'), Luke 6:32-34; 17:9.
 - b. The respective Hebrew (chen) and Greek (charis) words that are translated as "grace" are equivalent to each other and mean "favor."
 - c. The most common and maybe simplistic definition of the extension of God's grace toward mankind is "unmerited favor."
2. After only a little contemplation, then, it is certain that God's grace toward mankind is reflected in both testaments of the Bible and under all three religious dispensations (i.e., Patriarchy, Judaism and Christianity).
 - a. However, there is much confusion in the religious world respecting the grace of God (e.g., Calvinism, Universalism, unconditional grace, conditional grace).
 - b. One can only sweep away the denominational fog and confusion regarding the grace of God by resorting to the Bible for God's definition and divine instruction about grace.

Body:

I. God's grace defined.

- A. The Hebrew word "chen" means "to favor someone"¹ and is the Old Testament counterpart of the Greek word "charis."
- B. The Greek word "charis" when referring to God's grace toward humanity means unmerited favor.
 - 1. However, charis has several other meanings depending on the contexts in which it appears.
 - 2. "In secular Greek of all periods it is also a very common word, and in both Biblical and secular Greek it is used with far more meanings than can be represented by any one term in English."²
- C. Otherwise, God's grace in both testaments is represented as the Divine's best special attention, motivated by boundless love, toward his humble creation, man.
 - 1. "Grace is the beauty of God expressed toward man."³
 - 2. Essentially, the grace of God is taught whenever the "whole counsel of God" is taught, and faithful preachers have not failed to preach God's grace, Acts 20:27, ASV.
 - 3. "Salvation in Christ is received by the grace of God. This was true on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2) and has been true in each case of genuine conversion ever since. Brethren have believed, preached and on occasion defended this great doctrine of grace as revealed in the Bible. It is an unfair and erroneous charge to assert that brethren now and in the past do not and did not believe that salvation in Christ is received by the grace of God."⁴

II. The grace of God in both testaments.

- A. Patriarchy.
 - 1. Gen. 6:8.
 - 2. Exod. 34:6.
- B. Judaism.
 - 1. Psa. 84:11.
 - 2. "Who would say that there was no grace under the

Old Testament? Was it not by the grace of God that the Israelites journeyed in the wilderness? Was it not God's grace that fed them mamma [sic] in the wilderness? Was it not God's grace that took them safely over the Jordan? Was it not God's grace that protected them from the heathen in the new land? In fact, was it not God's grace that saved them from the land of Egypt?"⁵

C. Christianity.

1. John 1:17.
2. Acts 11:23; 13:43; 20:24.
3. Rom. 1:5; 3:24; 4:4; 5:1-2, 20; 6:1-4, 14-15; 16:20-24.
4. 2 Cor. 6:1.
5. Gal. 1:6; 5:4.
6. Eph. 2:8-9.
7. Col. 1:5-6.
8. 2 Thess. 2:16.
9. Titus 2:11.
10. Heb. 2:9; 4:16; 12:28.
11. 1 Pet. 1:13.
12. 2 Pet. 3:18.

III. The significance of New Testament references to God's Grace.

A. John 1:17.

1. "...John 1:17...Certainly the Law was inferior to the gospel, but this text does not teach that there was no grace in the Law, nor does it teach that there is no law under the gospel of grace. In the first place, it should be obvious that the Law given through Moses excluded neither grace nor truth. Although the New Testament provides a clearer view of grace, the Law itself was not antagonistic to it."⁶
2. To suppose from John 1:17 that God's grace was not included in the Old Testament would require one to equally erroneously conclude that there was no truth in the Old Testament, Psa. 25:10.
3. John 1:17 does not teach that the testaments are

antagonistic toward each other or that grace is absent in the Old Testament, or that grace in the New Testament excludes law keeping, but John 1:17 represents the personification of the grace of God in the very person of God the Son incarnate.

- B. Rom. 5:1-2.
 - 1. Grace is available through faith, which itself comes from the Word of God, Rom. 10:17.
 - 2. The faith by which God's grace is attainable is the 'obedient faith' with which the apostle Paul prefaced and concluded the Epistle of Romans, Rom. 1:5; 16:26.
- C. Eph. 2:8-9.
 - 1. Faith is the doorway through which anyone approaches the grace of God.
 - 2. The *type of works* about which Paul wrote to the Ephesians is meritorious, which cannot save.
- D. Titus 2:11-12.
 - 1. The grace of God saves and that grace has been presented to all mankind.
 - 2. However, the grace of God must not be *grace only* since not everyone will be saved, Matt. 7:13-14; 21-23.
 - 3. The grace of God requires compliance with or obedience to New Testament instruction.

IV. There is a grave difference between denominational teaching about the grace of God and what the Bible actually teaches about the grace of God.

- A. Calvinism teaches an abbreviated form of Universalism, but both Calvinism and Universalism are grossly inconsistent with what the Bible teaches about the grace of God.
 - 1. Calvinism and Universalism teach "grace only," except that Calvinism restricts its application to a select number of certain persons whereas Universalism supposes that every soul will receive the saving grace of God.
 - 2. Nowhere does the Bible teach "grace only," which would negate every other activity of God and man

- relative to salvation (e.g., obedience, Heb. 5:8-9).
3. “We are saved by grace, but **NOT BY GRACE ONLY!** If salvation were by ‘grace only’ then it would logically follow that all men should be saved for Titus 2:11-12 says, ‘For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath **appeared to all men...**’ God’s grace has appeared to ALL MEN. Therefore, if salvation is by ‘grace only’ then all men have been saved! If anyone then is lost, it is God’s fault for man has nothing to do with it. But such is not the case.”⁷
 4. “It is clear then that God's grace is to all people, for all people alike, and that it is available for every person who was ever born on earth (Titus 2:11). If then, salvation is by grace only, all people are already saved; for God's grace has appeared to all. Christ himself, however, taught that all people will not be saved; and the only intelligent reconciliation of those twin facts lies in accepting the premise of human salvation's being conditional, that is, made to turn upon human acceptance of it through human compliance with the conditions upon which God through Christ and the apostles promised it.”⁸
 5. “If salvation is by grace alone, it would eliminate all need for preaching the gospel since all would be saved, whether they hear it and obey it or not. ...The grace is on God’s part, and the faith is on man’s part. ...God has chosen to save only those who accept His grace, through faith. It is God’s grace that saves, but an obedient faith is essential in order for His grace to be applied. ...Grace is God’s gift to man but it is not an unconditional gift.”⁹
- B. The grace of God is the manifestation of his love toward humanity in such a way that affords him the opportunity to redeem fallen man without compromising his holiness, 1 Pet. 1:16.
1. “...God’s grace does not mean (and does not provide for) the circumstance in which God just

overlooks sin. ...There has ever been the tendency upon the part of humans to try to ‘galvanize sin into respectability.’”¹⁰

2. For God to simply *ignore* human sins would dethrone him from being our holy God, Isa. 59:1-3.

C. The grace of God is **conditional** upon an obedient response by those who that grace saves.

1. “There is no question but that we are saved by the grace of God (Eph. 2:8). However, we must appropriate the grace of God unto ourselves through faith which comes by hearing the Word of God and by obeying his commands which set us free from sin (Rom. 10:17; 6:17-18). The apostle Paul ties faith and grace together...(Rom. 5:1-2).”¹¹
2. “I have an allotted task to perform. My performance of this task is not meritorious (Eph. 2:8,9). I can never do enough to deserve salvation (Luke 17:10). Yet, without doing the will of the Father in heaven, I can never enter into the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 7:21). I do not nullify God’s part (Grace) by doing my part (Obedient Faith).”¹²
3. “Grace is God’s part of our salvation and demonstrating faith is man’s part.”¹³

V. The relationship of obedience and God’s grace.

A. Reception of God’s grace today is conditional upon man’s obedience to the “perfect law of liberty”—the Gospel or New Testament, Jam. 1:25; 2:12.

1. “We are under the perfect law of liberty (James 1:25). We are under the law of Christ (Gal. 6:2). We are under the law of faith (Rom. 3:27). And we are under the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus (Rom. 8:2). In fact, we are even told that the saving grace that God has so freely given unto us obligates us to live in a certain manner (Titus 2:11-12). How is it, that in light of these passages, some among us are saying that we are not under law?”¹⁴
2. One resists the grace of God by purposely

committing sin, for which rebellion one will be severely and eternally punished by a wrathful God, Heb. 10:26-29.

3. “‘Grace’ is God’s ‘favor’ upon us, which we do not and could not deserve. Through Christ, God has given us what we need rather than what we deserve. However, we can receive God’s grace only as we accept **the conditions which God attaches to it** (2 Corinthians 6:1).”¹⁵
4. “While the gospel is a legal system, it does not destroy grace. Neither do conditions minimize nor in any way reflect upon grace. A human will is a legal document. If someone were to select you to be a beneficiary of his will, that is grace. If he adds conditions to the inheritance, it is still grace, for he does not have to include you either with or without conditions. ... Without doubt one is justified by grace (Eph. 2:8-9). But the grace is appropriated to oneself through faith that is expressed in overt acts of obedience. ... the grace of God is made available through faith that is active, that is obedient.”¹⁶
5. “If men are saved, they are saved by the grace of God (Tit. 2:11; Eph. 2:8-9; Acts 15:11; et al.). No one is--or can be--saved by *meritorious* works (Eph. 2:8-9; Rom. 11:6; et al.). But this truth does *not* mean that men are saved *only* by grace (on the part of God) without *any* works at all (on the part of men). If grace were the *only* consideration, then *all* men would be saved (Tit. 2:11). Yet, Jesus made clear that “few” would be saved, in contrast to the “many” who would be lost (Matt. 7:21-23). While God offers--through His grace--salvation to *all* men (Tit. 2:11; cf.: John 3:16; Heb. 2:9), this offer is not unconditional! God offers salvation to all men, but He conditions that offer with the *contingency* that men by faith lovingly *obey* the requirements which are set out in God’s word. Even though men are saved by the grace of God—and not by any meritorious works—it is still

the case that Jesus taught that it is those who do the will of God who enter the kingdom of God (Matt. 7:21-23).”¹⁷

- B. That the grace of God anticipates a judgment of the works of man to receive his eternal habitation shows that God’s grace is conditional, Ecc. 12:13-14; 2 Cor. 5:10; Rev. 20:12; 1 Pet. 1:17.

VI. The relationship of faith and God’s grace.

- A. The apostle Paul.
 - 1. Rom. 5:1-2; Eph. 2:8-9; Titus 2:11-12.
 - 2. Faith is obviously the vehicle through which God’s grace is attained.
- B. The apostle Peter.
 - 1. Peter tied faith and grace together as they relate to salvation, 1 Pet. 1:9-10.
 - 2. Faith is obviously as essential to salvation as grace, and faith, to be acceptable to God, must be living and active, Jam. 2:14-26; Heb. 11.
- C. Faith—and acts of faith (obedience)—appropriate God’s grace to man.
 - 1. “Although we are saved by grace, that does not mean that there are no conditions, no commands to obey, and no responsibilities on man’s part. ...God has extended his grace to man in making it possible for man to be saved. Now man must reach up by faith to accept that grace. Faith comes by hearing the Word of God (Romans 10:17). ...But grace cannot apply to those who reject God’s grace by refusing to obey him.”¹⁸
 - 2. The grace of God is ineffective toward disobedient souls, 2 Thess. 1:7-9.
- D. There are several elements to which the Bible attributes saving power, which elements represent activity on both the divine and human side of redemption.
 - 1. The Godhead’s parts to human salvation include: grace, Eph. 2:8-9; mercy, Titus 3:5; the blood of Jesus Christ, Col. 1:14; revealing the Gospel, Rom. 1:16; 2 Pet. 1:21; sending a Savior, John 1:16.
 - 2. Mankind’s parts to human salvation include: faith,

John 8:24; hope, Rom. 8:24; repentance, Luke 13:3; confessing Christ, Rom. 10:9-10; baptism, Acts 10:48; faithfulness, Rev. 2:10; obedience, Heb. 5:8-9.

3. God doing his parts regarding human redemption does not cancel human participation, and men doing their parts regarding human redemption does not cancel divine participation.

VII. The relationship of works to God's Grace.

- A. The New Testament teaches both that works displace God's grace and that works are required to appropriate God's grace.
 1. Does Paul (Romans) contradict James (2:14-26)?
 2. "If only **one kind of 'works'** is under consideration, the contradiction is unresolvable; but, if **two different kinds of 'works'** are under discussion, there is no contradiction."¹⁹
- B. There is a type of works that is counter to God's grace.
 1. Rom. 4:4-5 describes meritorious works that were characteristic of the Old Law, which works are antagonistic toward God's grace.
 2. "In the Romans letter, Paul talks about the elimination of the dispensation and not about elimination of obedience to Christ."²⁰
 3. "The works condemned are those which seek to put God under obligation, to receive one's deserved standing before God..."²¹
 4. "Works of the law of Moses, works of human merit, works of man's device or origination, etc., do not and will not save by the grace of God."²²
- C. There is a type of works that is necessary to enjoy God's grace.
 1. "God does not require man to earn salvation, but rather gives salvation to those who trust and obey. ...It is not unconditional favor for those who do not seek to please Him."²³
 2. "While some men may not like it, the Bible still teaches that even though men are not saved by *meritorious* works, they are saved by the *works*

which God demands (Jas. 2:24) in the sense that they *cannot* be saved by the *grace* of God *without* doing these *works*! This is the case in spite of the fact that after one has obeyed these works, he is still to recognize that salvation from sin is a *gift*, not a *wage* (Rom. 6:23; cf. Lk. 17:10).”²⁴

D. Baptism is incorrectly said by proponents of *grace only* to be a meritorious work.

1. “...old fallacy...If you think that people must be baptized to be saved, you then will have to insist that they will have to comply with every commandment in the scriptures, every Christian duty, meet every obligation and keep the whole law letter-perfect or there could be no salvation. This fallacy assumes baptism is meritorious and that the individual saves himself by meeting the demands of a legal system. Since this is the ground of his salvation, then he will have to meet all the demands of this legal system. This is untrue. This is not our teaching concerning baptism and, therefore, has no value as an argument at all.”²⁵
2. The same Scriptures that teach of faith, repentance, confessing Christ, etc. also teach that man has human responsibility respecting being immersed for the remission of his sins, Acts 2:38; 22:16; Rom. 6:3-5; Col. 2:12; 1 Pet. 3:21.

Conclusion:

1. Grace is but one of several elements to which the Bible attributes saving power.
2. Some elements to which are attributed in the Bible saving power are the responsibility of God, whereas other elements to which are attributed in the Bible saving power are the responsibility of mankind (e.g., grace—God; faith, obedience—man).
3. “Ephesians 2:8,9...Thus is declared: (1) man’s salvation is the gift of God; and that (2) this salvation has two sides: there is the divine side, and there is the human side—God’s side and man’s side. The grace side, divine side, involves (includes)

everything which God has done in order to make it possible for a human being to be saved. The faith side—the human side—includes everything which God requires of the human being in order for him/her to be saved. Always in God’s plan the availing faith is the live, active, working, obedient faith. Specifically, this availing faith cause one to **repent** of his/her sins, to **confess** his/her faith in the Christ, to **be baptized** for the remission of sins, and to **live righteously** in this evil world.”²⁶

Invitation:

1. God’s grace was never intended to cover the sins of impenitent persons, Rom. 6:1-2.
 - a. “One who sins without compunction [without any uneasiness], and refuses to be penitent and try to live right is beyond the reach of the grace of God.”²⁷
 - b. “Even though we blunder and stumble, there is mercy and forgiveness, provided we are not rebels or willful and habitual sons of disobedience.”²⁸
2. The conditional nature of God’s grace requires obedience to the Word of God.
 - a. “First, the grace of God is universally available to the human family through His Son. ...Secondly, the Bible clearly teaches that the Lord’s grace is conditional. ... But thirdly, if it is to avail, the grace of God must be continued in.”²⁹
 - b. “Even after I have done all that God has asked me to do, I still don’t **deserve** to be saved (Lk. 17:10). Yet, I cannot be saved without obedience (Heb. 5:8,9). I must remind myself that my salvation is not **deserved** because I obey, yet my salvation is not possible if I do not obey. Let us show appreciation for God’s amazing grace by submitting to his terms of obedience in hearing, believing, repenting, confessing, being baptized and living faithful lives.”³⁰
 - c. “Men are *saved* by the *grace* of God *when* their *faith* leads them, as penitent believers, to be *baptized* in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of their sins (Acts 2:38).”³¹
3. What have you done with the grace of God, Rom. 10:17; 5:1-2; Heb. 5:8-9; Acts 3:19; Rom. 10:9-10; Acts 22:16; Rev. 2:10.

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Are You Prepared?

Ezra 7:10

Thesis: To encourage Christians and non-Christians alike to prepare themselves of Christian service now and eternity to come.

Song: *Is Thy Heart Right With God?*

Introduction:

1. Obviously, Ezra was a prophet of God who did not take his prophetic office lightly.
 - a. Ezra made a four-fold effort to serve God.
 - b. He prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord.
 - c. He performed the law of the Lord.
 - d. He taught the law of the Lord to others.
 - e. He familiarized himself with the statutes and judgments of God.
2. Likewise, all Christians should endeavor to serve God.
 - a. Preachers need to make the special preparation and effort characteristic of Ezra.
 - b. Elders also need to imitate Ezra.
 - c. Deacons can learn how to serve well and conscientiously from the example of Ezra.
 - d. All Christians should endeavor to serve God with as much fervor and enthusiasm as Ezra.

Body:

- I. **We need to prepare our hearts to seek the law of the Lord.**
 - A. Preparation of the heart is precisely the place to begin serving God.
 1. Jesus taught that evil or goodness proceed from the heart, Matt. 15:18-19; 5:28.
 2. Righteous servants of God are first righteous in their hearts, Matt. 5:8.
 3. Christians should imitate the very heart of Jesus, Matt. 11:29.
 4. Whatever a soul is outwardly, he is first in his heart!

5. We are what we think in our hearts, Phil. 4:8.
- B. Our hearts must not seek any law other than the law of the Lord.
 1. For instance, other gospels are not THE Gospel, Gal. 1:6-9; Rev. 22:18-19.
 2. Pursuing the spirit or the laws of sectarianism (within or out of the church) is not instilling in our hearts the law of the Lord, Matt. 15:9; 1 Cor. 1:10-13.
- C. We must seek ONLY the law of the Lord.
 1. Jesus Christ refused to give his allegiance to Satan by resorting to the written law of the Lord, Matt. 4:10.
 2. Allegiance to other gods and embracing their laws is a grave offense to God, Exod. 20:4-5; 34:14; Deut. 6:14-15.

II. We need to do the law of the Lord.

- A. It is not enough to know and **not do** the law of the Lord.
 1. The sin of omission is as deadly as any sin one might commit, Jam. 4:17.
 2. We kid ourselves if we think that knowing God's Word without putting it into practice will permit us to live in heaven with God, Jam. 1:22.
- B. It is not enough to merely believe the law of the Lord.
 1. Faith without works is wholly useless, Jam. 2:14-17, 20, 24, 26.
 2. Faith without demonstrating it in corresponding activity is no more productive than the faith of "devils," Jam. 2:18-19.
- C. A person must first practice the law of the Lord himself before he could possibly be an effective teacher of the law of the Lord.
 1. Consequently, the Pharisees of Jesus' day were poor instructors, Matt. 23:2-3.
 2. Jesus Christ is the perfect teacher, partly because he first obeyed the law of the Lord, Heb. 5:8-9.

III. We need to teach the law of the Lord.

- A. Naturally, preachers must teach the law of the Lord.
 1. The apostle Paul commanded Timothy to preach

- the Word of God, 2 Tim. 4:2.
- 2. Preachers are authorized by God and thereby obligated to preach the Word of God, Titus 2:15.
- B. Elders must be able to teach the law of the Lord.
 - 1. One of the qualifications for the appointment of elders includes boldly (if necessary) teaching the law of the Lord in the face of opposition, Titus 1:9.
 - 2. Another qualification of elders is to be an able and willing teacher of the law of the Lord, 2 Tim. 3:2.
- C. All Christians share the obligation to teach the law of the Lord.
 - 1. Every Christian according to ability and opportunity has the responsibility to teach the law of the Lord, 2 Tim. 2:24.
 - 2. Each of us is required to give answers of those who would enquire of us regarding the practice of our religion, 1 Pet. 3:15.

IV. We need to ground ourselves in the statutes and judgments of God.

- A. We should not seek to edify ourselves with other doctrines.
 - 1. Any doctrine besides the doctrine of Christ is evil, 2 John 9-11.
 - 2. Only the law of the Lord is approved doctrine, 2 Tim. 3:16-17.
- B. We should not follow false teachers.
 - 1. Impenitent false teachers must have a proverbial *cowbell* hung around their necks, Rom. 16:17-18.
 - 2. The teaching of every teacher or preacher must be examined in light of what the law of the Lord teaches, 1 John 4:1.
- C. We can only nourish our spiritual bodies by feasting on the law of the Lord.
 - 1. We do this through studying or meditating on the law of the Lord, 2 Tim. 2:15.
 - 2. A regular diet of the law of the Lord will make strong Christians, 2 Pet. 2:2; Heb. 5:12-6:2.
 - 3. Only then will Christians be grounded in the faith, Col. 2:6-7; 1:23.

Conclusion:

1. Each of us should imitate the worthy example of Ezra.
 - a. We should prepare our hearts to seek the law of the Lord.
 - b. We should do the law of the Lord, which for everyone now living is the New Testament or Gospel — the perfect law of liberty, Jam. 1:25.
 - c. We should teach the law of the Lord.
 - d. We should ground ourselves in the law of the Lord.
2. If Christians everywhere imitated the noble example of Ezra, the church would grow stronger spiritually and numerically.
 - a. There is widespread failure throughout the brotherhood PREPARE, SEEK, DO and TEACH.
 - b. This failure partly hinders every congregation of the Lord's church, including here and wherever else this sermon could be preached.

Invitation:

1. Heaven is a prepared place for a prepared people; have you made adequate preparation to spend eternity in heaven?
2. If not, erring Christians must repent and return to the Lord, while unbaptized believers must repent and be baptized for the remission of their sins, Acts 8:22; 2:36-38.

Sins of Good People in the Church

1 Peter 4:17

Thesis: To emphasize the necessity of Christians being completely holy, pure and obedient.

Song: *More Holiness Give Me*

Introduction:

1. There are three kinds of people in the Lord's church.
 - a. There are good people as God counts goodness, those who have obeyed the Gospel and continue to be faithful, Acts 2:47; Mark 16:16; Heb. 5:8-9; Rev. 2:10.
 - b. There are morally good people, nevertheless, who are unfaithful to the Lord, 1 Cor. 3:1-3; Heb. 5:12-14; Rev. 2:4; 3:14-19.
 - c. There are people who are backsliders, 2 Pet. 2:20-22.
2. Whereas the good people as God counts goodness are spiritually secure, those Christians who are merely morally good people and those erring Christians who have turned back to the ungodly world stand condemned before Almighty God.
3. Each of us needs to ask himself in what category before God he or she stands, and make a spiritual examination, 2 Cor. 13:5.
4. For a few moments, let's survey some *sins of good people in the church*.

Body:

I. Omission of Duty.

- A. With knowledge comes responsibility, Jam. 4:17.
- B. In addition to enumerating one's unforgiven sins, final judgment will note what was left undone, Matt. 25:31-46.
- C. Faith without works of obedience will not suffice in judgment, Jam. 2:14-26.

II. Loss of One's First Love.

- A. Is your heart still in Christianity, Rev. 2:4?
- B. Where has the zeal gone that you had when you first

obeyed the Gospel?

- C. Jesus Christ told the Ephesian Christians, through the pen of the apostle John, that they had to repent, Rev. 2:5.

III. Becoming Lukewarm.

- A. Our Lord condemned the church of Laodicea because its members had become apathetic and indifferent, Rev. 3:14-19.
- B. Christians are supposed to be zealous of good works, Titus 2:14.

IV. Violating the Golden Rule.

- A. Jesus taught that the children of God are to treat all people in the way we desire others to treat us, Matt. 7:12.
- B. Further, Christians are supposed to have a preferential regard for fellow Christians, Rom. 12:10; 1 Pet. 2:17.

V. Practicing a Surface Religion.

- A. Are you distracted from New Testament Christianity by the least temptation, Luke 8:13?
- B. The writer of Hebrews warned to guard against unbelief developing in our hearts, after which we depart from the Lord, Heb. 3:12.

VI. Choking our Christianity with Worldly Cares and Pleasures.

- A. In the Parable of the Soils, seed (the Word of God) sown among thorns was unfruitful because of cares, riches, lusts and pleasures, Luke 8:14; Mark 4:18.
- B. The cares for physical things in this world should be secondary to concern for seeking our Lord first, Matt. 6:25-34 (33).
- C. The quest for riches can be ruinous, 1 Tim. 6:10.
- D. Lusts of the world are deadly, 1 John 2:15-17.
- E. The pleasures of sin are elusive and temporary, Heb. 11:25.

VII. Compromise of Truth to Please Family.

- A. The Gospel will divide families because of the ongoing conflict in the spiritual world, Matt. 10:35-38; Luke 12:51-53.
- B. Any sacrifices one may make in this life, including in one's family, will be amply compensated in the world to come, Matt. 19:29.

- C. Faithful Christians will love Jesus more than their family members, Matt. 10:37.

VIII. Quarrelsome in the church, at home or at work.

- A. Christians are to learn gentleness, meekness and patience, 2 Tim. 2:24-26.
- B. Jesus Christ himself was the perfect example to follow in meekness and gentleness, even in the face of his suffering and death, 1 Pet. 2:21-23.

IX. Covetousness.

- A. Covetousness or greediness for gain by illicit means is classified with other sins for which the wrath of God will visit sinners, Col. 3:5-6; Eph. 5:5.
- B. The children of God are supposed to lay up treasures in heaven rather than on earth, Matt. 6:19-21.

X. Discourteous and Unfriendly.

- A. Christians are supposed to be courteous, especially to brethren, 1 Pet. 3:8.
- B. In order to have and maintain friends, one must exhibit friendliness, Prov. 18:24.

XI. Envy.

- A. Envy and hate are some of the sins that we are supposed to have put away upon becoming Christians and is listed with sins that condemn souls to hell, Titus 3:3; Rom. 1:29.
- B. The older brother of the prodigal son, despite many other good qualities was guilty of envy, Luke 15:11-32.

XII. Desiring Preeminence.

- A. Diotrephes abused his brethren so he could rule the church, 3 John 9-10.
- B. The scribes and Pharisees during the ministry of Jesus Christ abused their fellows to seek preeminence over them, Matt. 23:1-9.

XIII. Burying One's Talents.

- A. Jesus told a parable about a servant who buried his talent (which was the name for a quantity of money then), Matt. 25:14-30.
- B. We must be fruitful to be pleasing to our Lord, John 15:1-8.
- C. There is something for every member of the church to do

in the service of Jesus Christ, 1 Cor. 12:12-31.

XIV. Failing to Bridle the Tongue and Control One's Temper.

- A. James wrote that to not bridle one's tongue is to make his religion "vain," Jam. 1:26; 3:3-13.
- B. Angry words are not to be answered with angry words, Prov. 15:1.
- C. Unjustified anger, which fuels angry words, is listed among the sins not to be named among faithful Christians, Col. 3:8-9.

XV. Being Too Critical.

- A. Non-disciples and disciples of Jesus Christ were critical of him, Mark 14:1-11.
- B. Jesus Christ condemned unrighteous judgment, Matt. 7:1-5.

Conclusion:

- 1. Do we need to tweak our Christian living?
- 2. Are there sins of which we are guilty, by which we threaten our only heavenly hereafter and discourage the Lord's church?
- 3. Sin left unrepented and unforgiven once time is no more will condemn even children of God, Rom. 6:23; Heb. 10:26.

Invitation:

- 1. Does sin separate you from your God, Isa. 59:1-3?
- 2. Erring Christians must repent, 1 John 1:9.
- 3. God desires all mankind to repent and turn to him, 2 Pet. 3:9; Acts 17:30-31; Acts 2:38.

Contentment

1 Timothy 6:6-8

Thesis: To encourage especially brethren to seek contentment instead of materialism and hedonism.

Song: *Sing and Be Happy*

Introduction:

1. Materialism is, “preoccupation with or emphasis on material objects, comforts, and considerations, as opposed to spiritual or intellectual values.” (*Webster’s Talking Dictionary*)
2. Hedonism is, “1. the doctrine that pleasure or happiness is the highest good. 2. devotion to pleasure and self-gratification as a way of life.” (*Ibid.*)
3. The world frantically chases materialism and hedonism and never derives contentment.
4. Unfortunately, even Christians relentlessly pursue materialism and hedonism, and by such pursuits they, too, fail to achieve contentment.
5. However, the Bible commands the child of God and provides instruction how to find contentment in this life.

Body:

I. Biblical Commands and Instruction How to Develop Contentment.

- A. God requires his children to pursue contentment.
 1. The apostle Paul, by inspiration, wrote that Christians should seek what they need and be little concerned about what they want, 1 Tim. 6:6-8.
 2. Likewise, the writer of Hebrews urges Christians to be happy with the necessary things of life as opposed to being dissatisfied in lacking optional things, Heb. 13:5.
 3. Earlier, John the Baptist also taught the pursuit of contentment, Luke 3:14.
 4. The apostle Paul even taught learning contentment respecting the socio-economic class in which one

finds himself, 1 Cor. 7:17-24.

- B. God's Word provides instructions how to achieve contentment in this life.
 - 1. We can learn contentment by seeking spiritual things first, Matt. 6:19-34 (33).
 - 2. We can develop contentment through our happy homes, Ecc. 9:9.
 - 3. Practicing righteousness makes for contentment, Psa. 37:16; Prov. 14:14; 16:8; Heb. 11:25-36.
 - 4. We should set our hearts on neither poverty nor great riches, Prov. 30:8-9.
 - 5. We should seek a tranquil life, Ecc. 4:6.
 - 6. Mankind needs to discipline his appetite for acquisition of things, Ecc. 6:7, 9.

II. The apostle Paul is an example of contentment.

- A. He suffered forfeitures, hardships and persecutions, but still developed contentment.
 - 1. Paul no longer prided himself in the type of things in which men usually pride themselves, Phil. 3:4-9.
 - 2. This apostle suffered hardships and severe persecutions for the cause of Christ, to whom he entrusted himself and in whom he found contentment, 2 Cor. 11:23-28; Acts 16:22-25.
- B. Paul's personal leisure and pleasures were not the focus of his Christian living and Christian service.
 - 1. In whatever state he found himself that afforded him the ability to practice Christianity was satisfactory, Phil. 4:11-13.
 - 2. Jesus Christ counseled his disciples that their priorities should be on spiritual pursuits and the material needs would take care of themselves, Matt. 6:25-34 (33).

III. Alternatives to Contentment.

- A. One's quality of life can become impaired.
 - 1. We can experience needless anxieties and worries, Matt. 6; Ecc. 4:6.
 - 2. Insatiable appetites for material goods and pleasure bring unhappiness, Ecc. 6:7, 9.
- B. Failure to achieve contentment in this life is displeasing

to God.

1. Covetousness is one of the sins that Jesus said defiles a man, Mark 7:21-23; Rom. 13:9.
2. Our hearts are to be set on things above, not on things on this earth, Col. 3:2.
3. Purposing to be rich will ruin one's soul, 1 Tim. 6:9-10.
4. All of the riches in the world and the world itself cannot satisfactorily equal the value of a soul in a right relationship with God, Matt. 16:26.

Conclusion:

1. The Bible alone holds the key to contentment.
2. Christians are commanded to seek contentment.
3. The pleasures of sin for a season cannot produce contentment.
4. Relying on Jesus Christ and the Word of God can lead us to contentment.
5. The only alternatives to contentment in this life are unhappiness and eternal doom.

Invitation:

1. Genuine contentment begins with godliness and being in Christ, 1 Tim. 6:6-8; Phil. 4:13.
2. The unconverted must become children of God, being born again, John 3:5-7; 1 Pet. 3:21-23.
3. The erring child of God cannot be renewed until he returns to his Lord, Heb. 6:6; Acts 3:19.

Inviting Christ Into the Home

Genesis 2:18-25

Thesis: Christ in the home is the antithesis of Satan in the home; further, Jesus Christ in the home is a prerequisite to salvation and godly living.

Introduction:

1. Today, as we talk about the *home*, we are not discussing the houses in which we live, but the *family*.
 - a. The home or family had its beginning when God instituted marriage between Adam and Eve, Gen. 2:18-25.
 - b. From that point through the present, and as long as time continues, the home or family has been, is and will continue to be the basic unit of society.
 - c. Our nation and other nations of the world will continue to be great or falter largely due to the strength or weakness of its homes.
 - d. Many modern homes are utter failures because Christ does not reside in that home, but rather Satan is enthroned in those homes.
2. Our nation cannot continue to be great if family unit upon which it depends for its greatness continues to deteriorate.
 - a. The widespread pursuit of *materialism* and *licentious living* continues to undermine the stability of the home in this nation and throughout the world.
 - b. Also, irresponsibly contracted marriages, neglect of divine instruction regarding marriage and the home, rampant divorce as well as broken homes undercut the stability of both the nation and the Lord's church.
 - c. The *answer* to the ruined homes and the subsequent ruining of the nation is to *invite Christ into the home*.

Body:

I. Jesus Christ Is Needed in Today's Homes.

- A. Jesus Christ is no intruder; he will not come into a home in which he is not welcome.
 - 1. Through providence and the Gospel, every home in which Jesus is a welcome guest will be wonderfully blessed.
 - 2. No home, into which Jesus enters, is more corrupt or irreligious because our Lord is there, but rather that home is lifted up in spirituality.
 - 3. Homes in which Jesus is welcome are schools for children whose pliable souls are molded for earthly habitation now and their eternal abode in heaven with God.
- B. Christ will enter homes where he is welcome and bless those homes with the blessings they need.
 - 1. Jesus visited the home of Peter and Andrew and healed Peter's mother-in-law, Mark 1:29-31.
 - 2. Jesus visited the home of Jairus and resurrected his daughter, Mark 5:22-24, 35-42.
 - 3. Our Lord entered the home of Mary and Martha and taught them divine truth, Luke 10:38-42.
 - 4. When Jesus visited the home of Zacchaeus, he pronounced salvation upon his host, Luke 19:1-10.
- C. Jesus Christ is needed in today's homes in times of sickness (or any affliction).
 - 1. The sinful life loses its appeal when one faces great illness.
 - 2. Typically, people are drawn closer to God when they or their loved ones are facing great sickness, Psa. 119:67, 71; Jam. 5:13-16; 2 Cor. 12:1-10; Jam. 1:2-4; Rom. 5:3-5.
 - 3. Christian homes are usually better prepared to accept, endure and profit from sickness than homes that do not know the Lord.
 - 4. There is an abiding sense of hopelessness in the homes where people are seriously ill physically and spiritually, possibly even facing death outside of Christ.

5. Christians, though, have a real friend in Jesus in both life and death.
- D. Jesus Christ is needed in today's homes when death interrupts family fellowship.
1. Preachers, family and friends can offer a little consolation to the families of departed Christians, but without Christ in the home, the bereaved can only experience utter despair at the loss of a loved one, 2 Cor. 1:3-4.
 2. The fact that departed loved ones will be reunited with their family members who are in Christ is a great relief afforded only to Christians.
 3. Therefore, Jesus Christ is needed in the face of death.
- E. Jesus Christ is needed in today's homes to uplift the speech in the home.
1. Of the about 4,800 words usually spoken daily in every home, they can be angry or kind, inspiring or destructive, pure or sensual, religious or profane, dignified or unworthy.
 2. Words can build homes or destroy families, mend or fester wounds, make happy marriages or broken homes.
 3. Consequently, the Bible often addresses the importance of the words that we speak, Matt. 12:36-37; Jam. 3:1-12; Prov. 25:11; Eph. 4:29; Col. 4:6.
- F. Jesus Christ is needed in today's homes to bring salvation to its occupants.
1. No physical need outweighs the human need for salvation.
 2. The words of Jesus Christ are powerful and responsible for the creation and sustaining of the universe, John 1:1-3; Col. 1:15-17; Heb. 1:3.
 3. The words of Christ will be used in the Judgment to determine the eternal disposition of every soul, Heb. 4:12; John 12:48; 6:63.
 4. The words of Jesus Christ are also powerful unto the salvation of souls, John 8:24; Luke 13:3; Matt.

10:32; Mark 16:16.

5. Christ in the home is the most pressing need of the family in this or any century, especially respecting the salvation of souls.

II. Jesus Christ in Today's Homes Makes Them Stronger.

A. The needs of the home can be better achieved with Christ in the home rather than without Jesus as the Divine Guest in the home.

1. Jesus in the home helps offset the ungodly influence of the lost world on the home's occupants, John 17:15-16; 1 John 2:15-17.
2. Jesus in the home helps reduce and solve marital problems, Eph. 5:25-33.
3. Jesus in the home helps moms and dads properly execute their parental responsibilities, Eph. 4:1-6.
4. Jesus Christ as a member of the Godhead instituted the home and is amply able to instruct it.
5. Jesus Christ should, therefore, be a welcome guest at the marriage altar, at the birth of children, in good times and bad, and always be a reliable resource to whom each person in the home can appeal.

B. Jesus Christ in the home ensures companionship and happiness.

1. Marriage was instituted and the home created, in part, that a man and a woman would be companions and be happy, Gen. 2:18-25.
2. Husbands and wives who accept the evolutionary lie that they are merely highly developed animals, without Christ in their homes, are not equipped for lives of love, happiness and lifelong companionship.
3. God has always intended marriage to be a permanent relationship between a man, a woman and God, Matt. 5:32; 19:1-9.
4. With Jesus Christ in the home, marriages will exhibit mutual love between the husband and the wife, Eph. 5:25-33.

C. Jesus Christ in the home promotes purity and fidelity.

1. A third of babies conceived are illegitimate and two thirds of marriages end with divorce.
 2. Premarital and extramarital sex occurs without restraint in modern society.
 3. However, Jesus said that only the pure in heart would will see God, Matt. 5:8.
 4. Purity begins in the heart, Matt. 5:27-28; Mark 7:20-23.
 5. The New Testament is replete with exhortations to avoid sexual sin, 1 Cor. 6:18-20; Gal. 5:19-21; 1 Thess. 4:3-7;
 6. The New Testament also is replete with exhortations to pursue purity, 1 Tim. 4:12; 5:2, 22; 2 Tim. 2:22.
 7. Purity and fidelity together pose the solution to one of the gravest problems confronting the church today, marital discord and disrespect for God's marriage instructions.
- D. Jesus Christ in the home will expunge from it one of the greatest attacks on the home in our time, alcohol.
1. The consumption of alcohol is linked with numerous heinous crimes and the widespread destruction of the home.
 2. Drinking alcoholic beverages is often associated with other sins as well, especially infidelity, Prov. 23:29-32.
 3. Drunkenness is a matter of degrees and is uniformly condemned in both testaments of the Bible, Prov. 20:1; 1 Cor. 6:10; Gal. 5:21.
- E. Jesus Christ in the home fosters forgiveness, kindness, courtesy and consideration.
1. To receive Divine forgiveness, one must be willing to forgive others, Matt. 6:14-15.
 2. Forgiving others is Christ-like, Col. 3:12-13.
 3. We are required to rebuke sinners and forgive them when they repent, Luke 17:3-4.
 4. Failure to admit wrong and failure to forgive wreck many marriages.
 5. The kindness, courtesy and consideration that

permeate courtship will make marriages happier and healthier.

6. Kindness is commanded of Christians, Eph. 4:32; Matt. 7:12.
7. All family members are responsible for contributing to the happiness and success of the home, and for this to occur, we need Christ in our homes.

Conclusion:

1. Christ in the home assures the best possible fortune for the home and a boundless source to which one can appeal for the solution of all family problems.
2. When the home welcomes Christ by exalting the Bible, the Bible and Christ in the home exalt the home.

Invitation:

1. Christ in each family member contributes to the happiness and success of the home, Gal. 3:27.
2. One can put Christ on in baptism by being buried into the likeness of our Lord's death by immersion, Rom. 6:3-5.
3. Erring Christians can put Christ back in their lives and back in their homes by repenting of their sins, 1 John 1:9.

Two Opinions

1 Kings 18:21

Thesis: To move Christians to faithfully live the Christianity they profess.

Introduction:

1. The background to the occasion of 1 Kings 18:21 and its surrounding verses include:
 - a. Ahab became king of the northern kingdom of Israel and was more wicked than any of his predecessors, 1 Kings 16:29-30.
 - b. Ahab married Jezebel, after which he introduced Baal worship into Israel, 1 Kings 16:31-33.
 - c. The prophet Elijah pronounced a three-year absence of rain because of the sins of Ahab, Jezebel and Israel, 1 Kings 17:1.
 - d. After three years, Elijah stages a confrontation between the prophets of Baal and himself to prove to Israel who the true God is, 1 Kings 18:1-45.
 - e. The site of this contest was Mt. Carmel on the seacoast.
2. The same question that Elijah posed to Israel in 1 Kings 18:21 needs asked in every generation.
 - a. The world needs to consciously choose between God and all alternatives (e.g., denominationalism, hedonism, materialism, evolution).
 - b. God's people need to consciously choose between following God faithfully and allowing worldly distractions to sidetrack them.
 - c. Every congregation, including this one, needs to answer the question, "...How long halt ye between two opinions? if the LORD *be* God, follow him..."

Body:

- I. **Christians have the responsibility of echoing Elijah's question before the communities in which they live.**
 - A. The Great Commission levies upon Christians the

responsibility to challenge the lost to follow God, Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16.

1. Those who do not pretend to be religious are among those to whom Christians must take God's saving Gospel, Rom. 1:16.
 2. Not only must Christians take the Gospel to those sometimes styled the *unchurched*, but we must take the Gospel to lost souls who are practicing vain religion, Matt. 15:9, 13 (e.g., denominations).
- B. Christians have their *prophets of Baal to slay*.
1. However, the weapons of our warfare are not carnal and literal, 2 Cor. 10:4.
 2. The Lord's kingdom and the kingdom of Satan are spiritual kingdoms, John 18:36; Matt. 26:52.
 3. Christians use the sword of the Spirit (the Word of God) and wear the Gospel armor, Eph. 6:11-17; Heb. 4:12.
- C. We, like Elijah, must rely on God to *slay the prophets of Baal* today.
1. Only through the power of God could Elijah stop rain for three years.
 2. Only through the power of God could Elijah call down fire from heaven and cause it to rain.
 3. We cannot save the lost without God.
 4. We cannot save the lost without the Gospel.

II. **Elijah's question needs to be posed to spiritual Israel today.**

- A. False doctrines taught within the church require the posing of the question, "...How long halt ye between two opinions? if the LORD *be* God, follow him..."
1. Departures from truth were predicted, Acts. 20:29-30.
 2. Therefore, Christians are required to test preachers, teachers and their words with the Word of God, 1 John 4:1.
 3. Some of the doctrinal errors taught within the church in our lifetimes include errors about marriage-divorce-and-remarriage, the role of women, the A.D. 70 theory, gimmickry, cultic

tactics, elders have no authority, the Holy Spirit, evolution, loosing God's authority where he did not loose and making laws where God did not make laws.

- B. Elijah's question needs to be posed within the church today because of widespread materialism.
 - 1. The love of money is still the root of all evil, 1 Tim. 6:10.
 - 2. Making the pursuit of riches one's primary goal in life still leaves one unprepared to meet God, Luke 12:16-21.
 - 3. It is still impossible to serve God foremost and seek money foremost, Matt. 6:24.
- C. Elijah's question needs to be posed within the church because of apathy among God's people.
 - 1. Losing one's first love and being lukewarm spiritually are still offenses to Jesus Christ, Rev. 2:4; 3:15-16.
 - 2. It is still the case as it was in Jeremiah's day that God's people often misrepresent themselves as faithful servants and true to the Word of God when they are not, Jer. 6:14 (e.g., "all is well").
- D. We as Elijah must call upon the Lord and encourage others to do so, too.
 - 1. Those who call upon the name of the Lord in an acceptable way will be saved, Rom. 10:13; Acts 22:16.
 - 2. Calling on the name of the Lord requires activity on our parts, Jam. 1:22; Matt. 7:21; Luke 6:46; Jam. 4:17.
- E. Christians must slay the prophets of Baal, today.
 - 1. For us, that includes defending the Gospel of Christ, Phil. 1:17.
 - 2. We must contend for the faith once and for all delivered to the saints, Jude 3.

Conclusion:

- 1. The world often halts between two opinions and usually follows Satan.
 - a. Only Christians can make a difference.

- b. God has no Elijahs today besides faithful Christians.
 - c. With an abiding sense of urgency, we need to take the Gospel to the whole world.
2. Denominationalism often halts between God's way and alternatives to God's way.
 - a. Only Christians can make the difference.
 - b. Again, Christians are the only Elijahs God has on earth today.
 - c. If Christians do not confront denominational error, who will?
 3. Christians often halt between two opinions.
 - a. Only faithful Christians can make a difference.
 - b. Faithful Christians are the only Elijahs God has on earth today to search and rescue the perishing.
 - c. Only faithful Christians can rebuke sinners, contradict false teachers and admonish weak brethren.
 4. What can we do?
 - a. Each child of God can begin by correcting shortcomings in his own life, Matt. 7:3; 2 Cor. 13:5.
 - b. Each child of God can uphold morally, financially and bodily church programs to convert the lost and restore fallen brethren, 2 Cor. 8:5.
 - c. **The church can do nothing unless we do something; we are the church!**

Invitation:

1. Who this day is willing to slay the prophets of Baal and overturn the heathen altars in his life?
2. Who will say as old Israel did after the prophets of Baal were slain, "The LORD, he *is* the God; the LORD, he *is* the God" in 1 Kings 18:39 by being baptized for the remission of his sins, Acts 2:38; 22:16?
3. Who will say as an erring Christian, "The LORD, he *is* the God; the LORD, he *is* the God" and heartily come back to the Lord penitently and in prayer, Acts 8:22; 1 John 1:9?

To Fulfill All Righteousness

Matthew 3:13-17

Thesis: Exposition of the baptism of Jesus.

Introduction:

1. Each of the Gospel accounts records the baptism of Jesus, with Matthew providing the most detailed information, Matt. 3:13-17; Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:21-23; John 1:29-34.
2. The baptism of John the Baptist is discussed in the Gospel records as well as the Book of Acts, Matt. 3:6-12; Mark 1:4-8; John 3:23; Acts 10:37; 13:24; 19:3-4.
3. John the Baptist was our Lord's cousin and he was six months older than Jesus.
 - a. However, this *may* have been the first time that Jesus and John had seen each other, John 1:33-34.
 - b. Jesus was reared in Galilean Nazareth while John the Baptist was reared in Judaea.
 - c. However, since John recognized Jesus as he approached, **Matt. 3:14**; John 1:29, before the baptism was administered, John saying he did not know Jesus before the baptism, may indicate that he did not *publicly acknowledge* Jesus as the Christ until that time, John 1:30-34.
4. John's baptism represented a ceremonial washing with which Jesus commenced his ministry as our Prophet, High Priest and King, Acts 3:22-23; Heb. 7:17-27; Matt. 21:5.

Body:

- I. **“Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him,” Matt. 3:13.**
 - A. Jesus traveled about 65 miles from Galilee to Judaea to be baptized by his cousin John.
 - B. The baptism of Jesus at the hands of John the Baptist marked the beginning of Jesus' public ministry.
 - C. Apparently, John the Baptist had begun his ministry to

prepare the way of the Lord six months previous to the baptism of Jesus, and both were about 30 years old, Luke 3:23.

II. “But John forbid him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?” Matt. 3:14.

- A. John resisted the request of Jesus to be baptized.
 - 1. “He was moved to strenuous protest against Jesus’ baptism by him.”¹
 - 2. “John knew the purpose of his baptism; he knew that all who had been baptized of him needed to be baptized, but he did not recognize in Jesus anything that would lead him to believe that Jesus need to be baptized of him.”²
 - 3. Clearly, Jesus Christ did not need to be baptized for the same reason for which John baptized every other person.
- B. John’s baptism involved repentance of sin and immersion in water for the remission of sins, Mark 1:4-5; Luke 3:3
 - 1. Those submitting to John’s baptism were penitent sinners, Matt. 3:5-6.
 - 2. John the Baptist acknowledged his frail, sinful humanity, **Matt. 3:14**.
 - 3. Significantly, he also recognized the sinlessness of the Son of God incarnate who approached him to be baptized, Heb. 4:15.

III. “And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer *it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered him,*” Matt. 3:15.

- A. The baptism of Jesus primarily served to anoint him as God’s priest, Heb. 5:5.
 - 1. “Jesus Himself declared the main purpose and meaning of this event in His words ‘It is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness’ (Matt 3:15). It was an act of ceremonial righteousness appropriate to His public entrance upon His mission as the Christ, which included His threefold office of Prophet, Priest, and King, especially the second, for the essence of His redemptive work lies in His consecration as a Priest, the Great High Priest. In

this office He offered not ‘the blood of goats and bulls,’ but Himself to put away sin (Heb 9:13-26). It is this consecration to His redemptive priesthood that comes into clearest view in His baptism in the Jordan. By ‘fulfilling all righteousness’ our Lord meant the righteousness of obedience to the Mosaic law. The Levitical law required all priests to be consecrated when they began to be about thirty years of age (Num 4:3; Luke 3:23). The consecration was twofold-first the washing (baptism), then the anointing (Ex 29:4-7; Lev 8:6-36). When John on the Jordan's bank ‘washed’ (baptized) Jesus, the heavens were opened, and the Holy Spirit came upon Him. This was the priestly anointing of Him who was not only a Priest by divine appointment but an eternal Priest (Ps 110:4) who was thus divinely consecrated for the work of redemption (Matt 3:16; Acts 4:27; 10:38).”³

2. “Others in being baptized confessed their sins; Jesus professed ‘all righteousness.’ He submitted, as part of the righteousness He undertook to fulfill, to be consecrated to His ministry in His 30th year, the age at which the Levites began their ministry...”⁴

B. Though Jesus Christ did not need John’s baptism to remove sins, our Lord was required to be baptized to obey the commandments of God, Heb. 5:8-9.

1. “...perfect holiness involves doing all God says to do, without rationalizing. Had Jesus refused or neglected to obey this precept of God, He would have failed, coming short of perfect righteousness.”⁵
2. “Had He not so completely done God’s will, His condemnation of the religious leaders (Mt. 21:25) would have had a hollow ring to it. This is why the Pharisees and Sadducees are so guilty: even if they were too self-deceived to see their need of repentance and forgiveness, at least they should have humbly submitted to be baptized by John ‘to

fulfill all righteousness!’ But, as it was, they doubly ‘rejected the counsel of God against themselves’ (Lk. 7:30).”⁶

- C. The baptism of Jesus, though, strictly speaking, is not an example to be duplicated today.
 - 1. James Burton Coffman observed in his commentary that Jesus was about 30 years old at the time, not an example of acceptable conduct regarding the Great Commission baptism.
 - 2. Further, Jesus had no sins for which to repent when he was baptized, again hardly an example for anyone submitting to the baptism of the Great Commission today.
 - 3. “Jesus was not baptized to give us an example that we should also be baptized. Rather, Jesus was baptized to give us an example of doing whatever God has commanded just because God had said to do it.”⁷
 - 4. By submitting to the ordinance of baptism, administered by John, Jesus showed himself willing to obey every righteous ordinance, Luke 1:6.

IV. “And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased,” Matt. 3:16-17.

- A. Being baptized in the Jordan River and coming out of the water after baptism implies immersion.
 - 1. Other passages indicate without doubt that Bible baptism is immersion, Rom. 6:3-5; Col. 2:12.
 - 2. The Greek words for baptism and baptize mean to immerse, dip, plunge or submerge.
- B. The heavens opened and the Father speaking as the Holy Spirit descended marked the anointing of the Christ to his saving ministry as high priest.
 - 1. Luke records that between the baptism of Jesus and the heavens being opened, Jesus prayed publicly,

- Luke 3:21.
2. All three persons of the Godhead (Trinity) are mentioned in the same breath.
 3. Likewise, all three persons of the Godhead appear in Matthew's account of the Great Commission, Matt. 28:18-20.
- C. The Holy Spirit descended "bodily" like a dove.
1. The dove was an ancient symbol of purity and innocence.
 2. "(1) The dove was a "clean" creature under the ceremonial laws of the Jews; (2) it was used in their religious sacrifices, two, in fact, being offered upon the presentation of our Lord in the temple (Luke 2:24); (3) it is a monogamous creature! (4) it is a symbol of peace; (5) it is a marvel of gentleness, love, and affection; (6) it is a messenger (the homing pigeon is a dove); and (7) the dove has no gall, suggesting that there is no bitterness in the service of God."⁸
- D. God the Father made three public announcements that Jesus of Nazareth is his Son.
1. The baptism of Jesus, here, is the first public acknowledgement by God of the deity of Jesus.
 2. In addition, at the Transfiguration of Christ the Father acknowledged his Son, adding, "hear ye him," Matt. 17:5.
 3. The apostle Peter mentioned this validation of the Son of God by Father at Jesus' baptism, 1 Pet. 3:17.
 4. The third public acknowledgement of Jesus by the Father occurred as our Lord was dying on the cross, John 12:28-30.
 5. These acknowledgements of the Son of God compare to Psalm 2:7; Heb. 1:5; 5:5.

Conclusion:

1. Instead of being baptized for the remission of sin, Jesus was baptized to completely obey all of the Old Law under which he lived; our Lord would have been disobedient had he not submitted to John's baptism.

2. The baptism of Jesus Christ marked the beginning of his public ministry.
3. The Father speaking from heaven, the Holy Spirit descending and John the Baptist declaring Jesus to be the Son of God served to anoint Jesus the high priest of the New Testament.
4. Through his baptism, Jesus demonstrated for us the need to obey God without rationalizing away our obligation to do the will of God.

Invitation:

1. Clearly, Scripture reveals that only the obedient will be saved and that the disobedient will be lost eternally, Heb. 5:8-9; 2 Thess. 1:7-9.
2. Baptism for the remission of sins is a command; have you obeyed that command, Acts 2:38; 10:48?
3. Obedience upon the part of erring Christians takes the form of repentance and prayer, Acts 8:22; 1 John 1:9.

¹ *Vincent's Word Studies in the New Testament*, Electronic Database. (Seattle, WA: BibleSoft) 1997.

² H. Leo Boles, *A Commentary on the Gospel According to Matthew*. (Nashville, TN: Gospel Advocate Co.) 1952, p. 89.

³ *The New Unger's Bible Dictionary*. (Chicago, Illinois: Moody Press) 1988.

⁴ *Fausset's Bible Dictionary*, Electronic Database. (Seattle, WA: BibleSoft) 1998.

⁵ *The Gospel of Matthew*. (Joplin, MO: College Press) 1968.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ James Burton Coffman, *Coffman Bible Study Library*. (Abilene, TX: ACU Press) 1989.

The Lord Is the Strength of My Life

Psalm 27:1

Thesis: To emphasize the child of God's dependence on the Lord.

Introduction:

1. People typically resort to a variety of resources for strength in this life.
 - a. Many turn to popularity among friends, family, peers or constituents.
 - b. Alcohol is often the hidden strength of many evildoers, robbers, murderers and adulterers.
 - c. A contemporary proverb says, "Behind every successful man is a good woman."
 - d. There may be numerous sources to which people ordinarily turn for strength in this life.
2. To what or to whom can and ought man turn for strength in this life?
 - a. Strength that comes by popularity is unstable and often short-lived.
 - b. Alcohol and other drugs are destructive and sinful rather than true sources of strength by which one can live his life.
 - c. Relying on frail humanity, male or female, for strength in this life is at best inadequate.
 - d. All temporal resources on which humanity may choose to rely for strength in this life lack the quality of eternal, guiding strength only accessible in Jesus Christ.

Body:

I. "The Lord is my light"

- A. Many passages refer to Jesus Christ as "light."
 1. The prophet Simeon said that the infant Jesus was to be a light, Luke 2:32.
 2. Jesus Christ referred to himself as "light," John 8:12; 9:5.

3. Old Testament prophecies refer to Jesus Christ as the “light,” Isa. 49:6; 58:8.
 4. Jesus Christ is described as the eternal “Sun” by which heaven will have light, Isa. 60:19-20; Mal. 4:2.
 5. Christ’s kingdom is a kingdom of light, 1 Pet. 2:9; Eph. 5:14.
- B. God the Father is also called “light,” indicating the unity of purpose and nature of the Godhead.
1. The Father along with the Son is the light of heaven, Rev. 21:23.
 2. God is called the Father of lights, Jam. 1:17.
 3. “...God is light...” 1 John 1:5.
- C. Christians are imitators of Jesus Christ and also are called lights.
1. Christians are “the light of the world,” Matt. 5:14-16; Phil. 2:15.
 2. Christians are “children of light,” 1 Thess. 5:5; John 12:36; Eph. 5:8.
 3. As Christians, we are obligated to “walk in the light,” 1 John 1:7; Isa. 2:5.
- D. All need to turn to the light.
1. Psalm 119:105, 130 describe the Word of God as light.
 2. We, like the apostle Paul, need to make it our goal to turn the lost world from darkness to light, Acts 26:18.

II. “The Lord is my salvation”

- A. Jesus Christ is the only salvation of mankind.
1. Our Lord purchased the church with his blood, Acts 20:28.
 2. Only Jesus has “the words of eternal life,” John 6:68.
 3. Jesus Christ saves every **obedient** soul, Heb. 5:8-9.
 4. The Son of God left heaven for earth to save souls, Luke 19:10; John 3:17.
- B. There is no other source to which one can turn besides Jesus Christ for salvation.
1. Anyone desiring to be saved **must** be saved

- through Jesus, Acts 4:12.
- 2. Jesus Christ alone is our mediator before the Father, 1 Tim. 2:5.
- 3. The church is not source of salvation, but rather it is the body of the saved, Acts 2:47.
- 4. Human ingenuity lacks the capacity to save anyone from anything and only results in division, 1 Cor. 1:10-13.
- C. Every false prophet, ancient or modern, is unable to bestow salvation and will fall even as the prophets of Baal fell before the prophet Elijah, 1 Kings 18.

III. “Whom shall I fear”

- A. The word “fear” in this context refers to reverence because of the revered one’s power and includes being afraid.
 - 1. The same word is translated as “reverend” in Psa. 111:9.
 - 2. The same word is translated as “fear” in Psa. 111:5, 10.
 - 3. The question, then, in Psa. 27:1 is “Whom shall I revere?”
- B. Without doubt, the Godhead is deserving of our utmost reverence or godly fear.
 - 1. Psa. 111:9 announces, not a new name for Deity, but a quality of Deity, “reverend is his name.”
 - 2. Psa. 33:8 says, “Let all the earth fear the LORD...”
 - 3. Saints and all who know of God need to greatly fear him, **Psa. 89:7**.
 - 4. God **requires** that his people fear him, Deut. 10:12-13.
 - 5. Fearing God is preparatory for the coming judgment, Ecc. 12:13-14; Isa. 8:13.
 - 6. Christians are instructed in the New Testament to fear God, 1 Pet. 1:17; 2:17; Heb. 12:28; Matt. 10:28.
 - 7. Fearing God will keep God’s children from following other gods, Josh. 24:14.
- C. The fear God will keep us true to him throughout this life.

1. God's mercy overshadows those who fear him, Luke 1:50; Psalms 147:11.
 2. God's good pleasure overshadows nations and their citizens that fear him, Acts 10:35.
- D. Though our primary reverence must be directed toward God, reverence also must be directed to others, too.
1. Children are required to reverence parents, Leviticus 19:3.
 2. We are obligated to have reverence for civil rulers, Romans 13:1ff; 1 Peter 2:17.
 3. Christians must have reverence for the church as the divine institution founded by Jesus Christ with his blood, Acts 20:28; Ephesians 3:10-11.
 4. Mankind owes reverence toward the Word of God, Romans 1:16; Revelation 22:18-19.

IV. "The Lord is the strength of my life"

- A. The divine strength of God perfects the otherwise weakness of men.
1. Weak, defenseless Israel was saved and the Egyptians drowned in the Red Sea, after which Israel praised God in song as their strength, Exodus 15:2.
 2. By the strength of God, weak Israel conquered Canaan, Deuteronomy 7:17-24.
 3. The apostle Paul trusted in the strength of God to compensate for his weaknesses, 2 Corinthians 12:9-10.
 4. Even the supposed weakness of God (as man maligns God) is stronger than the strength of men, 1 Corinthians 1:25.
- B. Divine strength is the only true and enduring strength to which man can appeal.
1. King David cited God as his strength, 2 Samuel 22:33.
 2. David further described God's strength as a saving shield, Psalm 28:7-8.
 3. "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble," Psalm 46:1; 73:26; 81:1; 84:5; 89:21; Isaiah 49:5.
- C. Happily, the strength of Deity is available to mankind.

1. God promises to be our strength, **Isa. 41:10**.
2. The apostle Paul trusted in Jesus Christ for his strength, Phil. 4:13.
3. Both testaments afford mankind the strength of God working in their lives, Dan. 11:32; Eph. 3:16; Col. 1:9-11.

V. “Of whom shall I be afraid?”

- A. The child of God has nothing to fear of mankind.
 1. If not physically, Jesus Christ will preserve his followers spiritually, Matt. 10:28.
 2. Perseverance in the face of death will result in a crown of life, Rev. 2:10.
 3. Affliction in this life for the cause of Christ, in view of the eternal reward that lies ahead, permits the Christian to persevere in joy, 1 Pet. 3:14; 4:12-16.
- B. However, unrighteous and erring children of God have much for which to be afraid.
 1. Jesus will punish the ungodly children of God along with those who never followed him, Matt. 10:28; 2 Thess. 1:7-9.
 2. Jesus will execute vengeance on the unrighteous children of God, Heb. 10:30-31.
 3. At Judgment, the ungodly will be cast into hell, Rev. 20:12-15; 21:8.
- C. The ungodly also have reason to be afraid of civil government.
 1. Civil government, with the approval of God, punishes criminals, Rom. 13:1-7.
 2. Our Christian duty includes obeying civil government, Titus 3:1; 1 Pet. 2:13-14, 17.
 3. Historically, swift and severe punishment, with God’s approval, was directed toward criminals, Lev. 20:9-16; Exod. 21:12, 16-17.

Conclusion:

1. The Lord is the all of a Christian.
2. Christianity demands one’s complete dependence on God.
3. Without dependence on God (according to the command within the Bible), there is no reason to hope regarding this life or

eternity to come.

4. David well said in Psa. 27:1, “The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?”

Invitation:

1. The Lord is not the light, salvation and strength of non-Christians and erring Christians, but he can and wants to be.
2. God will be the strength of your life if you will submit to immersion in water for the remission of sins, Acts 2:38.
3. For erring Christians, God will be your strength upon your return to him, penitently and in prayer.

Wasted Sermons I Have Preached

1 Thessalonians 2:13

Thesis: To encourage auditors of God's Word to fully embrace it as such.

Introduction:

1. Famous biblical characters preached wasted sermons in their days.
 - a. Noah, Moses, Elijah, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Hosea, Amos, Zechariah and Malachi are some of the Old Testament preachers whose sermons were sometimes wasted on their hearers.
 - b. Jesus Christ, Peter, Stephen and Paul are some of the New Testament characters whose sermons were wasted often on their hearers.
2. Wasted sermons were an indictment of self-incrimination assigned in Scripture to both Old and New Testament people.
 - a. The prophet Isaiah opened the great Messianic Chapter 53 with a complaint against the children of God, Isa. 53:1.
 - b. The apostle John recorded that Jesus himself fared no better among the children of God than Isaiah did, John 12:37-38.
 - c. The apostle Paul assigned the same problem of wasted sermons to humanity in general, Rom. 10:16.
 - d. Happily, though, in every age, there have always been some on whom God's Word in sermons preached **have not been wasted**, 1 Thess. 2:13.
3. Today, Gospel sermons, though they may be filled with God's eternal Word, frequently are wasted because of the frailty of humanity and the strength of sin.
 - a. When there is sin in our lives or when we are indifferent toward Gospel truth, even the finest preaching falls on deaf ears, Matt. 13:13-17.

- b. The most thorough and heartfelt presentations of God's Word are wasted and useless without the appropriate human response to them, **Heb. 4:2**.
- 4. The affect of wasted sermons has eternal consequences.
 - a. *Wasted sermons* will cause the lost to remain lost.
 - b. Further, *wasted sermons* will cause saints to miss the eternal home for which they once longed.

Body:

I. I have preached wasted sermons about Christian worship.

- A. I have preached wasted sermons about **giving**.
 - 1. The New Testament teaches that Christians are to give upon the first day of each week according to their prosperity and as the purpose in their hearts, 1 Cor. 16:1-2; 2 Cor. 9:7.
 - 2. Likewise, in the Old Testament as well, the principle of giving back to God was well established, Prov. 3:9; Exod. 25:1-2.
 - 3. However, my sermons regarding **giving** have been wasted on those who refuse to be guided by God's Word in this matter.
- B. I have preached wasted sermons about **regular attendance of the assemblies of the church**.
 - 1. Hebrews 10:25-31 **condemns** the willful abandonment of the assemblies of the church.
 - 2. Some who have not totally abandoned the assemblies but attend irregularly are nevertheless out of step or walking disorderly, from whom Paul commanded brethren to withdraw, 2 Thess. 3:6.
 - 3. I have preached wasted sermons about assembling with the saints to those who refuse to heed the Scriptures regarding this.
- C. I have preached wasted sermons about **singing**.
 - 1. The apostle Paul clearly, unmistakably taught that **singing** is the God-authorized musical offering to God in worship, Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16.
 - 2. Every reference to worshipful music in the New Testament church is exclusively singing, Rom. 15:9; 1 Cor. 14:15, 26; Heb. 2:12; 13:15; Jam. 5:13; Acts 16:25.

3. Nevertheless, I have preached wasted sermons about **singing** to those who refuse to be amenable to God's Word only.
- D. I have preached wasted sermons about preaching.
1. There is no doubt that God's preacher is obligated to preach all of God's Word, which the apostle Paul made certain that he did, Acts 20:20, 27.
 2. Further, irrespective of whether people appreciate it, preaching necessarily includes positive **and negative** lessons, which are designed to please God rather than men, 2 Tim. 4:2; Gal. 1:6-11.
 3. I have preached wasted sermons about **preaching** to those who were less interested in the Words of God and pleasing him than pleasing themselves, 2 Tim. 4:3-4.

II. I have preached wasted sermons about Christian living.

- A. I have preached wasted sermons about **marriage-divorce and remarriage**.
1. Our Lord explicitly taught that there is only one God-approved reason by which an innocent person can divorce and later remarry, Matt. 19:3-9.
 2. The apostle Paul taught that divorce for any other reason requires the estranged spouses to remain celibate or reconcile, 1 Cor. 7:10-11.
 3. I have preached wasted sermons about **marriage-divorce and remarriage** to those choose to defy Almighty God regarding this biblical doctrine.
- B. I have preached wasted sermons about a variety of **moral issues**: adultery, fornication, homosexuality, dancing, immodesty, murder, drunkenness, etc.
1. Such sinful conduct is routinely and regularly condemned throughout the New Testament, Rom. 1:17-32; 1 Cor. 6:9-10; Gal. 5:19-21; Col. 3:5-6; Rev. 21:8.
 2. I have preached wasted sermons to those whose preferences set aside divine instruction about **moral issues**.
- C. I have preached wasted sermons about attaining **spiritual maturity**.

1. The early church (and doubtless the church in each generation) suffered from widespread spiritual immaturity, Heb. 5:12-6:2; 1 Pet. 2:2.
 2. I have preached wasted sermons about **spiritual immaturity** to those who chronically fail to fortify themselves with the Gospel of Christ.
- D. I have preached wasted sermons about **imitating Christ**, 1 Pet. 2:21.
1. Christians have the moral obligation to imitate Jesus Christ, 1 John 2:6.
 2. Only the Christian walk with Christ can keep the saved in a saved condition, 1 John 1:7.
 3. However, I have preached wasted sermons about **imitating Christ** to those who were more impressed with the pleasures of sin for a season, Heb. 11:25.

III. I have preached wasted sermons about Christian service.

- A. I have preached wasted sermons about **evangelism**.
1. The words of Jesus about taking the Gospel to all the world are still recorded in the Gospel records, Matt. 28:19-20; Mark 16:15-16; Luke 24:47.
 2. The words of James and Jude about rescuing fallen Christians still appear in their respective epistles, Jam. 5:19-20; Jude 23.
 3. God's faithful children are the watchmen for the souls of erring saints and the lost world, Ezek. 3:17-21.
 4. I have preached wasted sermons about **evangelism** to brethren who are unmoved by the lost souls everywhere around them.
- B. I have preached wasted sermons about **benevolence**.
1. The apostle Paul **plainly stated, repeatedly**, that Christians (**including collectively as the church**) have a benevolent duty toward fellow Christians **and secondarily toward non-Christians**, 2 Cor. 9:13; Gal. 6:10.
 2. According to Jesus, our benevolence toward the less fortunate will determine as much as anything else where we spend eternity, Matt. 25:31-46.

3. Yet, I have preached wasted sermons about **benevolence**.

IV. I have preached wasted sermons about the church.

- A. I have preached wasted sermons about the **eldership**.
 1. The qualifications and responsibilities of elders to the church are clearly enumerated in the New Testament, 1 Tim. 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9; Acts 20:28.
 2. Likewise, the responsibility of Christians to obey the elders is forcefully emphasized in the New Testament, Heb. 13:7, 17, 24.
 3. Yet, I have preached wasted sermons about the **eldership**.
- B. I have preached wasted sermons about **church discipline**.
 1. Perhaps no New Testament instruction is more widely ignored by the church today than its responsibility to police itself, Rom. 16:17-18; 1 Cor. 5:1-13; 2 Thess. 3:6, 14; Titus 3:10, ASV; 3 John 9-10.
 2. Christians have a responsibility to be concerned about and attempt to restore erring brethren, Gal. 6:1-2; Jam. 5:19-20.
 3. I have preached wasted sermons about **church discipline**.

Conclusion:

1. Sadly, every biblical topic in God's Word has been the subject of a *wasted sermon* on someone.
 - a. Without doubt, **every sermon** I have ever preached has been wasted on someone in the audiences before whom I have preached.
 - b. I have seen adults coloring in coloring books, clipping their nails, sleeping, talking, etc. while I have endeavored to preach the Holy Word of God.
 - c. I continue to observe Christians who live disobedient and sometimes ungodly lives despite God's Word passing through my lips to their ears.
2. I am heartened, though, knowing that the preaching of God's Word has the potential of edifying others who gladly lend their ears to it.

- a. It is possible for a sermon to contain biblical information that some auditor has not previously known.
- b. Others who hear Gospel preaching may be caused to remember what they have previously learned.
- c. Every truth seeker ought to be edified by listening to the whole counsel of God, overtime, being preached in their presence.

Invitation:

1. Each of us decides whether the Bible holds for us numerous *wasted sermons* or the words of life.
2. You who have never obeyed the Gospel of Christ by submitting to your Lord in immersion in water for the remission of your sins, is the Bible for you a collection of *wasted sermons*, Acts 2:38?
3. You who are unfaithful Christians, is the Bible for you a collection of *wasted sermons*, or will you come back, penitently to God, Acts 8:22; 1 John 1:9?

Want-To Religion

Acts 2:42

Thesis: To encourage greater diligence to attend as many assemblies as one possibly can.

Song: *I Want to Be a Worker*

Introduction:

1. The Book of Acts as the *hub of the Bible*, the *book of conversions* and the *history of the first-century church* is inundated with examples of *want-to religion* and *church attendance*.
2. Perhaps we can inoculate ourselves against apathy, indifference and sporadic attendance of worship and Bible study with some *want-to religion* from the Book of Acts.

Body:

I. The Church Begins, Acts 2.

- A. The church or kingdom was yet future before Acts 2, Matt. 16:18-19; Mark 9:1; Acts 1:4-5, 8, 12.
 1. Jesus Christ used the terms “church” and “kingdom” interchangeably in Matthew 16:18-19.
 2. “Power” or “the keys of the kingdom” were promised to the apostles, Matt. 16:18-19; Acts 1:8; Mark 9:1.
 3. The apostles received this power on the Jewish feast of Pentecost following the death, burial, resurrection and Ascension of Jesus Christ, Acts 2:1-4.
 4. The apostles demonstrated this power when they preached in languages that they had not learned, Acts 2:5-13.
- B. The Gospel was first preached in Jerusalem.
 1. The first recorded Gospel sermon appears in Acts 2:14-40.
 2. About 3,000 believers were baptized and added to the church by the Lord, Acts 2:41-47.

3. This is the first time the church is mentioned as functional instead of yet future, Acts 2:47.

II. Church Attendance in Acts 2.

- A. Acts 2:42 addresses *religious fellowship* enjoyed by the infant church.
 1. Christians continued steadfastly to assemble for religious purposes, 1 Cor. 15:58.
 2. Possibly four of the five *acts of worship* are indicated in Acts 2:42 (singing is absent).
 3. The worship of the church is intended to be a *corporate* worship where the entire church comes together, in one place, at one time, 1 Cor. 11:17-18, 20, 33-34; 14:23.
- B. Acts 2:46 addresses *social fellowship* enjoyed by the infant church.
 1. As a consequence of their religious fellowship, the early church sought social fellowship or interaction as well.
 2. These Christians preferred to associate daily with fellow Christians, Rom. 12:10; 2 Pet. 1:1.

III. Church Attendance in Acts 4 & 5.

- A. Acts 4:23-32.
 1. After persecution, the apostles “went to their own company” (not necessarily the Lord’s Day assembly, vs. 4:23).
 2. Yet, they were preaching or teaching and praying, vs. 4:31.
 3. This “company” had increased to a “multitude,” vs. 32
- B. Acts 5:12-16.
 1. Public preaching of the Gospel occurred in Solomon’s Porch in the Temple area, vs. 12.
 2. Regular assemblies resulted in multitudes of believers (men and women) being added to the church, vs. 14.
- C. Acts 5:42.
 1. The early church met daily in public places (the Temple) and private places (in homes).
 2. The usual distinction between preaching and

teaching is that the latter is more informal, but the result was the same.

- D. Conclusions from Acts 4 and 5.
 - 1. The church was still meeting frequently, not just for Lord's Day worship.
 - 2. The church's frequent assembling was not based on *compulsory motivation*, but *want-to religion*.
 - 3. There was an absence of any admonition to assemble regularly in the presence of *want-to religion*.
 - 4. The oneness or unity of the early church was the key to *want-to religion*, Acts 4:32; 1 Cor. 1:10; John 17:21.

IV. Church Attendance in Acts 6.

- A. In verse 1, the number of the disciples multiplied.
- B. In verse 7, the number of disciples multiplied again, including the conversion of "a great company of the priests."
- C. Conclusions.
 - 1. Frequent attendance led to spiritual and numerical growth.
 - 2. *Want-to religion* is **contagious!**

V. Church Attendance in Acts 8 & 9.

- A. Acts 8:1-4.
 - 1. Severe persecutions came upon the church (including death and imprisonment).
 - 2. Church attendance did not stop; it was merely diverted to all parts of the Roman world as the disciples scattered and whet everywhere preaching the Gospel.
- B. Acts 9:1-2, 26, 31.
 - 1. Severe persecutions continued, vs. 9:1-2.
 - 2. The Lord's church was still meeting in Jerusalem despite severe persecutions, vs. 26.
 - 3. The Jerusalem church still possessed *want-to religion*.
 - 4. The churches were edified and multiplied despite persecution, vs. 31.
- C. Conclusions.

1. Persecution of the early church did not douse its *want-to religion*.
2. Rather, persecution of the early church was a catalyst for the church's spread and for its spiritual and numerical growth.

VI. Church Attendance in Acts 11 & 12.

- A. Acts 11:19-26.
 1. The Gospel was widely preached, vs. 19.
 2. A great number of Greeks obeyed the Gospel, vss. 20-21.
 3. The church continued to assemble regularly (e.g., Antioch, Jerusalem), vs. 22.
 4. Much people were added to the church, vs. 24.
 5. The church in Antioch where Paul assembled regularly and its members were first called Christians, vs. 26; Isa. 62:2.
- B. Acts 12:12-17.
 1. A *special assembly* of Christians had convened, which apparently was not the Lord's Day assembly.
 2. Several Christians met to pray for the Peter's safety that he might not be martyred as the apostle James had been martyred, Acts 12:2.
- C. Conclusions.
 1. *Want-to religion* grew, leading to the conversion of Gentiles and the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy regarding a new name for God's people.
 2. *Special assemblies* in addition to *regular assemblies* characterized the early church.

VII. Church Attendance in Acts 13-19.

- A. Acts 13.
 1. The church in Antioch selected missionaries during one of their assemblies, vss. 1-4.
 2. God determined long ago that preachers would be the primary means of publishing God's Word, Rom. 10:13-15; Joel 2:32.
 3. Consequently, Paul and Barnabas preached the Gospel and established congregations.
- B. Acts 14:26-28.

1. A *special assembly* was called upon the return of Paul and Barnabas to rehearse the missionary journey.
 2. The assembly evidently was not a Lord's Day assembly because they "gathered the church together."
- C. Acts 15.
1. This chapter depicts a first century *lectureship*.
 2. The purpose of the assembly was not to *make doctrine*, but to compare what God requires versus what some brethren were teaching.
 3. Verse 30 indicates that a *special assembly* was called in Antioch to proclaim the results of the Jerusalem lectureship.
- D. Acts 16-19.
1. These chapters record subsequent missionary journeys to formerly established congregations.
 2. Those churches were still assembling.
- E. Conclusions.
1. The church in Antioch had enough *want-to religion* not only to sustain themselves, but also to send preachers to plant new assemblies or churches.
 2. The early church attended *regular* and *special assemblies*.

VIII. Church Attendance in Acts 20 & 21.

- A. Paul was in a hurry to reach Jerusalem, but he delayed several days at Troas.
1. Paul was trying to arrive in Jerusalem before the feast of Pentecost, Acts 20:16.
 2. However, Paul delayed seven days in Troas, waiting for the Lord's Day worship, Acts 20:6-7.
 3. The Lord's Day or first day of the week worship services were paramount in the mind of Paul and the first century church.
- B. Paul obviously waited for the Lord's Day.
1. Acts 20:7 prescribes the frequency with which Christians must partake of the Lord's Supper (every Lord's Day).
 2. Likewise, the Jews understood that they were

- 3. required to observe every Sabbath, Exod. 20:8.
- 3. “Gathered together” often appears in the New Testament depicting the worship assembly of the church, Acts 20:7-8.
- C. Acts 21:4-5.
 - 1. Paul tarried another seven days, though he was in a hurry, vs. 4; Acts 20:16.
 - 2. Paul may have waited on this occasion, too, for the Lord’s Day.
 - 3. The early Christians still enjoyed a heightened religious and social closeness or fellowship, Acts 20:36-38; 21:5.
- D. Conclusions.
 - 1. The early church placed a special emphasis on the Lord’s Day worship assemblies, Acts 2:42; 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:1-2.
 - 2. However, the Book of Acts is saturated with assemblies in addition to Lord’s Day assemblies.
 - 3. An assembly for the Lord’s Day worship involves spiritual and physical togetherness.

IX. Church Attendance in Hebrews 10:25-27.

- A. The admonition in Hebrews 10:25 is not to abandon the assemblies of the Lord’s church.
- B. All appointed assemblies are included in this admonition.
- C. Hebrews 10:25 includes but is not limited to the Lord’s Day assemblies.
- D. Forsaking assemblies is punishable with fiery indignation, vss. 26-27.
- E. Many Jewish Christians had lost their *want-to religion* by the time the Book of Hebrews was penned, cf. Rev. 2-3.

Conclusion:

- 1. The Book of Acts vividly depicts *want-to religion*.
- 2. Admonitions to not forsake assembling together are absent in the Book of Acts due to the presence of *want-to religion*.
- 3. *Warnings* not to forsake assembling together appear in Scripture regarding those who *lost the want-to out* of their religion.
- 4. *Want-to religion* is a much better principle by which to be motivated than warnings of severe, divine punishment.

5. *Want-to religion* prompted early Christians to exercise special care to worship on each Lord's Day.
6. Early Christians also sought to assemble frequently (*sometimes daily*) and for *special* assemblies.
7. Assembling whenever they could permitted first century Christians to fortify their close fellowship or partnership in Christianity.
8. Preferring brethren and loving the brotherhood also prompted Christians to assemble frequently, Rom. 12:10; 1 Pet. 2:17.

Invitation:

1. Christians who willfully disregard Bible classes and worship are committing sin, by which they are endangering their souls.
2. Every erring child of God, irrespective of what his sins may be, needs to return to the Lord while opportunity remains, 2 Cor. 6:2; John 9:4.
3. Every soul needs to obey the Gospel and worship God, Acts 22:16.

Everywhere Religion

Exodus 4:24-26

Thesis: To demonstrate that **location** does not change the will of God.

Song: *Anywhere With Jesus*

Introduction:

1. Exodus chapters 3-4 record the excuses Moses made to God when commissioned by God to liberate Israel from Egypt.
2. Beginning in Chapter 5, Moses sought Pharaoh to free Israel.
3. However, nearly half of Exodus Chapter 4 records three additional events, including:
 - a. The departure of Moses, his wife and their children from the house of Jethro, his wife's father, 18-23.
 - b. Aaron, brother of Moses, coming out of Egypt to meet Moses in the wilderness, 29-31.
4. A third event is obscure, contained in a mere three verses, yet rich with an important biblical lesson with which all God's people need to be impressed, 24-26.
5. As it turned out, Moses forgot to practice his religion everywhere — **everywhere religion!**

Body:

I. Exposition of Exodus 4:24-26.

- A. While on the way to Egypt and as Moses and his family lodged for the night, God confronted Moses because he had not circumcised one of his sons (Gershom or **Eliezer**, Exod. 2:22; 18:3-4).
 1. Circumcision was a law of God under Patriarchy and later under Judaism, Gen. 17:9-14, 23-27; Lev. 12:3.
 2. Circumcision was a physical mark or symbol of the covenant God made with his people, Gen. 17:9-10.
 3. Later, before the Jewish possession of Canaan, God required all the males to be circumcised; circumcision had been neglected during the 40-

year wilderness wandering, Josh. 5:2-9.

- B. Though God had selected Moses and sent him to deliver Israel from Egypt, God was prepared to kill him for his disobedience.
 - 1. Moses faced a life and death situation, all because he had **neglected** part of the covenant with God under which he lived.
 - 2. Zipporah, Moses' wife, reluctantly circumcised her son to spare her husband's life.
 - 3. **Omission** of covenant duty has always been considered by God as sin, Jam. 4:17, in addition to the **commission** of sin, 1 John 3:4.
 - 4. It is more than probable that Moses' sin of omission respecting circumcision had been because his wife, Zipporah, found the practice *foreign to her family's customs and distasteful*.
 - 5. (Incidentally, Zipporah and her two children returned to Jethro's house and did not travel with Moses the rest of the way to Egypt; they joined Moses again after Moses and Israel fled Egypt, Exod. 18:2-6.)

II. **Moses discovered the hard way that location does not change the will of God; Christians can learn from this episode in the life of Moses that *location* does not change the will of God.**

- A. The Bible teaches that **immodesty** is a sin, 1 Tim. 2:9-10; 1 Pet. 3:1-6.
 - 1. Immodesty is not just sinful in church.
 - 2. If immodesty is a sin, it is sinful at the public pool or beach, too.
 - 3. Whether the location is in the mountains, in the plains, in a coastal state, on a cruise ship or even in another country, God's law is the same.
- B. The Bible teaches that drinking **alcohol** is sinful, Prov. 23:29-35; Gal. 5:21.
 - 1. The pleasurable consumption of alcohol is not just a sin at the corner bar.
 - 2. If drinking alcohol is a sin, it is sinful at social events or even secretly at home, too.

3. Irrespective of whether the location is in one's home community, Germany or Italy, God's law is the same.
- C. The Bible teaches that **pornography** is a sin, Matt. 5:28.
1. Pornography is not just sinful at X-rated (NC-17) movies, bookstores and so-called *gentlemen's clubs*.
 2. If pornography is a sin, it is sinful when viewed at work or at home, too (e.g., magazines, TV).
 3. Christians must faithfully practice **everywhere religion**.
- D. The Bible teaches that **lying** is a sin, Rev. 21:8.
1. Lying is not just a sin when it occurs on the witness stand in a court of law.
 2. If lying is a sin, it is sinful to lie to the IRS, at work or at home.
 3. **Everywhere religion** will dispel lying from the lives of Christians.
- E. The Bible teaches that **stealing** is a sin, Eph. 4:28.
1. Stealing is not just sinful when robbery occurs at gunpoint.
 2. If stealing is wrong, it is sinful when one steals from God, his employer or the government.
 3. **Everywhere religion** eradicates stealing from the lives of Christians.

Conclusion:

1. The number of examples to illustrate the affect of practicing Christianity everywhere is endless.
2. Every example demonstrates that the **location** does not change the will of God.
3. Christians either faithfully practice **everywhere religion** or they do not faithfully practice Christianity.
4. **Location** does not change the will of God.

Invitation:

1. Since location does not change the will of God, living in Utah should not make one a Mormon, living in Italy should not make one a Catholic and living in the Middle East should not make one a Moslem.
2. God has one law of redemption for all men, Acts 17:30.

3. God's everywhere religion is Christianity!

4. The universal Gospel of Christ teaches: **hearing** God's Word only, Rom. 10:17; **believing** the Bible only, John 20:30-31; **turning** from sin to God [repenting], Acts 3:19; publicly **avowing** that Jesus is the Christ, Rom. 10:9-10; submitting to **immersion** in water for the remission of sins, Acts 22:16; living **obedient** lives until death, Rev. 2:10; and **repenting and praying** for forgiveness of future sins as they occur, Acts 8:22.

Young People Religion

Titus 2:1-15

Thesis: To make a brief examination of Christian living as it especially pertains to younger Christians.

Song: *Take My Life, And Let It Be* or *The Touch Of His Hand On Mine*

Introduction:

1. The only *religion* in which any of us should have any interest is religion of divine origin and revelation.
2. In addition to general passages that address Christian living, some verses especially teach younger Christians how to live godly.
3. Certain other verses also instruct especially older men and women, which we will examine on another occasion.

Body:

I. Some passages especially instruct young men in godly living.

- A. A great deal of biblical instruction intended especially for young men pertains to fleshly lusts.
 1. The Old Testament warns young men about fleshly lusts, Prov. 5:1-23; 6:25-35; 7:10-27; 23:26-28.
 2. The New Testament also warns young men about fleshly or youthful lusts, **2 Tim. 2:22** — “There are lusts peculiar to flaming youth.” (Robertson)
 3. Young men are to “follow after” Christian virtues “as if in a chase” in a “steady pursuit” of them. (Robertson)
- B. Some passages instruct young men about family responsibilities.
 1. Fathers have a primary role in the rearing of their children, Eph. 6:4.
 2. Husbands have the responsibility to love their wives comparably to the love Jesus Christ has for his church, Eph. 5:25.

3. Husbands and fathers have the responsibility to provide for the physical support of their families, 1 Tim. 5:8.
- C. Still other Scriptures teach young men to heed the instruction of older men.
 1. The Old Testament warns young men to heed the advice of their fathers, Prov. 1:8; 4:1; 6:20.
 2. The New Testament instructs youth to revere older men as fathers, 1 Tim. 5:1.
- D. The Bible teaches young men about the dangers of evil companions.
 1. In the company of evil companions, a young man can commit heinous crimes that he otherwise would not do, Prov. 1:10-19.
 2. Association and friendship with sinful persons leads one to commit sin, **1 Cor. 15:33, ASV**; 2 Cor. 6:14-18.

II. Some passages especially instruct young women in godly living.

- A. Young women are urged also by Scripture to be morally pure.
 1. Young women are to be “pure from carnality.” (Vincent), **Titus 2:3-5**.
 2. The modesty supposed to be characteristic of a young woman is a quality that begins on the inside and reflects itself outwardly in manner of dress and demeanor. (Vine) **1 Tim. 2:9-10**; 1 Pet. 3:1-6.
- B. The Bible also assigns family responsibilities to young women.
 1. God determined that the home is the primary sphere of activity for which the wife and mother is responsible, Titus 2:3-5.
 2. In her role as wife and mother she can contribute to the conversion and edification of her husband and children, 1 Pet. 3:1-6; 2 Tim. 1:5.
 3. Proverbs 31:10-31 paints an admirable portrait of a godly woman.
- C. Scripture also instructs younger women to heed the instruction of older women.

1. Younger women learn how to be good wives and mothers from older women, Titus 2:3-5.
2. Naomi and Ruth are excellent examples of a daughter (daughter-in-law here) learning godliness from a mother (mother-in-law here).

Conclusion:

1. Godly living is expected and required of young men and women, as well as of older men and women.
2. Each must pursue moral purity.
3. Each must accept divinely prescribed roles and subsequent responsibilities.
4. Each must heed instruction from older, more experienced and knowledgeable brethren.

Invitation:

1. The greatest responsibility of any accountable soul, regardless of age, is to obey the Gospel.
2. The second greatest responsibility is to continue obeying the Gospel.
3. Third, each Christian must attempt to teach the Gospel throughout his life so that others may also realize the blessings of the Gospel.

Old People Religion

Titus 2:1-3

Thesis: To make a brief examination of Christian living as it especially pertains to older men and women.

Song: *Take My Life, And Let It Be* or *The Touch Of Hand On Mine*

Introduction:

1. The only *religion* in which any of us should have any interest is religion of divine origin and revelation.
2. In addition to general passages addressing Christian living, some verses especially teach older men and women how to live godly.
3. Certain other verses also teach especially young men and young women about Christian living.

Body:

I. Old Man Religion.

- A. Older men must present themselves examples of godliness, Titus 2:1-2.
 1. Older Christian men should be sober, honorable, temperate, sound in the faith, loving and patient — *a tall order!*
 2. Older men who are godly are praiseworthy before mankind and God, Prov. 16:31.
 3. Grandpa Noah wore his old age in ever-beautiful godly fashion, though NONE OF HIS CONTEMPORARIES obeyed God (600 years old when the flood came).
 4. Joshua is an outstanding example of godliness in an older man, Jud. 2:7-8.
- B. Older men should strive to attain the qualifications required of elders, 1 Tim. 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9.
 1. Each older Christian man should be exemplary as one not worthy of rebuke, moderate, sober minded, orderly, hospitable, able to teach, not covetous, patient, not contentious, who accepts

- responsibility, who has a good reputation and humble.
2. Further, Paul wrote to Titus that elders should be good stewards, not self-willed, not easily angered, lovers of good men, just and holy.
 3. Even if a man does not qualify to be an elder, he should pursue these traits and determine to possess as many of them he can.
 4. Elders are not responsible for a level of Christian living from which other members are exempt!
- C. Older men have special responsibilities uniquely their own among all God's creatures.
1. As fathers and husbands, men have the responsibility to care for and rule their families, 1 Tim. 3:4; Eph. 5:22-25; 6:4; 1 Tim. 5:8.
 2. Men in general and elders in particular have the responsibility for the public worship of the church, 1 Cor. 14:34-35; Acts 20:7; 1 Tim. 3; Titus 1.
 3. Though women may participate to a large degree in evangelism, edification and benevolence, men (especially elders) have the primary responsibility for the direction of the church.
 4. Often, however, many men neglect their various and special responsibilities at home and in the church.

II. Old Lady Religion.

- A. Older women may be the gracious recipients of the good works of others, Acts 9:36-42.
1. Tabitha (or Dorcas) was the benefactor of several widows, Acts 9:39.
 2. Those women apparently were not embarrassed to accept the hospitality of brethren.
 3. Likewise, sisters today should not be reluctant to experience the good works of others on their behalf.
 4. Sometimes older Christian women may need a little help and should not hesitate to apprise their brethren and the church; we want to help.
- B. Older women can provide an invaluable service to

brethren and the church, 2 Tim. 1:5; Titus 2:3-5.

1. Grandma Lois instilled faithfulness in her daughter Eunice and through their combined influence, they favorably influenced preacher Timothy as well.
 2. Older women should not underestimate their potential **influence** for good (or bad) — *so watch it!*
 3. Older women should not underestimate their responsibility toward younger women and children.
- C. Older women also can give to others and cause change, Acts 9:36-42; Ruth 1:16-17.
1. Dorcas may not have been elderly herself, but as opportunities present themselves, older women can be the benefactors of others; “woman” in Acts 9:36 indicates that she exhibited her Christian service *alone*, without the help of anyone else or the church.
 2. Naomi had such an affect on Ruth that she forsook her own people to remain with Naomi and espoused the true God in place of idols.
 3. *Old lady religion does not provide for retirement from Christian living and Christian service!*
 4. Even widows taken in by the church must labor for the church, 1 Tim. 5:3-16.

Conclusion:

1. Older men and women must present themselves as examples of Christian living.
2. Older men are not exempt from pursuing the traits required of elders.
3. Men have unique responsibilities that they dare not neglect.
4. When in need, the elderly should not hesitate to apprise brethren and the church of their circumstances; we will gladly do what we can.
5. Yet, older Christian women have heightened responsibilities toward younger women and children.
6. In addition, older women must exhibit hospitality as they have opportunity.
7. Older women can make a difference!
8. Finally, older Christians must realize that *there is no retirement*

from Christianity this side of the grave!

Invitation:

1. Every accountable soul, irrespective of age, is responsible for working out his own salvation, Phil. 2:12.
2. Every child of God has the responsibility to continue in Gospel obedience for life, Rev. 2:10.
3. We have an obligation also toward other souls as well, Gal. 6:1-2; Jam. 5:19-20.

This Is Your Life

Revelation 20:12

Thesis: To illustrate the seriousness of righteous living and encourage obedience to the Gospel.

Introduction:

1. Some years ago, there was a TV show entitled *This Is Your Life*.
2. When each of us stands before the Judgment Bar of God, the books will be opened, including the book of life, Rev. 20:12.
3. For the next few moments, let's examine our *spiritual lives* — **This Is Your Life!**
4. (Assemble a 3-ring binder with colored poster board pages corresponding to the numbered points below.)

Body:

I. WHITE PAGE: Innocence and Purity of Children.

- A. Sin is not inherited, Ezek. 18:20.
- B. Babies enter the world sinless, Ezek. 28:15.
- C. Little children are sinless, and therefore, they are worthy examples to illustrate the affect of conversion and membership in the kingdom of God, Matt. 18:3; 19:14.

II. BLACK PAGE: Age of Accountability.

- A. Eventually, sin comes into the life of every accountable soul, Rom. 3:23.
- B. We are not being honest with ourselves if we deny that we sin sometimes, 1 John 3:4; 1:8, 10.
- C. Unaddressed, sins lead to eternal death or separation for eternity from God, Rom. 6:23.

III. RED PAGE: Blood of Jesus Christ.

- A. Anyone who is saved today is saved by the blood of Jesus Christ.
 1. Jesus washes the saved from their sins with his blood, Rev. 1:5.
 2. Through his blood, Jesus redeems souls from sins, Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:14.

3. Our Lord purchased the church with his blood — one soul at a time, Acts 2:47; 20:28.
 4. Consequently, nothing is more precious than the blood of Christ, 1 Pet. 1:18-20.
- B. According to the Bible, baptism is the way in which a soul contacts the saving blood of Jesus Christ.
1. Jesus shed his blood in his death, especially as a Roman soldier pierced his side with a spear, John 19:31-37.
 2. Baptism alone is ascribed in Scripture with the capacity to immerse a sinful soul in the saving blood of Jesus Christ — by placing one symbolically into the death of Christ, Rom. 6:3-5.
 3. Therefore, baptism and the blood of Christ are inseparably tied together — and no preacher, human doctrine or manmade church has divine approval to divorce them from each other.
 4. For the blood of Jesus Christ to save a soul from sins, all of the elements to which Scripture attributes saving power must be embraced (i.e., faith, repentance, professing Christ as Lord).

IV. WHITE PAGE: Purged from Past Sins.

- A. One rises from the waters of baptism to walk in newness of life and does not serve sin any longer, Rom. 6:5-6.
- B. Sins forgiven by the blood of Christ are forgiven forever, unlike the remembrance of sins annually under Judaism, Heb. 9:12; 10:1-4.
- C. The blood of Christ, properly applied, cleanses the conscience of past sins, Heb.9:14; 1 Pet. 3:21.

V. YELLOW PAGE: Faithfulness and Service.

- A. Jesus Christ himself is our perfect example for faithfulness and service to God, 1 Pet. 2:21.
- B. Like Jesus, we must determine to be faithful unto death if necessary, Rev. 2:10.
- C. As Christians, we are obligated to practice “the perfect law of liberty” and remain pure and holy, Jam. 1:25, 27; 1 Pet. 1:15.
- D. Each Christian needs to spiritually mature for his own

spiritual welfare as well as to reach others successfully with the Gospel, Heb. 5:12-14.

- E. Further, the New Testament instructs every Christian to seek good works, Titus 2:14.

VI. BLACK PAGE: Sin of Apostasy.

- A. Simon, a Samaritan, is a biblical example of the possibility of sinning so as to be lost after one becomes a Christian, Acts 8:18-24.
- B. The eternal punishment for apostasy somehow is worse than other sins for which souls will be punished eternally, 2 Pet. 2:20-22.
- C. A Christian cannot reasonably expect to persevere without adopting the Christian graces in his life, 2 Pet. 1:5-9.

VII. RED PAGE: Blood of Jesus Christ.

- A. The blood of Jesus Christ saves penitent Christians from their sins, 1 John 1:7.
- B. Erring Christians cannot obtain forgiveness for their sins under any other conditions and from anyone else, Heb. 10:26-31.

VIII. WHITE PAGE: Purged of Recent Sins.

- A. Penitent acknowledgement of a Christian's sins results in forgiveness, 1 John 1:9.
- B. Jesus Christ acts as the penitent Christian's defense lawyer before the Heavenly Father, 1 John 2:1-2.

IX. YELLOW PAGE: Christian Service and Endurance.

- A. The Christian must be unmovable from the Christian faith, 1 Cor. 15:58.
- B. Christians must remember that Jesus Christ is the Savior of the *obedient*, Heb. 5:8-9.

X. BLUE PAGE: Heaven and Eternal Life.

- A. Only the righteous as God reckons righteous will enter heaven and enjoy eternal life, Matt. 25:46.
- B. Heaven and eternal life are symbolized in "the crown of righteousness" of which Paul wrote and the "crown of life" of which Jesus spoke, 2 Tim. 4:8; Rev. 2:10.
- C. All the ups and downs of this life will be worth it when we hear our Lord say, "Well done thou good and faithful servant," Matt. 25:21.

XI. BLACK PAGE: Sin and Death.

- A. Unforgiven sins will separate souls from God for eternity, Isa. 59:1-3.
- B. Instead of everlasting life, everlasting punishment will be the disposition of lost souls after the great Judgment, Matt. 25:46.
- C. Disobedient souls will hear their Lord say, "Depart from me," Matt. 7:21-23.
- D. The fires of Divine Vengeance will buffet disobedient souls throughout eternity, 2 Thess. 1:7-9; Rev. 21:8.

Conclusion:

1. ***This is your life!*** (Hold up the 3-ring binder and fan its pages.)
2. Is what appears in *your spiritual book of your life* what you want to be read in the Judgment?

Invitation:

1. What verb will Jesus use when he addresses you in the Last Day, ***Enter*** or ***Depart?***
2. Even Christians need to examine themselves whether they are in the faith, 2 Cor. 13:5.
3. Unbaptized believers can have their sins washed away in baptism, Rev. 1:5; Acts 22:16.

Be With Me Lord

2 Chronicles 15:2

Thesis: To emphasize under what conditions God is willing to be with us.

Song: *Be With Me Lord*

Introduction:

1. Asa was a righteous king of Judah, the southern kingdom of the Jews, 14:2.
 - a. He reigned for 41 years and destroyed idolatrous altars throughout the kingdom, chaps. 14-16; 14:3,.
 - b. He built garrisons in Judah, 14:6.
 - c. Though much of Asa's reign had been characterized by peace, in the context at hand, Asa was returning from a war in which Judah had been victorious because God fought for them, 14:6, 9-15.
 - d. Near the end of his reign, Asa chose to rely on a heathen king for military support instead of God, for which cause God's approval departed from Asa, 16.
2. What the prophet Azariah said to Asa also applies to our relationship with God, 2 Chron. 15:2.
 - a. "The Lord is with you, while ye be with him."
 - b. "If ye seek him, he will be found of you."
 - c. "If ye forsake him, he will forsake you."

Body:

I. The Lord Is With You, While Ye Be With Him.

- A. "Be with me Lord" is *conditional!*
 1. It is man who must adhere to the ways of God and follow his paths; God does not walk after the manner of men, Isa. 2:2-3.
 2. It is man who departed from God and who, then, must be reconciled to God, Eph. 2:16; Col. 1:20-22.
- B. With the Lord on our side, none can stand against us; if the Lord is for us who can be against us? Psa. 124:1-8;

Rom. 8:31.

1. God gave Asa's army a victory over a much greater army out of Ethiopia, 2 Chron. 14:9-15.
 2. Likewise, Christians today can persevere whatever buffets them through Jesus Christ, Phil. 4:13.
- C. There are some with whom God has never been.
1. Contrariwise, God will root up every false religion, Matt. 15:9, 13.
 2. God is not with false prophets, teachers and preachers, 1 John 4:1; Rom. 16:17-18.

II. If Ye Seek Him, He Will Be Found Of You.

- A. This phrase offers hope and comfort.
1. Jesus promises that if we seek him, we will find him, Matt. 6:33; 7:7-8.
 2. All men can find God, though not all men find God, 1 Chron. 28:9.
- B. Finding God, though, is *conditional*.
1. If we do not seek God, we will not find him.
 2. If we do not seek God in the right place (e.g., human doctrines instead of the Bible, manmade religion versus God-mandated religion — the church), we will not find him.

III. But If Ye Forsake Him, He Will Forsake You.

- A. God turns his back on those who turn their backs on him.
1. Sins put souls beyond the reach of God, Isa. 59:1-3.
 2. God does not hear (i.e., acknowledge) sinners, John 9:31.
- B. God has turned away from many.
1. He turned away from the Jewish nations of Israel and Judah, sending them into their respective captivities.
 2. God turned from numerous individuals whose names appear throughout the Bible.
 3. There are some today from whom God turns away, Col. 2:23.

Conclusion:

1. We do not have a right to ask God in prayer to be with us when we are not with him, Luke 6:46.

2. God is not with those who do not seek him where he is to be found.
3. God turns from them who turn from him.

Invitation:

1. God, though, openly accepts all who turn to him on his terms.
2. Non-Christians must repent and be converted to have their sins “blotted out,” Acts 3:19.
3. Erring Christians must repent and pray, Acts 8:22.

Growing Our Faith

Luke 17:5

Thesis: To undergird and embolden the faith of the children of God.

Introduction:

1. True religious faith is based on *biblical evidence*, Rom. 10:17.
 - a. Faith *is not* a blind leap in the dark as some religionists claim.
 - b. If faith were merely *subjective* (i.e., a blind leap in the dark), we could neither be certain that faith has a part in our salvation nor confident that it can sustain us and enable us to enter heaven someday.
2. The Bible, from which we draw our faith, is only as firm as the *internal and external* body of *evidence* that validates it.
 - a. Honestly evaluated, the Bible's internal evidence shows that it is divine in origin — the very mind of God!
 - b. Interpreted with neither a purposeful bias against nor a deliberate prejudice for the Bible, external evidence also concludes that the Bible is an otherworldly or a divine masterpiece.
3. The Bible mentions many degrees of faith.
 - a. Some types of faith are unacceptable to God: little faith, stolen faith, misplaced faith, failing faith, hindrances to faith, useless faith, weak faith, vain faith, deficient faith, overthrown faith, dead faith, lying faith and trembling faith (among other similar references).
 - b. Some types of faith represent the faith necessary for each faithful child of God to acquire and maintain: great faith, saving faith, healing faith, increasing faith, full of faith, system of faith, door of faith, steps of faith, word of faith, joy of faith, household of faith, grounded faith, stedfast faith, established faith, work of faith, spreading faith, comforting faith, growing faith, unfeigned faith, first faith, fight of faith, common faith, sound faith, assurance of faith,

professed faith, unwavering faith, living and active faith, prayer of faith, tried faith, victorious faith and holy faith (among other similar references).

- c. The double impact of internal and external biblical evidence erases in the mind of the child of God the degrees of faltering faith and firmly establishes Bible faith on which he can confidently depend to guide him through this life to eternal life.

Body:

I. The Bible's Internal Evidence Is Unimpeachable!

- A. Biblical *prophecy and fulfillment*, involving many hundreds of prophecies, proves that the Bible is the divinely inspired Word of God.
 1. For example, there are 333 Messianic prophecies concerning our Savior, all of which are minutely and completely fulfilled (most of which are beyond the capability of self-fulfillment by an imposter, e.g., death of Christ: John 19:31-42; Exod. 12:46; Psa. 34:20; 1 Cor. 5:7; Zech. 12:10; Isa. 53:9).
 2. The historical era during which the church or Messianic Kingdom was to be established was definitively predicted more than 500 years before its fulfillment, Dan. 2:31-45; 8:20-21; 10:20; 11:2; Matt. 16:18-19; Acts 2:47 (i.e., Babylonian Kingdom; Medo-Persian Kingdom, 538 B.C.; Grecian Kingdom, 333 B.C.; Roman Empire).
- B. The Bible's *doctrinal agreement* proves that it is of divine origin rather than a mere human production.
 1. Approximately 40 human penmen from widely different backgrounds over 1,600 years scribed the words of God.
 2. The Bible spans three God-given religious dispensations or time periods.
 3. Yet, handled aright, the Bible is void of doctrinal contradiction and completely agrees with itself, 2 Tim. 2:15, ASV.

II. The Bible's External Evidence Is Unquestionable!

- A. The biblical account makes no errors regarding *historical facts*, despite that information being absent from the

secular, historical record for many centuries.

1. For instance, an archaeological discovery validated the reference in Acts 13:7 that Cyprus was ruled by a “proconsul” at the time the apostle Paul preached there, though the secular, historical record omitted the change in governing from the jurisdiction of the Emperor to the Roman Senate.
 2. Further, the home-rule afforded the Jews through Herod the Great in the first century was replaced with Roman governors following the banishment of Herod Archelaus; though the secular, historical record omits that Pilate was governor when Jesus was crucified, an archaeological find exonerates the Bible regarding the rule of Pilate.
- B. The biblical account makes no errors regarding references to *scientific facts*, though scientists were unaware of those facts for hundreds to thousands of years after the Bible recorded them.
1. For instance, there are paths or currents in the oceans, as the Bible long ago recorded, Psa. 8:8.
 2. The Bible indicated that the earth is round well before the flat-earth theory was abandoned, Isa. 40:22.
 3. The Bible recorded that the earth is suspended upon nothing when enlightened humans believed that Atlas held the earth on his shoulders, Job 26:7.
 4. The Bible declared nearly 2,000 years before modern science was aware of it that all races of men carry in their veins “one blood,” Acts 17:26.

Conclusion:

1. The Bible is obviously from God since the prophecies it recorded hundreds, even thousands of years before their fulfillment place this book beyond the realm of human ingenuity.
2. The Bible is absolutely and completely accurate in every scientific fact or otherwise to which it makes reference.
3. The biblical record contains no errors regarding geography, topography, etc.
4. Every statement that the Bible makes regarding this material

universe and the history of the planet that lends itself to evaluation and for which there is sufficient evidence to examine validates the Bible as the most remarkable and superhuman document.

5. The Bible, therefore, is equally credible regarding *doctrinal matters*.

Invitation:

1. The Bible alone deserves to be the source of Bible faith, Rom. 10:17.
2. An obedient faith saves, Rom. 1:5; 16:26; 5:1; Heb. 5:8-9; Acts 2:38.

Here Am I

Genesis 22:1; 1 Samuel 3:4

Thesis: To emphasize the need for the child of God to be willing and ready to serve God.

Song: *Who Will Follow Jesus*

Introduction:

1. The context of 1 Samuel 3:2-10 records God's call of Samuel to be his prophet.
 - a. Young Samuel was a servant to and instructed by the prophet and priest Eli.
 - b. Samuel exhibited a *willingness* to serve, saying, "**Here am I.**"
 - c. Samuel exhibited a *readiness* to be directed by God, saying, "**Speak for thy servant heareth.**"
2. There are similarities between God's calling of Samuel and God's calling of Christians.
 - a. Biblically accurate religious instruction is invaluable also today for those who become Christians and prepare to serve God.
 - b. God selects servants from among those who have chosen him as Lord.
 - c. Christians must exhibit a *willingness* to serve: "**Here am I.**"
 - d. Christians also must exhibit a *readiness* to be directed by God: "**Speak for thy servant heareth.**"
3. There are some differences, too, between the call of Samuel and the call of Christians today.
 - a. Samuel heard a verbal, audible call from God, whereas people now are called to be Christians and servants of God through the written Word of God, the New Testament.
 - b. Samuel was singled out among other Israelites to serve God, but today all men are called to be Christians and to be servants of God, 1 Cor. 12:12-31.
4. Let's consider for a few moments the ramifications for us of

the principles embedded in the phrases: “Here am I” and “Speak for thy servant heareth.”

Body:

I. “Here Am I.”

- A. This sentence displays an attitude of submissiveness and humility before the higher will of God.
 - 1. Likewise, every Christian needs to demonstrate these characteristics as a faithful child of God.
 - 2. Both testaments enjoin humanity to pursue humility before God, Micah. 6:8; Jam. 4:10.
- B. The Bible records the names and deeds of numerous godly persons who were willing and ready to serve God.
 - 1. **Noah**, Gen. 6:22; 7:5.
 - 2. **Abraham**, Gen. 12:1-4; 22:1-3, “**Here am I.**”
 - 3. **Jesus Christ**, John 6:38; 4:34.
 - 4. **Dorcias**, Acts 9:36.
 - 5. Especially the New Testament enjoins on Christians a willingness and a readiness to serve God, Titus 3:1; 1 Pet. 3:15; 2 Tim. 2:21.
 - 6. The apostle Paul commended the readiness of brethren, 2 Cor. 9:2.
- C. Other Bible characters, though they were servants of God, exhibited a reluctance to perform the tasks for which God selected them.
 - 1. **Moses** was afraid of ridicule, failure and rejection when God called him, so he resisted God’s call to service five times, Exod. 3:11, 13; 3:11, 13; 4:1, 10, 13.
 - 2. **Jonah** fled from the mission on which God sent him, Jonah 1:1-3.
 - 3. **Esther** was afraid for her life, but served God anyway, Esth. 4:8-14.
 - 4. God became angry at Moses for his reluctance to serve, Exod. 4:14; Mordecai was provoked by Esther’s reluctance to serve, Esth. 4:13-14; our reluctance to serve God angers him and provokes our brethren.
- D. Christians today must serve God in whatever capacity he has chosen for them to perform.

1. Whether *willingly* and *ready* or *reluctantly* and with *apprehension*, Christians must serve God or risk divine disfavor — now and eternally.
2. No Christian can or should do everything that needs to be done in the service of God, but there is something for each child of God to do, 1 Cor. 12:12-31.
3. It is **not enough** to be Christians, we must serve God, too, Eph. 4:1; Phil. 3:14; 1 Thess. 2:12; 2 Pet. 1:10; Titus 2:14.

II. “Speak For Thy Servant Heareth.”

- A. This is precisely the attitude that Christians **must** have regarding God and his Word, but every non-Christian and erring Christian rejects.
 1. The apostle Peter taught that Christians are obligated to resort exclusively to divine instruction in religion, 1 Pet. 4:11.
 2. The apostle Paul taught that anyone who alters the Word of God warrants divine condemnation, Gal. 1:6-9.
 3. Jesus Christ repeatedly charged humanity with the urgency of hearing the Godhead exclusively, Matt. 7:21; John 12:48; Rev. 22:18-19.
 4. People who partially or wholly reject the Word of God bring divine condemnation upon themselves: erring Christians, non-Christians, denominationalists, Buddhists, Moslems, Jews, atheists, agnostics, etc.
 5. In addition, any portion of Scripture that Christians or the church refuse to teach or to practice (if applicable) is the extent to which Christians and the church condemn themselves.
- B. The churches of Christ serve the Lord exclusively according to the Word of God.
 1. The Bible alone is our only source of faith and doctrine (religious authority), 2 Tim. 3:16-17.
 2. We purposely worship and serve God as the churches of Christ worshipped and served God 2,000 years ago, Rom. 16:16.

3. In contrast, denominations and world religions owe their origin to worldly wisdom and human doctrine; therefore, neither denominations or world religions can serve God acceptably.
- C. Today, Christians serve God by doing what the Word of God instructs them to do.
1. **Knowledge of God's will must be translated into action**, Jam. 4:17.
 2. Unless our allegiance to Jesus Christ is translated into action, we have no basis for addressing him as Lord, Luke 6:46.
 3. The word "serve" itself is indicative of action and following Jesus Christ, John 12:26.
 4. Jesus Christ is our best example for serving God, Matt. 20:28.
 5. Christian service is noticeable even to non-Christians, whereby they will take notice and glorify God, Matt. 5:16.
 6. Christians also need to prod fellow Christians to serve God, Heb. 10:24.

Conclusion:

1. Both phrases, "**Here am I**" and "**speak for thy servant heareth**," demonstrate *willingness* and *readiness* with which every Christian must determine to serve God.
2. The godly attitude of Samuel, if imitated by the church and Christians, will lead us to new heights of service to God.
3. Are you willing and ready to serve God; if so, say within yourselves, '**Here am I, speak for thy servant heareth.**'

Invitation:

1. Willingness and readiness to serve God begins with becoming a child of God and continues with the same willingness and readiness to serve as obedient children of God.
2. Non-Christians must submit themselves to the Word of God and bring themselves to believe, repent of sins, profess Jesus as Lord and be immersed for the remission of sins, Rom. 10:9-10, 17; Acts 2:38.
3. Erring Christians must bring themselves once again under the jurisdiction of the Word of God, repenting and praying, Acts 8:22; 1 John 1:9.

Contrasts of Faith

Matthew 6:30

Thesis: To contrast deficient faith with efficient faith and encourage heightened faith among Christians.

Song:

Introduction:

1. Personal faith derives from the system of faith, and hence, the Christian's walk is doubly accomplished through "faith," Rom. 10:17; 2 Cor. 5:7.
2. One's personal faith, then, is only as efficient as his reliance on God and his Word, Heb. 10:23.
3. Each child of God needs to grow his faith, by which he can persevere better between now and eternity, 2 Thess. 1:3.
4. By being "full of faith," we can be victorious through faith, Acts 6:5, 8; 11:24; 1 John 5:4-5.

Body:

I. To be victorious through faith, we must be wary of DEFICIENT FAITH.

- A. Deficient faith comes in many forms.
 1. Four times during his ministry, Jesus Christ ascribed "**little faith**" to his apostles, Matt. 6:30; Luke 12:28; Matt. 8:26; 14:31; 16:18, and one Gospel writer characterized it as "**no faith**," Mark 4:40, while another penman said it was a **missing faith**, Luke 8:25.
 2. If not careful, one can experience **stolen faith** when the Word of God is stolen from his heart, Luke 8:12.
 3. As Jesus predicted, the apostle Peter encountered **failing faith** when he least expected it, Luke 22:32.
 4. Paul declared that a **weak faith** is full of doubt, Rom. 14:1.
 5. Paul wrote to the Thessalonian Christians about their **lacking faith** that needed to be perfected, 1

Thess. 3:10.

- B. Deficient faith leads to eternal ruin.
 - 1. A nominal faith is a **useless faith**, John 12:42.
 - 2. Akin to a useless faith is a **vain faith**, 1 Cor. 15:2, 14, 17.
 - 3. The Word of God or “truth” is fundamental to personal faith, that separate from it one experiences **overthrown faith**, 2 Tim. 2:18.
 - 4. **Trembling faith**, such as that possessed by demons, dreads approaching eternity, Jam. 2:19.
 - 5. Faith that is not obedient and active is a **dead faith**, Jam. 2:14-26.

II. To be victorious through faith, we must relentlessly pursue EFFICIENT FAITH.

- A. Efficient faith has several attributes.
 - 1. Our Lord credited two non-Jews with **great faith**, unparalleled among Jews, Matt. 8:10; 15:28.
 - 2. **Grounded and settled faith** rests firmly on the Gospel and provides real hope, Col. 1:23.
 - 3. The apostle Paul commended the Colossian brethren for having **steadfast faith** and **established faith**, Col. 2:5, 7.
 - 4. The Thessalonians had a **working faith**, which was a **spreading faith**, 1 Thess. 1:3, 8.
 - 5. Paul told Titus to guide his audiences to **sound faith**, Titus 1:12; 2:2.
 - 6. The only faith that has any merit is the **most holy faith**, Jude 20.
 - 7. Biblical faith is the **common or like precious faith**, Titus 1:4; 2 Pet. 1:1.
- B. Efficient faith leads to eternal happiness.
 - 1. Affliction and distress is allayed with **comforting faith**, 1 Thess. 3:7.
 - 2. **Unfeigned or wholehearted faith** is a real heritage worth passing through the generations of anyone’s family, 1 Tim. 1:5; 2 Tim. 1:5.
 - 3. An efficient faith is a **joyous faith**, Phil. 1:25.
- C. Acquiring efficient faith requires one first to sense his deficiency.

1. A desperate father sought Jesus to heal his demon-possessed son, saying, “**I believe; help thou mine unbelief,**” Mark 9:23-24.
2. The apostles recognized their need to grow their faith and said, “**Increase our faith,**” Luke 17:5; likewise, the apostle Paul concerned himself with increasing the faith of the Corinthian Christians, 2 Cor. 10:15.
3. Acquisition of eternal life requires Christians to embrace the **fight of faith** and a **kept faith**, 1 Tim. 6:12; 2 Tim. 4:7.
4. Hence, Christians will experience the **trial of faith**, 1 Pet. 1:7.

Conclusion:

1. Unquestionably, even a Christian’s faith can weaken at times.
2. One’s faith is dependent on the Word of God abiding in his heart.
3. However, it is clear that one can have efficient or **effectual faith**, Philemon 6.

Invitation:

1. Growing one’s faith begins with his **profession of faith** in Christ and obediently acting upon that belief, John 6:69; Mark 16:16.
2. Erring Christians must bring themselves to again hold the **profession of faith**, their **first faith**, without wavering, Heb. 10:23; 1 Tim. 5:12.

The Gospel of the Empty Tomb

1 Corinthians 15:1-4, 12-23

Thesis: To emphasize the extreme importance of the resurrection to Christianity.

Song: *Christ Arose*

Introduction:

1. Christianity is the most unique religion on earth because the tomb of its founder is **empty!**
 - a. The corpses the founders of other world religions lie motionless in tombs across the globe, and their decaying remains offer neither hope regarding this life nor approaching eternity.
 - b. Jesus Christ, though, resurrected from the grave never there to return and is alive today, whereby he gives us great hope regarding life that now is and eternity to come.
2. The whole of Christianity depends on the cardinal doctrine of the resurrection of Christ.
 - a. Without the resurrection of Jesus Christ, there would be no Christianity!
 - b. Without the resurrection of Christ, the despairing disciples would have long ago abandoned their posts as the apostles of Christ and proponents of Christianity.
 - c. Without the resurrection of Christ, the New Testament would not have been written and the Old Testament would remain incomplete, unfulfilled and worthless.
3. Every spiritual promise; the eternal character and nature of God; the deity and authority of Jesus Christ as well as the saving power of the Gospel rests firmly on the resurrection of Jesus Christ.
 - a. From the first spiritual promise in Gen. 3:15, including the promises made to Abraham in Gen. 12:1-3 and every promise respecting the establishment of the kingdom of

God, Dan. 2; Isa. 2; Joel 2, would be **empty promises without the empty tomb.**

- b. Without the resurrection of Jesus Christ, our all-knowing, just, merciful God would be a deceitful, fallen idol.
 - c. Without the resurrection of Jesus Christ, our Savior would be an imposter and liar, not the Son of God and lacking divine authority.
 - d. Without the resurrection of Jesus Christ, the Gospel would not be the glad tidings of good news, but rather it would be a colossal hoax on humanity, completely lacking any power to redeem lost souls.
4. The biblical doctrines of eternal destiny involving death, the second coming, heaven, hell, the judgment and the authority of God rest or fall on the resurrection.
- a. Without the resurrection, there is no eternal destiny of heaven that mortals may pursue by the way in which they live their lives on earth.
 - b. Without the resurrection, either there is nothing beyond the grave or if there is a heaven, it is inaccessible and all souls who have ever lived will spend forever in hell.
 - c. Without the resurrection, there would be no Second Coming of Christ.
 - d. Without the resurrection, there would be no judgment.
 - e. Without the resurrection, God has nothing to offer mankind whereby men will heed the authority of God.
5. The saving power of the blood of Jesus Christ, the faithful obedience of countless souls throughout numerous generations, plus every aspect of worship and service would be void (useless) without the resurrection of Jesus Christ.
6. The resurrection of a crucified Messiah is the cardinal doctrine upon which God-approved religion has always depended!
- a. The Old Testament always foretold of a resurrected Messiah.
 - b. The Gospel records and Acts tell of a resurrected Messiah.
 - c. The New Testament foretells the return of the resurrected Messiah.

Body:

I. The death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ was a primary subject of prophecy.

- A. Genesis 3:15 is the first prophecy regarding the resurrection of Jesus Christ.
 - 1. This prophecy was somewhat veiled and remained a mystery throughout Old Testament times.
 - 2. God's plan of redemption remained a mystery until God revealed it through Jesus Christ, Rom. 16:25; 1 Cor. 2:7; Eph. 3:4, 9; Col. 1:27; 4:3; 1 Tim. 3:16.
- B. Psalm 16:10 is another obvious prophecy of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.
 - 1. The apostle Peter, by inspiration, confirmed that Psalm 16:10 pertains to Jesus Christ, Acts 2:27.
 - 2. Psalm 16:10 remained a mystery until its exclusive fulfillment in Jesus Christ.
- C. Jesus Christ prophesied his own resurrection.
 - 1. Sometimes his prophecy was veiled or misunderstood (initially), John 2:18-22.
 - 2. Sometimes the prophecy was clear and unmistakable, but the hearers were shrouded in a veil of disbelief, Matt. 16:21-23; 20:17-19; 26:32; Mark 9:9; 14:28.
- D. The apostle Paul said the prophets and Moses had foretold of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, Acts 26:22-23.
- E. Numerous Old Testament passages refer to the resurrection of Jesus Christ indirectly.
 - 1. Verses that refer to the Messiah's triumphant death indirectly refer to the resurrection.
 - 2. Verses that refer to Jesus Christ as the fitting sacrifice for sin involve the resurrection of Jesus Christ.
 - 3. Isa. 53:10-12 is representative of Messianic passages that indirectly involve the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

II. The resurrection of Jesus Christ is a primary teaching of the New Testament.

- A. Peter preached the resurrected Lord.

1. The resurrection was the heart of the first recorded Gospel sermon, Acts 2:23-24.
 2. The resurrection was the thrust of the second recorded Gospel sermon, Acts 3:14-15.
 3. The resurrection of Jesus Christ was the central theme of the apostles' defense before the Sanhedrin, Acts 4:9-10.
 4. The resurrection of Jesus Christ was the heart of the first recorded Gospel sermon to Gentiles, Acts 10:39-41.
 5. Peter also taught the resurrection of Jesus Christ in his first general epistle, 1 Pet. 1:3; 3:18.
- B. The resurrected Lord was the theme of the preaching of all the apostles, Acts 4:33.
- C. The evangelist Stephen preached the resurrected Christ for which the enraged Sanhedrin degenerated into a mob that stoned Stephen to death, Acts 7:52, 55-60.
- D. The apostle Paul also taught the resurrection.
1. Paul preached the resurrection of Christ in the synagogue at Antioch of Pisidia, Acts 13:30, 33-34, 37.
 2. Paul preached the resurrection to the Thessalonian Jews in their synagogue, Acts 17:1-3.
 3. Paul wrote to the Roman Christians regarding the resurrection of Jesus Christ, Rom. 1:4; 4:25; 6:4, 9; 10:9.
 4. Paul also wrote of the resurrected Christ to the Christians at Corinth, 1 Cor. 15:1-23.
 5. Further, Paul wrote of Christ's resurrection to the Lord's church at Thessalonica, Ephesus, Philippi and to Timothy, 1 Thess. 4:14; Eph. 1:20; Phil. 3:10; 2 Tim. 2:8.
 6. Paul preached the resurrected Christ before kings and mobs, Acts 22:6-10; 23:6; 24:21; 26:22-23.

III. The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the resurrection of power.

- A. The power of the resurrection of Christ originated with Jesus Christ himself, John 10:17-18.
1. By his own power, Jesus Christ laid down his life.

2. By his own power, Jesus Christ raised himself.
 3. By his own power, Jesus Christ could foretell his death and resurrection.
 4. By his own power, Jesus Christ arose, triumphant over death, to die no more!
- B. The power of the resurrection of Jesus Christ is a cardinal doctrine of the New Testament, Phil. 3:10-11.
- C. The power of the resurrection of Jesus Christ is the force that makes the saving Gospel effective, 1 Cor. 15:1-23.
1. The resurrection makes salvation possible, vs. 2.
 2. The resurrection of Jesus Christ vindicates the Old Testament respecting its prophecies of Jesus Christ.
 3. The resurrection of Jesus Christ qualified witnesses to proclaim the Gospel, vss. 5-8.
 4. The resurrection of Jesus Christ makes our own resurrection possible, vs. 12.
 5. The resurrection of Jesus Christ vindicates the preaching of the Gospel, vss. 14-15.
 6. The resurrection of Jesus Christ validates the Christian faith, vs. 14.
 7. The power of the resurrection of Jesus Christ makes the forgiveness of sins possible, vs. 17.
 8. The power of the resurrection comforts the living regarding dead saints, vs. 18.
 9. The power of the resurrection of Jesus Christ validates the Christian hope, vs. 19.
 10. The power of the resurrection of Jesus Christ emboldens Christians regarding the Second Coming and final judgment, vss. 24-28.
- D. The resurrection of Jesus Christ causes the Gospel or Word of God to be powerful, Rom. 1:16; Heb. 4:12.
- E. The resurrection or the empty tomb is the power of Christianity, without which Christianity would not exist!

IV. The resurrection of Jesus Christ is a matter of faith and one doctrine that has always been a test of fellowship.

- A. The resurrection of Jesus Christ is a **fact** that must be believed.
1. The Jews on Pentecost believed in the existence of God (Deity) and the humanity of Jesus of Nazareth

- before the apostles preached.
- 2. The resurrected Lord was the subject of the first recorded Gospel sermon.
- 3. The resurrection of Jesus Christ was the doctrine at which the Jewish leaders and many other Jews balked.
- 4. However, about 3,000 that day acknowledged the resurrected Christ and were baptized.
- B. The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the chief tenet of both faith and confessing Christ, Rom. 10:9-10.
 - 1. The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the basis for acknowledging him as the Son of God, Matt. 10:32; Acts 8:37.
 - 2. There would be no point in professing allegiance to a dead Savior!

V. Opponents of Christianity have made every effort to discredit the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

- A. Opponents of Christianity fully realize that Christianity stands or falls on the resurrection of Jesus Christ.
- B. Critics counter with the *Swoon Theory*.
 - 1. This attempt to discredit the resurrection of Jesus Christ says that Jesus merely pretended death while on the cross.
 - 2. In addition, the theory supposes that the coolness of the tomb revived our Lord.
 - 3. Next, the theory supposes that Jesus escaped from the tomb and persuaded his disciples that he had resurrected.
 - 4. In truth, the professional soldiers charged with the executions and verification of death, complete with thrusting a spear into the side of Jesus confirm the death of Christ, John 19:31-33.
 - 5. The Roman Governor, Pilate, also confirmed the death of Jesus before releasing his body to be buried, Mark 15:43-45.
 - 6. Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus prepared the body of Jesus for burial and entombed him, which they would not have done were Jesus alive.
 - 7. The *Swoon Theory* is a feeble attempt to discredit

Christianity.

- C. Some critics assert that the enemies of our Lord stole his body.
1. To the contrary, the enemies of Jesus Christ most of all desired the body of our Lord to remain entombed and had soldiers posted to guard the tomb, Matt. 27:62-66.
 2. If the enemies of our Lord had stolen his body, they would have presented it at Pentecost or on some other occasion of the preaching of the Gospel to discredit the resurrection.
 3. Christianity would have been stopped cold had the enemies of Jesus Christ been able to produce the corpse of Jesus Christ after it was preached he had resurrected.
- D. The oldest theory opposing the resurrection of Jesus Christ is that the disciples stole the body of their crucified Lord.
1. This lie originated with the Jewish leaders who bribed the soldiers to say that the disciples stole the body while they slept, Matt. 28:11-15.
 2. The testimony of *sleeping witnesses* would be inadmissible in any court of law.
 3. The disciples did not have enough courage to confront Roman soldiers guarding the tomb; they had fled a living Savior, Matt. 26:56.
 4. The day of the resurrection the disciples were fearfully assembled in hiding, John 20:19.
 5. If the disciples had really stolen the body of Jesus, it would not have been necessary to bribe the soldiers to say so.
 6. Doubtless, disciples who had stolen the body of Jesus and proceeded to preach falsely that he had resurrected would not have endured grave persecution for a lie.
 7. It is obvious that the disciples did not steal the body of our Lord.
- E. One theory states that the women went to the wrong tomb.

1. People do not forget where they have recently buried their loved ones.
 2. Surely, Joseph would remember where his own tomb was in which he buried Jesus.
 3. Mary the mother of Jesus and Mary Magdalene took special care in observing the place of the entombment of Jesus Christ, Mark 15:47; Luke 23:55.
- F. Other opponents of Christianity claim that the disciples deliberately deceived the people with lies.
1. Again, Jewish leaders would have produced the unresurrected corpse of Jesus if they could have done so.
 2. Disciples of Christ experienced grave persecution and martyrdom, which they would not have done based on what they knew to be a lie, 1 Cor. 4:9-13; 2 Cor. 11:23-28.
- G. Still another theory is that the disciples were sincerely deceived into believing Jesus Christ had resurrected.
1. However, hundreds saw the resurrected Lord at one time and they could not all have been deceived, 1 Cor. 15:6.
 2. Those who knew him the best saw, heard and ate with him, including his mother and the apostles, Luke 24:42-43; John 21.
 3. The Lord appeared to his disciples at different times and in different places over a period of 40 days.
 4. If the disciples had been deluded into thinking Jesus resurrected, when he had not resurrected, the Jewish leaders could have produced the unresurrected corpse of Jesus.
- H. Hallelujah, the Lord is Rise!

Conclusion:

1. The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the *heartbeat* of Christianity, without which Christianity cannot exist.
2. The resurrection of Jesus Christ turned the dejected, fearful disciples of Jesus Christ into bold proclaimers of the Gospel, who were willing to suffer torture and death if need be.

3. The resurrection of Jesus Christ on the first day of the week is commemorated each first day of the week by our assembling to worship.
4. The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the lifeblood of the church for which Jesus Christ died.
5. The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the death nail to atheism, other world religions, worship of nature and every false way.

Invitation:

1. The resurrection of Jesus Christ is in vain for every soul who chooses to ignore the instructions of Jesus respecting salvation.
2. Jesus would have every accountable soul believe in him as the Son of God, John 8:24; repent of sins, Luke 13:3; confess him as Lord, Matt. 10:32; and be baptized for the remission of sins, Mark 16:16.
3. Jesus would have erring Christians repent and pray, Acts 8:22.

The Purpose of Preaching

Nehemiah 8:1-8

Thesis: To demonstrate from the Bible the nature and divinely prescribed role of preaching.

Introduction:

1. Often, denominational preachers and sometimes even Gospel preachers take unholy liberties with the Word of God in their preaching.
 - a. Some preachers pervert the Gospel, Gal. 1:6-9.
 - b. Sometimes preachers add or subtract from the Word of God, Rev. 22:18-19.
 - c. Frequently, preachers substitute the doctrines of men in place of biblical doctrine, Matt. 15:9.
2. Yet, Bible reading alone is not biblical preaching.
 - a. Reading the Bible enables one recall and quote Scripture more easily.
 - b. However, Bible reading **and study** enable one to understand Scripture also, 2 Tim. 2:15.
 - c. Without Bible study and the subsequent understanding derived thereby, preaching largely would be in vain.
 - d. Bible preaching is based upon reading God's Word and explaining it, Acts 8:26-40.

Body:

- I. **In Nehemiah 8:1-8, the preacher gave the sense and caused the people to understand the reading, vs. 8.**
 - A. The Israelites, men and women, gathered for the explicit purpose of hearing God's Word read, vss. 1-3.
 - B. The people requested the preacher to read the Word of God (Old Testament), vs. 1.
 - C. The people purposed to hear the Word of God with the expressed intention of understanding it, vs. 2.
 - D. The congregation listened attentively for several hours (while standing), vss. 3, 5, 7.
 - E. Ezra stood upon a pulpit of wood and read the Bible with

it in view of the people, vs. 4-5.

- F. The people greatly revered God and his Word, vs. 5-6.
- G. The preachers caused the people to *understand* the Bible reading, vs. 7-8.
- H. Genuine Bible preaching for any age is represented in Nehemiah 8:8.

II. In Acts 8:26-40, the preacher preached Jesus from a passage that does have the word “Jesus,” vs. 35.

- A. The Ethiopian eunuch was reading from Isaiah 53:7-8, Acts 8:32-33.
- B. The eunuch read the Bible but he did not understand it, vs. 30-31.
 - 1. His failure to understand the text was not due to denominational confusion, for denominationalism did not exist yet.
 - 2. The eunuch who was the national treasurer for Ethiopia was probably a well-educated person, vs. 27.
- C. Philip did more than read the Bible to the eunuch.
 - 1. Philip preached Jesus from Isaiah 53, Acts vs. 35.
 - 2. Philip taught the eunuch that Jesus is the Son of God, vs. 37.
 - 3. Obviously, Philip taught the eunuch about baptism, vs. 37.
 - 4. When asked if he understood what he read, the eunuch had said, “How can I except some man should guide men.”

III. In 1 Corinthians 1:18-21, a preacher states the purpose of preaching, vs. 21.

- A. Bible preaching is foolishness to those who are lost, vs. 18.
- B. Bible preaching is the power of God to save them that believe, vs. 18, 21; Rom. 1:16.
- C. Bible preaching can make its auditors complete, 2 Tim. 3:16-17.
- D. The Word of God is manifested to humanity through preaching, Titus 1:3; Rom. 10:13-15.
- E. Bible preaching saves the unsaved and keeps the saved saved, Titus 3:8.

Conclusion:

1. Bible preaching demands Bible reading with explanation.
2. Throughout the Bible, preaching has been characterized by Bible reading and giving the sense or causing men and women to understand.
 - a. The New Testament explains the Old Testament.
 - b. Ezra explained the Old Testament to his peers.
 - c. Jesus Christ explained his teaching, Matt. 13:10-17.
 - d. John the Baptist prepared the way of the Lord by explaining Old Testament prophecies and making applications to himself and to Christ, Mark 1:2-8.
 - e. The apostle Peter explained Old Testament prophecies relative to the beginning of the kingdom, Acts 2:16ff.
 - f. Stephen explained Old Testament prophecies pertaining to Jesus Christ, Acts 7:1-60.
 - g. The apostle Paul explained the Old Testament prophecies, Acts 13:14-52.
 - h. Philip explained Isaiah 53 to the eunuch, Acts 8:26-40.
3. Incidentally, the purpose of preaching is not to:
 - a. fill an auditorium (numbers).
 - b. dazzle an audience with mastery of language (oratory, eloquence, fair speeches, good words).
 - c. zap the audience with an emotional charge that will make people roll in the isle, faint, shout, dance or jump.
 - d. fill the church treasury or pay the preacher.
4. **Bible preaching, plain and simple, equals Bible reading plus explanation!**

Invitation:

1. Bible preaching is essential to the proclamation of the Word of God, whereby souls can respond obediently and be saved, Rom. 10:13-15.
2. The apostle Peter preached that his auditors should save themselves, and those “that gladly received the word were baptized,” Acts 2:40-41.
3. Erring Christians need to hearken to the preacher’s call to repent and pray, Acts 8:22; 1 John 1:9.

Elements of Strength

Ephesians 6:10

Thesis: Underlying strong congregations on which God can rely are strong Christians on whom God can rely.

Song: *Make Me a Channel of Blessing; I Surrender All; Take My Life, And Let It Be*

Introduction:

1. A strong church is comprised of strong Christians.
 - a. What would a local congregation be like if it were comprised of Christians like Ananias and Sapphira or Demas or Diotrefes, Acts 5:1-10; 2 Tim. 4:10; 3 John 9-10?
 - b. What would a local congregation be like if it were comprised of Christians like the apostles of Acts 2 forward, Stephen, Philip, Timothy and Titus, Acts 6:8-8:13, 26-40?
 - c. How strong would the church be if it were comprised of souls like you or me?
2. What makes a local church strong?
 - a. A congregation **is not** strong merely because of numbers, Deut. 7:7; 2 Sam. 24:1.
 - b. How can a local congregation “be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might,” Eph 6:10?

Body:

- I. **A Converted Membership.**
 - A. Christians who comprise any local congregation need to be converted and in some respects become as little children, Matt. 18:3-4.
 1. Members of a congregation must practice humility.
 2. In addition, little children are teachable (have pliable minds), forgiving (not critical), trusting, happy (not overcome with despair) and worry free (not overly anxious).
 - B. Christians need to be *fully converted* to the ways of the Lord, Rom. 12:1-2; Heb. 9:14; Col. 3:24.

1. First, mankind must realize that he is incapable of directing his own steps spiritually, Jer. 10:23.
2. The wise ways of men cause strife, and God hates discord among brethren, Jam. 3:13-4:1; 1 Cor. 1:10-13, 18-31; 3:18-20; Prov. 6:16-19.
3. God, through the pen of the apostle Paul, condemned “will worship,” which is when man in his own wisdom discards the wisdom of God respecting spiritual matters, Col. 2:23.
4. Those not fully converted to the ways of God serve themselves and often become false teachers, Rom. 16:17-18.

II. A Faithful Membership.

- A. Faithfulness involves seeking spiritual things first, Matt. 6:33.
 1. Imagine a congregation in which every Christian always sought spiritual matters first!
 2. What would a local congregation be like if every member were just like you; would such a congregation vigorously pursue spiritual matters?
- B. Faithfulness also includes worshipping God regularly, Heb. 10:25.
 1. Christians who are relaxing at home, attending social functions or attending sporting events **instead of** assembling with brethren could hardly be called faithful!
 2. What would the local congregation be like if every member modeled your attendance?
- C. Faithfulness requires steadfastness, 1 Cor. 15:58.
 1. God reserves salvation for faithful Christians and will punish unfaithful congregations, Matt. 10:22; Rev. 2:10; 2-3.
 2. Would a congregation where every member were like you be steadfast, faithful and saved?

III. An Informed Membership.

- A. Christians must be biblically informed.
 1. Christians must be well versed in the Word of God, 2 Tim. 2:15; Acts 17:11.
 2. The Word of God is the Christian’s spiritual diet to

- good spiritual health, 1 Pet. 2:2.
 - 3. Would a congregation know much about God's Word if every member had your Bible knowledge, Hos. 4:6?
 - B. Christians also need to be aware of popular false doctrines to better avoid being ensnared by them.
 - 1. The apostle Paul warned Christians about false doctrines, Acts 20:29-30; Gal. 1:6-9; 1 Tim. 4:1-3; 2 Thess. 2:1-10.
 - 2. The apostle John instructed Christians to scrutinize teachers (preachers), 1 John 4:1.
 - 3. Christians need to watch for spiritual danger and defend the Gospel, Ezek. 3:17-21; Phil. 1:17.
 - 4. If every member of the church were as aware of contemporary threats to the church, would it be prepared to resist doctrinal error?

IV. A Working Membership.

- A. Working for Jesus is never in vain, 1 Cor. 15:58; Titus 2:14.
 - 1. No words to the lost or erring are in vain irrespective if anyone responds, because we are doing the work God requires of us, Mark 16:15-16; Jam. 5:19-20.
 - 2. Edifying the church and helping the needy are not in vain, because we are working for our Lord the works he has assigned us, 1 Cor. 14:12; Gal. 6:10.
 - 3. No godly efforts are in vain, Col. 3:23-24.
- B. The early church worked for Jesus despite serious obstacles and personal perils.
 - 1. Forced from their homes because of persecution, Christians fled from Jerusalem and took the Gospel throughout Palestine, Acts 8:1-4.
 - 2. Early disciples served Jesus Christ knowing that they might forfeit their lives in his service, Matt. 10:22; Rev. 2:10.
 - 3. How much work for the Lord would be accomplished if every member worked for Jesus like you do?

V. A Loving Membership.

- A. Love is the gentle cord that binds Christians together.
 - 1. Jesus Christ described love as the badge of discipleship, John 13:34-35; Heb. 13:1.
 - 2. Christianity without love is sadly deficient, 1 Cor. 13:1-3; 1 John 3:14.
 - 3. What would the church be like if every Christian demonstrated the love that you exhibit in your life?
- B. True love is learned from God who is Love, 1 John 4:8, 16.
 - 1. Especially Christians ought to love God who first loved them, Rom. 5:8; 1 John 4:19.
 - 2. We show our love for God by obeying him, John 14:15, 21, 23.
 - 3. If every Christian had the love for God that you have, would it be evident that the church loves God?

VI. A Praying Membership.

- A. There is power in prayer, Jam. 5:16-18.
 - 1. Therefore, it must be the case that Christians are powerless without prayer, and they are powerless with prayers in which they have no confidence, Matt. 21:22; Jam. 1:5-8.
 - 2. Hence, many passages of Scripture instruct the children of God to pray and pray often, 1 Thess. 5:17; Luke 18:1.
 - 3. What kind of a church would it be if every member's prayer life was like your prayer life?
- B. There are many people for whom we are obligated to pray.
 - 1. We, like Paul, ought to pray for our brethren, Rom. 1:9-10; 1 Cor. 1:4; Phil. 1:3-4; Col. 1:3, 9-12; 1 Thess. 1:2; 2 Thess. 1:3; Eph. 6:18.
 - 2. We need to pray for humanity in general and rulers in particular, 1 Tim. 2:1-2.
 - 3. Especially, we are to pray for the lost, not that they will be saved in their sins, but that they may submit to the righteousness of God, Rom. 10:1-3.
 - 4. How much praying would the church do if every

member prayed for brethren, humanity,
governments and the lost like you pray?

Conclusion:

1. Underlying strong congregations on which God can rely are strong Christians on whom God can rely.
2. Underlying weak congregations on which God cannot rely are weak Christians on which God cannot rely.
3. Do you contribute to the strength or weakness of the Lord's church?
4. The church of our Lord needs a strong membership, one that is: totally converted, faithful, informed, working, loving and praying.

Invitation:

1. It is impossible for erring Christians and non-Christians to help make the Lord's church strong, Phil. 4:13.
2. All spiritual blessings, chief of which is salvation, are available exclusively in Jesus Christ, Eph. 1:3; Gal. 3:27.

The Vicarious Suffering Of Christ

2 Corinthians 5:21; 1 Peter 2:24

Thesis: To better appreciate the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ for a lost world and what our response ought to be.

Song: *When I Survey the Wondrous Cross*

Introduction:

1. There are four cardinal doctrines of Christianity.
 - a. The Virgin Birth.
 - b. The Atonement (Redemption) of Sins.
 - c. The Vicarious Suffering of Christ.
 - d. The Resurrection from the Dead.
2. The cardinal doctrines of Christianity are attacked by modernists or liberals, atheists and others today.
 - a. A “modernist” is one who feels compelled to redefine the doctrines of Christianity to make them agree with what he believes to be indisputable, scientific fact (e.g., evolution instead of creation or other explanations for the miracles of the Bible).
 - b. An “atheist” is one who disbelieves the existence of God and spirit beings including the spiritual side of man.
3. Their attacks broadside all of the fundamental principles on which Christianity stands; each of the cardinal doctrines of Christianity is under attack.
 - a. The virgin birth (Isa. 7:14) is attacked by modernists in mistranslated versions of the Bible; and unfortunately, some misguided brethren cherish and defend these mistranslations (e.g., RSV).
 - b. Atheists and modernists further deny that God exists, that there can be absolute right or wrong (sin), atonement for sin, a Messiah, a spiritual side of man and a resurrection from the dead.

- c. Atheists and modernists discount Jesus Christ and his vicarious suffering as the fanatical behavior of a deluded man and his naive followers.
- 4. Truly, as the Son of God, Jesus not only suffered for mankind, but his was a vicarious suffering.
 - a. By “vicarious” we mean Jesus willingly suffered, not for his own offences, but for the sins of others, 2 Cor. 5:21; Heb. 4:15; 1 Pet. 2:22, 24.
 - b. Further, Jesus willingly suffered (bearing our sin unto death) in our place, John 4:34; 6:38.

Body:

I. A Closer Look at the Vicarious Suffering of Jesus Christ.

- A. The *willingness* of Christ to suffer in man’s stead is essential to the integrity of God; the Father could not have sent an *unwilling* Christ to Calvary’s cross without becoming cruel and unjust.
- B. The necessity of the vicarious suffering of Christ is also *crucial* to the integrity of God; otherwise, this also would make the Father cruel and unjust.
- C. The vicarious suffering of Christ is in harmony with the nature of God.
 - 1. Natural law in the plant kingdom employs cycles in which the death of one generation of plant life (e.g., forests, crops) permits the rise of new plant life.
 - 2. God, the author of natural law, devised a plan whereby out of the death of Christ sinful man is renewed, Rom. 6:3-5.
 - 3. Natural law in the animal kingdom includes instincts by which animals care for their offspring, even in the face of extreme peril or death, Matt. 23:37.
 - 4. God cares for his offspring, man, to the extent he was willing to experience the death of his Son.
- D. Vicarious suffering is in harmony with the grace of God.
 - 1. The principle that the innocent must suffer for the guilty is built into God’s grace, (e.g. animal sacrifices).
 - 2. Jesus Christ is the anti-type of those former

sacrifices, **Heb. 9:7-14**; 1 Pet. 3:18.

3. Since God is infinitely good and finite man practices evil, God appealed to grace to save man; man could not possibly be saved by justice in the hands of an infinitely just God — all would be hopelessly lost, Rom. 3:24; 5:17, 20-21.

II. God by his Sinless Nature Can Have No Fellowship with Sin.

- A. Therefore, left to himself, sinful man can have no fellowship with God.
 1. God did not create evil and has no relationship with it, Jam. 1:13-16.
 2. God, though, did not prevent the possibility of evil forasmuch as he endowed angels and mankind with the power of choice, Josh. 24:15; Rev. 22:17.
 3. Without the power of choice, men would be mere robots.
- B. Hence, in order to restore the fellowship between God and man, the Father sent an infinitely righteous vicarious sacrifice to compensate for man's sinfulness, John 3:16.
 1. Yet, God still cannot save impenitent souls without violating his just and righteous nature, Deut. 19:21.
 2. Therefore, God authored a scheme of redemption with which men must comply, Eph. 3:1-12; Tit. 1:1-3.
 3. God combined mercy and grace with righteousness and justice by the vicarious suffering of Christ to save souls, Titus 3:5; Eph. 2:8.
 4. Although redemption is a free gift, it must be *appropriated* by each soul to himself *according to God's terms*, Rom. 5:15-21; 6:3-5.

Conclusion:

1. There are four cardinal doctrines of Christianity: the Virgin Birth, Atonement (Redemption) for sins, the vicarious suffering of Christ and the resurrection from the dead.
2. These fundamental principles of Christianity are under attack today.
3. The vicarious suffering of Jesus Christ is *essential* to man's redemption.

4. Jesus willingly offered himself in our place to save man.
5. The vicarious suffering of Jesus Christ allows a *just but loving God* to save fallen men through his grace and mercy.

Invitation:

1. However, man must comply with God's terms in order to benefit from the vicarious suffering of Christ.
2. Namely, one must **hear** and **believe**, Rom. 10:17; **repent**, Acts 17:30; **confess Christ** as Lord, Rom. 10:9, 10; and **be baptized**, Acts 22:16; 1 Pet. 3:21.
3. Also, once saved, one must continue to obey God's plan (Gospel), Heb. 5:8-9, and on those occasions in which the child of God sins, through penitence and prayer he may again take advantage of the vicarious suffering of Jesus Christ, 1 John 1:7; Acts 8:22.

Potential Danger in All Our Blessings

Matthew 22:37-40

Thesis: To emphasize that the proper attitude toward and use of physical blessings is essential to salvation.

Song: *O Thou Fount of Every Blessing*

Introduction:

1. Things that are neither good nor bad have the potential of being used for good or evil.
 - a. For instance, the airplane is neither good nor bad, but it can be used for rescue and medial missions or travel and it can be used for war.
 - b. Fire has no moral quality either, but it can be used for warmth and cooking or it can destroy.
2. Blessings enjoyed by Christians, which blessings have no moral quality (they are neither good nor bad), can be abused to the harm of one's spiritual health.

Body:

I. Great Intellect, higher education and abundant knowledge can be a curse to a Christian.

- A. We do not mean, as opponents to Christianity sometimes charge, that Christianity only appeals to poorly educated people.
- B. Christians must be humble and teachable like children, Matt. 11:25; 18:3-4.
- C. A person must correctly exercise intellect in Christianity, Matt. 22:37; Phil. 1:9; Col. 1:9.
- D. Yet, worldly wisdom can puff one up and cause him to be arrogant, 1 Cor. 1:21; 3:18-21; 8:1.

II. Time can be a blessing or a curse depending on how it is used.

- A. One's time can be used to serve God or Satan, but not both, Matt. 6:24.

- B. We must buy back wasted moments by the efficient way in which we use time presently, Eph. 5:16.

III. Wealth can be a blessing or a curse.

- A. Wealth can ruin one or by its correct use help one prepare for a blissful eternity, 1 Tim. 6:10, 17-19.
- B. Treasure in heaven is more important than earthly riches, Matt. 19:21.
- C. Our Lord compared riches to thorns that can choke the Word of God out of us, Luke 8:14.
- D. Christians must develop contentment in place of coveting this world's riches, Heb. 13:5.

IV. Authority can be a blessing or a curse.

- A. The abuse of authority spelled the ruin of a Christian named Diotrephes and troubled the church, 3 John 9-10.
- B. If we have any authority in various areas of life or the church, we have an obligation to use that authority righteously (e.g., elders, deacons, teachers, preachers, bosses, officers, husbands, wives, etc.), Prov. 29:2.

V. Great beauty or personality when diverted to sinful use becomes a curse.

- A. Great beauty may lead one to immodesty and immorality, 1 Tim. 2:9-10; Prov. 7:10.
- B. An outgoing personality may lead a salesman or a preacher to deceive people, Lev. 19:36; Amos 8:5; Rom. 16:17-18.

VI. Great popularity, reputation and worldly honor may lead to compromises of truth and character.

- A. A good name is a worthy pursuit, Prov. 22:1.
- B. However, it is never right to follow a majority in unrighteousness to preserve one's popularity, Exod. 23:2.
- C. Godly men and women do not seek the praise of men in place of the praise of God, John 12:42-43.
- D. Often, the pursuit of worldly distinction interferes with the pursuit of godliness, 1 Cor. 1:26.

VII. Even a good moral life and devotion to duty may cause one to despise "publicans and sinners," Luke 18:9-14.

VIII. Fine clothes, cars, homes, meetinghouses, etc. can be dangerous, if we depend on these things rather than

personal faith, devotion, godly lives, saving souls, etc., 1 John 2:15-17.

- IX. Loyalty to home and duty led the elder son to despise his wayward, prodigal brother, Luke 15:11-31.
- X. Great talent and a good voice, etc. can ruin a preacher if it keeps him from studying and working for the Lord, 1 Tim. 2:15.
- XI. Good health or youthfulness now may keep some from obeying the Gospel.
 - A. There is no promise of a tomorrow for any of us, irrespective of how young we may be, Prov. 27:1; Jam. 4:13-15.
 - B. Aware that besides our eventual demise that Jesus Christ will return possibly within our lives, we ought to live godly **now**, 2 Pet. 3:9-11.

Conclusion:

- 1. The physical blessings of which we have been recipients are nearly innumerable.
- 2. Especially Christians must exercise caution regarding our earthly blessings lest they draw us away from God.
- 3. Blessings also increase our responsibilities!
 - a. A **good job**, for instance, increases one's responsibility to give heartily to the church so the Lord's work can continue.
 - b. **Worldly honor** increases one's responsibility to influence the world with the Gospel.
- 4. Blessings are like an automobile, neither good nor bad, but someone behind the steering wheel determines the use and course.

Invitation:

- 1. In addition to the physical blessings God showers on the just and the unjust, he reserves spiritual blessings in Christ, Matt. 4:45; Eph. 1:3.
- 2. Put on Christ today in baptism to begin enjoying spiritual blessings, Gal. 3:27.
- 3. Others present may have discarded their spiritual blessings and need to return to the Lord, 1 John 2:1-6.

What Doth the Lord Require of Thee?

Micah 6:8

Thesis: To demonstrate that in all dispensations, God has required men to see divine righteousness.

Introduction:

1. Micah was a faithful prophet of God at a critical time in the nation of Judah.
 - a. Micah was a contemporary of the prophet Isaiah.
 - b. Micah preached in the rural areas whereas Isaiah preached in Jerusalem.
 - c. Micah's divine condemnations chided both divided kingdoms of Israel (in the north) and Judah (in the south).
 - d. Micah's message foretold of divine punishment and captivity.
 - e. However, Micah offered hope if the Israelites would repent, as well as ultimate hope in the then distant coming of the Messiah.
2. God was grieved with the sins of both Israelite kingdoms.
 - a. The northern kingdom of Israel, or Samaria, left God from the time of its inception by immediately practicing idolatry.
 - b. Judah also began to practice idolatry.
 - c. Leaders perverted judgment in both kingdoms; priests and prophets in both kingdoms caused the people to err from God's Word.
 - d. Both kingdoms practiced idolatry and gross immoralities, among other sins.
3. Micah 6:8 records God's solution to the sin problem affecting both kingdoms.
 - a. Micah 6:8 emphasizes that the solution to the problem of sin lies with God and that he has not left humanity without instruction regarding human redemption.

- b. Abiding by the Word of God, generally speaking, is the answer for people who lived under the Old Testament and for people who live under the New Testament, Ecc. 12:13-14; 1 Thess. 2:13.

Body:

I. What Doth the Lord Require of Thee? Micah 6:8.

- A. “Do justly.”
 - 1. God-approved religion has always been a **doing religion**, Matt. 7:21; Jam. 4:17.
 - 2. Good intentions and empty “amens” are deficient.
 - 3. “Do justly” means actively pursuing righteousness as God defines righteousness, rather than what simply may pass for righteousness among men.
 - 4. One’s conduct would be judicially correct before our God and Judge.
- B. “Love mercy” (“kindness” ASV).
 - 1. The child of God will exercise mercy, kindness or have pity on his fellow man.
 - 2. The child of God will also show deference for God and do acts or deeds that represent a kind response to divine instruction.
 - 3. We will receive no more mercy and kindness from God than we are willing to bestow on our fellow men, Matt. 5:7; 18:23-35.
- C. “Walk humbly with thy God.”
 - 1. Humanity has been invited to go on a *journey* with God, the end of which for the faithful is a home in heaven with God.
 - 2. Successful pilgrims on the journey with God to God’s house are lowly, humble and not argumentative against God and his Word, 3 John 9-11; 1 Cor. 1:18-21; Prov. 11:2.
 - 3. We must continually walk down the path of life where God leads, 1 John 1:7; 2:6.

II. What Doth the Lord Require of Thee? Deut. 10:12-13.

- A. “Fear the Lord thy God.”
 - 1. In addition to any outward acts and ceremonial activities legislated by God, the Godhead requires that mankind respond to divine instruction with

- reverential fear* and with *reverent conduct*.
2. As the great Sovereign, Creator and Judge, God *demand*s from his creation the reverence that is *due him*.
- B. “Walk in all his ways.”
1. Humans must follow God through the course of life as he leads them through the Word of God.
 2. Life is neither hapless nor the destiny uncertain for those who allow themselves to be led of God through his Word.
- C. “To love him.”
1. The child of God’s affections are to be set primarily on God.
 2. We do not forget the objects of our affections, or what pleases and displeases them.
- D. “To serve the Lord thy God.”
1. “Serve” means to enslave one’s self to another whereby one is completely at the discretion of whomever is being served.
 2. The most noble and rewarding devotion is to God.
 3. As the New Testament reveals, mankind must opt to serve God foremost, Matt. 6:33.
- E. “With all thy heart and with all thy soul” (cf. Matt. 22:37).
1. “Heart” is defined as courage with understanding.
 2. “Soul” has to do with the life breath that animates us or makes us alive.
 3. Therefore, purposely the child of God determines to employ his total being or essence in the service of God.
- F. “To keep the commandments of the Lord, and his statutes.”
1. Both “commandments” and “statutes” refer to divine instruction and represent all of it.
 2. Both testaments demand obedience, 1 Sam. 15:22; Heb. 5:8-9.
 3. Love is associated with obedience, John 14:15.
- G. “Which I command thee this day.”
1. Obviously, divine instruction is not optional!

2. It is never safe to relegate divine instruction to a matter of indifference.
- H. “For thy good.”
1. The “good” in which God’s Word instructs humanity is for our physical and spiritual welfare on earth, and our spiritual welfare forever in heaven.
 2. The good God intends for us is better than what man often plans and does for himself.

Conclusion:

1. Generally, God just wants man to behave himself according to God’s rules; God as our Father has the right to direct his children and require obedience.
2. All of humanity will be judged according to the respective laws of God under which they lived, Rev. 20:12-15; 2 Cor. 5:10; John 12:48.
3. Our mission regarding righteousness and its reward is plain, 1 Pet. 3:11-12.
4. The righteousness that we must pursue is revealed in the Word of God (i.e., not the civil law of men that may conflict with divine instruction or personal mottos: “If it feels good, do it!”).

Invitation:

1. “What doth the Lord require of thee?” depends on your spiritual condition.
2. Non-Christians must obey the Gospel to avoid a vengeful Jesus Christ at his second coming, 2 Thess. 1:7-9; Mark 16:16.
3. Erring Christians must repent and pray, Acts 8:22.
4. The rest of us must stay on the path that leads ever upward to a heavenly city!

Holy Bible

2 Timothy 3:15

Thesis: To emphasize the holiness and sacredness of the Bible.

Song: *My Precious Bible, Give Me the Bible*

Introduction:

1. The Bible is holy and sacred.
 - a. By the Bible, I mean both the Old and New testaments.
 - b. I mean by the Bible those translations that most correctly reflect with accuracy the original languages in which the Bible was written, and the message of God he preserved in those manuscripts.
2. Further, the holy and sacred nature of the Bible **does not** depend upon the appreciation anyone has for it.
 - a. The Bible is inherently holy and sacred.
 - b. That is, the Bible is holy and sacred irrespective of whether mankind recognizes it as the Word of God and reveres it.
3. The Bible is holy and sacred because it is the Word of God.
 - a. There is sufficient internal and external evidence to validate the Bible as the Word of God, therefore making it holy and sacred.
 - b. Therefore, mankind is obligated to submit humbly to the God-given instructions contained therein.

Body:

- I. **There are several perspectives of the Bible that alone do not constitute conclusive evidence that the Bible is holy and sacred.**
 - A. The Bible underlies the customs and laws of the major portion of the western world.
 1. For centuries and until recently law and ethics have been attributed to the Bible.
 2. Still, the way in which the world dates its letters, calendars, etc. corresponds to Jesus Christ.
 3. The benevolent institutions throughout the world owe their existence either directly or indirectly to

God's Word.

4. However, merely because much of the world has been affected by the Bible does not prove that the Bible is the holy and sacred Word of God.
- B. The Bible claims to be holy and sacred.
1. Throughout the Bible, it claims unequalled authority over mankind, promises rewards for obedience and threatens punishment for disobedience, 2 Tim. 3:16-17; Heb. 5:8-9; 2 Thess. 1:7-9.
 2. However, the Bible is not the only volume claiming to be the Word of God, and the Bible's prophets are not the only ones who are claimed to be prophets of God (e.g., Koran, Book of the Mormon, Science and Health with a Key to the Scriptures, Mohammed, Joseph Smith, Mary Baker Eddy).
 3. That the Bible claims for itself holiness and sacredness is not by itself conclusive evidence that it is the holy and sacred Word of God.
- C. The Bible contains several prophecies that have been fulfilled.
1. The Old Testament has hundreds of prophecies, most of which that were fulfilled in the New Testament.
 2. However, skeptics might attempt to classify several of them as *self-fulfilling prophecies*.
 3. Some prophecies and their fulfillment, though they fortify the faith of those who already believe in God, may not convince the unbeliever of the holiness and sacredness of the Bible, as the Word of God.
- D. Multitudes of people around the world who believe and study the Bible may seem to validate the Bible as the holy and sacred Word of God.
1. However, there are more people in the world who **do not** believe the Bible is the Word of God.
 2. Multitudes subscribe to other world religions or no religion at all and no religious book.

- E. The Bible has been accurately translated from vast collections of manuscripts in the Bible's original languages.
 - 1. Though an admirable feat, the same might be said of several other prominent ancient documents.
 - 2. The preservation of ancient documents and their accurate translation into English, for instance, does not prove that the Bible is the sacred and holy Word of God.

II. The holiness and sacredness of the Bible as the Word of God depends on an objective analysis of reliable evidence.

- A. The Bible enjoys a remarkable harmony with itself that is unparalleled by any document of human origin.
 - 1. The Bible was written by about 40 human penmen over about 1,600 years and covers about 4,000 years of history; the human penmen were from various backgrounds, lived in various countries and most of them did not know each other.
 - 2. The Bible nowhere contradicts itself and appears to have been written by a single penman.
 - 3. The harmony of the Bible surpasses the harmony and reliability of any volume of human origin, suggesting that the Bible is divine in origin.
 - 4. The harmony of the Bible is one of several building blocks of evidence that with other similar building blocks relate to the holiness and sacredness of the Bible as the Word of God.
- B. The Bible is historically corrected despite formerly being suspected of being historically inaccurate.
 - 1. For instance, archaeological excavations have verified that the walls of Jericho fell flat and outward, as the Bible records, Josh. 6.
 - 2. Archaeological discovery has verified the biblical record that Belshazzar was king in Babylon when the Persians conquered it, Dan. 5.
 - 3. The accuracy of Bible history surpasses the accuracy of merely mortal accounts of history, suggesting that the Bible is divine in origin.
 - 4. This, too, is a building block of evidence.

- C. The Bible, though not a science text, is scientifically correct whenever it addresses science.
1. In 1856, Hubert Spencer supplied for science a basic principle: Time, force, action and matter are vital elements to scientific research; the Bible first recorded these respecting creation, Gen. 1:1: “In the beginning [time] God [force] created [action] the heaven and the earth [matter].
 2. Matthew Fontaine Maury, father of modern navigation, discovered the ‘paths of the sea’ (gulf stream and ocean currents) recorded in Psa. 8:8.
 3. The Bible also addresses the treasures to be found in snow and hail, which science has verified, Job 38:22.
 4. Gen. 6:15 records the perfect ratio of dimensions for modern shipbuilding, 3,200 years before modern man discovered it.
 5. Though the human penmen may not have been aware of the significance of the scientific information included in their writings, the inclusion of unknown scientific information in the Bible points to a divine penman.
- D. The Bible contains many prophecies that cannot be successfully construed as self-fulfilling, which therefore prove the Bible to be divine in origin, as well as holy and divine.
1. About 2,000 B.C., God promised that a Messiah would be a descendant of Abram or Abraham, Gen. 12:1-3; this was fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth.
 2. Prophecies regarding the death of the Messiah are beyond the possibility of deceitful fulfillment (i.e., self-fulfilling), Psa. 16:16-17; 34:20; Isa. 53:5, 9, 12 (his hands and feet were pierced; none of his bones were broken though the bones of two others crucified with him were broken; he was numbered in his death with outlaws; he was whipped prior to crucifixion; etc.).
 3. During the time of the Babylonian kingdom, Daniel prophesied and named the next two world

kingdoms, Dan. 8:20-21 (Media & Persia; Greece); secular history saw them both come to power per the details of the prophecy.

4. Fulfilled prophecies such as these validate the Bible as the holy and sacred Word of God.

Conclusion:

1. Historically, scientifically, prophetically and harmoniously the Bible is proved to be divine in origin.
 - a. A divine penman, therefore, is equally authoritative in **all** matters addressed in the Bible.
 - b. The Bible, then, is holy and sacred as it claims.
2. After the Bible is validated, all other passages pertaining to the holiness and sacredness of the Bible can be considered as corroborative evidence.
 - a. The Bible is exactly what it claims to be!
 - b. Being holy and sacred, the Bible is worthy of our earnest study and application to our lives.

Invitation:

1. Each of us needs to turn to the holy and sacred Word of God for direction in spiritual matters.
2. For instance, what the Bible says respecting salvation for everyone living today is critical to the eternal well being of humanity, Mark 16:16; Acts 8:22.

God's Answer Book

2 Timothy 3:16-17

Thesis: God's Word (the Bible) provides all the answers mankind needs for spiritual living and preparation for eternity in heaven.

Song: *Give Me the Bible*

Introduction:

1. The Bible is divine in origin, 2 Tim. 3:16-17; Gal. 1:11-12.
 - a. The Bible is not merely the product of well-meaning men, 2 Pet. 1:20-21.
 - b. Certainly, the Bible is not the work of evil men or Satan.
2. The Bible affects all mankind.
 - a. Every accountable soul is amenable to it and will be judged by it, Rev. 20:12.
 - b. Some who stand before the throne of God will hear their salvation declared, Matt. 25:21.
 - c. Some souls will be lost despite God desires all to be saved, Rom. 1:16; 2 Pet. 3:9; 2 Thess. 1:7-9.
3. Everyone is affected by the Bible irrespective of whether they realize it.
 - a. Those who ignore the Bible and think they have avoided the issue regarding the eternal disposition of their souls are mistaken, Matt. 12:30.
 - b. Christians are wondrously affected by the Bible in this life and will be further affected by it in the world to come.

Body:

I. The Bible reveals man's origin.

- A. The popular notion of evolution is incapable of revealing the origin of mankind.
 1. Macroevolution is riddled with **numerous missing links** and thereby unable to explain the transition from species to species it claims resulted in the development of humans.
 2. However, fretting over supposed species development is getting the cart before the horse

and a senseless until the evolutionist can explain the **origin of matter** (from which life supposedly spontaneously developed).

3. Further, macroevolution is incapable of explaining **intricate design** characteristic of the created universe, sometimes which design depends on a number of characteristics working together simultaneously for an organism to live or be something different from another similar species.
- B. The Bible, however, reveals the origin of mankind.
1. The testimony of the Bible regarding creation is as trustworthy as any other subject about which it records anything; it is inconsistent and illogical to believe only part of the Bible.
 2. The first two chapters of the Bible declare the origin of humanity, Gen. 1-2; Zech. 12:1.

II. **The Bible gives purpose to the lives of men and women.**

- A. Without the divine purpose for living, man condescends to the pursuit of his animal lusts.
1. This is reflected in the mottos by which many live there lives (e.g., “all the gusto one time around”; “if it feels good, do it”; “eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we die,” 1 Cor. 15:32; Luke 12:19).
 2. This is reflected in the moral atrocities that have become so rampant in the modern world (e.g., sexual perversions, breakdown of the home, our nation distancing itself from God), 1 John 2:15-17.
- B. The purpose of man’s existence on earth is to prepare for an eternity in heaven with God.
1. Therefore, Jesus warned those to whom he spoke to seek spiritual things first and prepare to meet God, Matt. 6:33; Amos 4:12; John 14:1-3.
 2. A day of judgment is coming during which God will determine if each of us made the appropriate preparation to live in heaven forever, Ecc. 12:13-14.
 3. The divine purpose that God intends for each accountable soul surpasses any purpose for living that can be achieved from one’s vocation, wealth,

pleasure, etc.

III. The Bible provides a foundation of faith by which to live.

- A. One's personal faith derives from the system of faith (Gospel or New Testament), 2 Cor. 5:7.
 - 1. Only such a Bible faith can guide one toward the eternal shore of heaven.
 - 2. The Christian pilgrimage would be an aimless maze without the divine guidance afforded in the Bible.
- B. Possessing a Bible faith is the basis of seeking God and finding him.
 - 1. For instance, without faith we cannot begin to please God, Heb. 11:6.
 - 2. An acceptable faith derives from the Word of God (the Bible), Rom. 10:17; John 20:30-31.

IV. The Bible provides light and understanding.

- A. Outside the Bible is spiritual darkness and the faulty wisdom of men, 1 Cor. 1:18-25.
 - 1. Spiritual darkness leads to works of darkness (sin), Rom. 13:12; Eph. 5:11.
 - 2. There can be no mixing of spiritual darkness and spiritual light, 2 Cor. 6:14.
- B. Contrariwise, the Bible provides spiritual light and understanding, Psalms 119:104-105, 130; 2 Tim. 1:10.
 - 1. Jesus is the key to spiritual light to dispel spiritual darkness, Matt. 4:16.
 - 2. The special mission of the apostle Paul was to turn the Gentiles from darkness to light, Acts 26:18; Eph. 5:8

V. The Bible identifies sin and its consequences.

- A. Categorically, sin is the violation of divine law, 1 John 3:4.
 - 1. Sin may be acts of omission, Jam. 4:17; Matt. 25:31-46.
 - 2. Sin frequently is violating divine instruction—disobedience, 1 Cor. 6:9-10; Gal. 5:19-21; Rev. 21:8; Rom. 14:23.
- B. The consequences for sin are lethal, Rom. 6:23.
 - 1. Disobedience and obedience are contrasted with

opposing results, Rom. 6:16-17.

2. If found to be disobedient before the judgment bar of God, eternal death (separation from God) will be assigned, Rev. 20:14-15.

VI. The Bible provides mankind what he needs in this life to prepare for the afterlife.

- A. Mankind does not need anything beyond the Bible to prepare adequately for the approaching eternity.
 1. The Bible is sufficient, 2 Tim. 3:16-17.
 2. The Bible is complete, 2 Pet. 1:3.
- B. Heaven awaits faithful Christians.
 1. We can share the certainty regarding an eternity in heaven with the apostle Paul, 2 Tim. 4:7-8.
 2. We can rest assured that Jesus will return for us, John 14:1-3.
 3. As long as we endure whatever may buffet us, we will receive a crown of righteousness in eternity, Rev. 2:10.

Conclusion:

1. The Bible cannot be destroyed, though many have attempted to destroy it over the centuries, 1 Pet. 1:25.
2. Every accountable soul today needs to study the Bible because it so greatly affects him, Acts 17:11; 2 Tim. 2:15.
3. Through study of the Bible, mankind learns how to please God, which is to obey him, John 14:15; Heb. 5:8-9.

Invitation:

1. The human response to the Bible will determine the eternal disposition of souls.
2. The correct human response to the Bible begins with compliance with the words of Jesus, Mark 16:16.
3. If one is an unfaithful child of God, the correct human response to the Bible for that person is repentance and prayer, Acts 8:22; 1 John 1:9.

The Authority of the Word of God

2 Samuel 23:2

Thesis: To show that for mankind today, all religious authority resides in the written Word of God.

Introduction:

1. The absolute authority of God our Creator has been delegated to the apostles of Christ.
2. The apostles and other inspired persons of the first century spoke and wrote by the inspiration of God.
3. For centuries until recently, most people professing to be Christians acknowledged the Bible or Word of God as from God and authoritative.
4. Today, however, the authority of the Word of God or the Bible has been severely undercut throughout Christendom.
 - a. The flood of modern speech translations of the Bible that sometimes contradict themselves and conflict with other translations has undermined the public's confidence in the Bible as the Word of God.
 - b. False theories respecting "inspiration" (e.g., *thought inspiration, literary inspiration*) likewise have undermined confidence in the Bible as authoritative in one's life.
 - c. *New interpretations* of the Bible to permit what former, more conservative interpretations condemned, are commonplace (e.g., homosexuality, divorce and remarriage for any cause, changing the God-appointed roles of men and women, etc.).
 - d. Many religionists today have substituted completely manmade preferences for divine mandates (e.g., *dead letter*, authority said to reside in the church, replacement of the Bible with other documents).
5. Therefore, it is appropriate and timely that we remind ourselves of the place of the Bible in our lives.

Body:

I. The written Word of God (the Bible) is the ONLY source of divine authority available now.

- A. There is no *new revelation!*
 - 1. Any doctrine that differs from what was delivered in the first century is false doctrine that will condemn all who embrace it, Gal. 1:6-9.
 - 2. The revelation that God intended man to have for all time from the first century onward has been provided already, Jude 3.
 - 3. Jesus Christ declared that only condemnation awaits anyone who adds or subtracts from the Word of God, Rev. 22:18-19.
- B. The Word of God, irrespective of whether it was spoken by the heavenly Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit, an angel or a prophet of God, endures and is authoritative.
 - 1. God put *his* Word in mortals, 2 Sam. 23:2; 2 Pet. 1:21.
 - 2. Jesus delegated authority to his apostles, Matt. 16:19; 18:18.
 - 3. The Word of God cannot be destroyed, Matt. 24:35; Isa. 40:8; 1 Pet. 1:25.

II. The written Word of God (the Bible) is the ONLY reliable source of information relative to salvation and impending final judgment.

- A. **Only** the Word of God can save mankind.
 - 1. As Peter observed, only Jesus Christ has “the words of eternal life,” John 6:68.
 - 2. Jesus remarked the Word of God ‘sanctifies,’ John 17:17.
 - 3. The Gospel, Word of God or Bible is comprised of ‘words whereby we can be saved,’ Acts 11:14; Rom. 1:16.
- B. Every accountable soul will be judged by the Word of God.
 - 1. Jesus himself affirmed that his words would judge humanity, John 12:48.
 - 2. Final judgment by Jesus Christ is a subject of Old Testament prophecy, Deut. 18:18-19; Acts 3:23.

3. The portrayal of the judgment in the Book of Revelation indicates that all souls will be judged by the particular Word of God under which each respectively lived, Rev. 20:12.

III. The written Word of God (the Bible) is the ONLY VERBALLY and PLENARY INSPIRED document available to mortals today

- A. The Word of God is God-breathed.
 1. The apostles and other inspired writers spoke and wrote exactly what they were given by God, Isa. 51:16; Jer. 5:14; Matt. 10:19-20; John 17:8; Acts 2:6-11; 1 Cor. 2:13.
 2. Not some supposed *thought inspiration* and certainly not *literary inspiration*, but the prophets of God have always spoken by *verbal inspiration*.
- B. **Only** the Word of God is complete and sufficient instruction by which man can redeem his soul and prepare to meet God in judgment.
 1. No other source can perfect mankind before God, 2 Tim. 3:16-17.
 2. The Word of God is complete — nothing lacking, 2 Pet. 1:3.

Conclusion:

1. Since the Word of God (the Bible) is divine in origin, authoritative, able to save souls, complete and the basis of final judgment, every accountable soul urgently needs to apply it to his life.
2. Irrespective of whether one acknowledges the impact of the Word of God (the Bible) on his life now and eternally, he is amenable to it, cannot escape it and will be judged by it.

Invitation:

1. The verbally inspired Word of God will save us or condemn us; which will it be in your case?
2. Non-Christians and erring Christians can obey the Word of God and redeem their souls from sin, Mark 16:16; 1 John 1:7.

Sin, the Great Separator

Isaiah 59:1-3

Thesis: To soberly ponder sin and the separation from God it causes.

Introduction:

1. Sin is defined by the Bible as the violation of divine law, 1 John 3:4.
2. Sinful souls cannot have communion with a sinless God without violating his holiness, Isa. 59:1-3.

Body:

I. Sin separates mankind from God.

- A. Sin separated Adam and Eve from God and mankind has frequently committed sin and been separated from God since, Gen. 3:23-24
 1. The Old Testament is replete or full of instances where sin separated people from God.
 2. The New Testament is filled with examples of disobedience to God (sin).
- B. Every soul begins life without sin.
 1. God does not create (or procreate) sinful creatures, Ezek. 28:15.
 2. Sin is not inherited but attributable to those who violate God's will, Ezek. 18:20.
- C. Sin will result in an eternal separation from God if not properly covered.
 1. Man still committed the sins for which he has been forgiven and sometimes sins still, but those sins for which he repents are "**covered**" or '**hidden**,' 1 Pet. 4:8; Jam. 5:19-20; 1 John 1:7, 9.
 2. Not properly covered, sins condemn souls eternally, Rom. 6:23; 2 Thess. 1:7-9; Matt. 25:41.
- D. Sinfulness and righteousness are incompatible.
 1. There can be no mixing of the two, 2 Cor. 6:14-16.
 2. God turns from those who practice sin, 1 Pet. 3:12;

Prov. 28:9.

II. Sin separates mankind from the church.

- A. God did not tolerate sin in the first century church.
 - 1. Ananias and Sapphira were *expelled to death* from the Jerusalem church for their sins, Acts 5:1-11.
 - 2. The Corinthian church was commanded to withdraw fellowship from the incestuous brother, 1 Cor. 5:1-13.
- B. There are several brethren who by their sins are separated or must be separated from the church.
 - 1. False teachers must not be allowed to teach falsely, Rom. 16:17-18; Titus 1:9-11; Jam. 3:1; 1 John 4:1.
 - 2. Factious brethren must not be allowed to ruin the church, Titus 3:10-11, ASV; 1 Cor. 1:10-13.
 - 3. Immoral brethren must not be allowed to ruin the reputation of the church, 1 Cor. 5.
 - 4. Doctrinally incorrect brethren must not be allowed to corrupt the Lord's church, 2 Thess. 3:6, 14-15.
 - 5. Faithful Christians must warn absentee members of their impending doom, Heb. 10:25-31.
 - 6. Members who would rule or ruin the church must be disciplined, 3 John 9-10.

III. Sin separates brethren.

- A. Sin separated men from other men under Patriarchy and Judaism.
 - 1. The universal flood of Noah's day separated eight righteous souls from the balance of humanity.
 - 2. The northern kingdom of Israel (versus the southern kingdom of Judah after the Jewish kingdom divided) first practiced idolatry.
- B. Sin continues to separate men from men and brethren from brethren in the Christian Age.
 - 1. The apostle Paul forewarned of a great apostasy, Acts 20:28; 1 Tim. 4:1-3; 2 Thess. 2:1-4.
 - 2. Brethren have a tendency to criticize and ostracize each other unrighteously, Matt. 7:1-5; Gal. 5:15.
 - 3. The noble effort to restore New Testament Christianity also experienced apostasy, resulting in great division (i.e., Christian Church, Disciples of

Christ and churches of Christ).

IV. Sin separates sinful mankind from heaven.

- A. No one guilty of sin can enter heaven, Rev. 21:27.
 - 1. Sins, anyone of which will prevent one's entrance into heaven, are clearly listed throughout the Bible, Rom. 1:18-32; 1 Cor. 6:9-10; Gal. 5:19-21; Rev. 21:8.
 - 2. Eternal separation will commence at the final judgment, Matt. 25:31-46.
- B. There is, though, a cure for sin, which if applied this side of eternity can *cover* or *hide* sins.
 - 1. Only the blood of Jesus Christ when applied to the souls of humanity can absolve sin, Col. 1:14; Eph. 1:7; Acts 20:28; Heb. 9:11-12; 1 John 1:7; Rev. 1:5.
 - 2. A soul contacts that saving blood in the act of baptism, John 19:34; Rom. 6:3-5; Col. 2:12.

Conclusion:

- 1. Sin has always and still separates mankind from God.
- 2. Sin works havoc in the church.
- 3. Sin continues to separate men from each other and even divide brethren from brethren.
- 4. The Lord's church is obligated to police itself!
- 5. Not properly covered or hidden, sin will separate souls from God for eternity, and cause them to experience a devil's hell.

Invitation:

- 1. Repentance and immersion in water for the remission of sins remits past sins and makes one a Christian, Acts 2:38; 1 Pet. 3:21.
- 2. Repentance and prayer by erring Christians remits sins, Acts 8:22; 1 John 1:9.

The Church in Prophecy #I

Ephesians 3:8-11

Thesis: To trace the church for which Jesus Christ died from prophecy to its establishment.

Introduction:

1. The church of Old Testament prophecy refers to a specific and unique religious institution.
 - a. Among other designations, it is called in the New Testament “the churches of Christ or the church of God, Rom. 16:16; 1 Cor. 1:2.
 - b. Only this church was purchased with the blood of Jesus Christ, Acts 20:28.
 - c. None of the denominations whose names populate our phone books and whose buildings dot every community is mentioned in the Bible and not one of them was purchased with the blood of Jesus Christ.
2. To trace the church for which Jesus Christ died from prophecy to its establishment, three important factors must be analyzed:
 - a. Prophecies about the kingdom,
 - b. Prophecies about the Messiah, and
 - c. The relationship between the kingdom and the church, as well as the relationship between the King of the kingdom and the Messiah.
3. There is little prophecy about the church to evaluate unless it is understood that the words “kingdom” and “church” are equivalent terms referring to the same divine institution.
 - a. If the church and the kingdom do not refer to the same divine institution, then Jesus made the first and last prophecy about the church in Matt. 16:18.
 - b. However, by inspiration, the apostle Paul observed that the church was in the eternal purpose of God and that Jesus Christ (the Messiah) is associated with the church, Eph. 3:8-11.

- c. The promise of Jesus to establish the church, in which passage he used the terms “church” and “kingdom” interchangeably, is compatible with our Lord’s promise that the kingdom would come with power while those to whom he spoke were yet alive, Matt. 16:18-19; Mark 9:1.

Body:

I. The church and the kingdom are different terms for the same divine institution.

- A. It is apparent to the honest Bible student that the terms “kingdom” and “church” are used interchangeably.
 1. Jesus used both terms in the same speech as references to the same divine institution, Matt. 16:18-19.
 2. The church came into existence “**with power**” on the first Pentecost following the Ascension of Jesus Christ, its doors being opened with the “**keys of the kingdom,**” and Jesus **added the saved to the church,** Mark 9:1; Acts 2:1-4, 47.
 3. Our Lord promised a kingdom in his **early ministry,** Matt. 4:17; in the **middle of his ministry,** Mark 9:1; Matt. 10:7; and in the **last week of his ministry,** Luke 22:29.
 4. Either Jesus Christ erred, promising one thing (kingdom) and establishing another instead (church), or the kingdom and the church are the same thing!
- B. Disciples of our Lord perceived that the kingdom and the church are the same divine institution.
 1. The angel, Gabriel, promised that Jesus would have an unending kingdom, Luke 1:33.
 2. John the Baptist preached that Jesus would establish a kingdom, Matt. 3:1-2.
 3. The apostle Paul used the terms “church” and “kingdom” interchangeably, Col. 1:13, 18.
 4. The apostle Paul taught that Jesus Christ is ruling over his kingdom now, 1 Cor. 15:24-28.
 5. The apostle John, who recorded Jesus’ messages to the seven **churches of Asia,** considered himself a member of the **kingdom,** Rev. 1:9.

6. Biblical inspiration uniformly declares, then, that the church and the kingdom are the same institution.

II. There are many prophecies concerning the establishment of the church.

- A. Since the kingdom and the church refer to the same divine institution, every prophecy about the kingdom is also a prophecy about the Lord's church.
 1. Isa. 2:2-3 is a prominent Old Testament prophecy about the kingdom or the church, which includes references to its establishment in Jerusalem in the "last days."
 2. Kingdom prophecies foretold that the kingdom or church would be for Jews and Gentiles, Isa. 61:11; 62:1-2; Acts 11:26.
 3. Dan. 2:31-45 foretold during what earthly kingdom the divine kingdom would be established, and that the divine kingdom would "stand forever."
 4. Likewise, Dan. 7:13-14 foretold of an everlasting kingdom for all people.
 5. Joel 2:1, 28-3:2 declare the kingdom of prophecy respecting its beginning in Jerusalem, that it would come with power and that it would be for all people, Acts 2:16-21; Rom. 10:13.
 6. John the Baptist prophesied about the kingdom in the waning days of Judaism, Matt. 3:1-2.
 7. Jesus himself, during the same time, also preached about the then coming kingdom, Matt. 4:17; Mark 9:1; Luke 12:32; 22:29.
 8. Only because the kingdom and the church are the same divine institution is it intelligible that the church was in the eternal purpose of God, Eph. 3:8-11.
- B. Every prophecy concerning the Messiah pertains to the church in prophecy.
 1. Gen. 3:15 is a veiled prophecy about Jesus Christ, which intimates the victory of the Son of God by which sinners are saved.
 2. Deut. 18:15, 18-19 introduces the Prophet

- (Messiah) like Moses who the apostle Peter, by inspiration, identified as Jesus Christ, the Savior of the church, Acts 3:19-26; Eph. 5:23.
3. Approximately 333 prophecies announce the Jesus Christ as the Messiah, whose saving work is executed in the kingdom or the church, Gen. 49:10; Isa. 7:14; etc.
 4. It is obvious to the honest Bible student whose mind is not cluttered with manmade creeds that the Old Testament prophecies about the kingdom and the Messiah pertain to the New Testament kingdom or church and the Christ.
- C. Every prophecy relating to the throne of David pertains to the church.
1. 2 Sam. 7:12-16; Psalm 89:29, 36-37 and Psalm 132:11-13 associate the throne of David with the prophesied kingdom, the fulfillment in the New Testament of which pertains to the church over which Jesus is head (or the kingdom over which Jesus is King).
 2. On the birthday of the church, the apostle Peter applied Old Testament prophecies regarding the Messiah sitting on the throne of David to the establishment of the church by Jesus Christ, Acts 2:29-30.
 3. The Messiah's throne of the kingdom is the same throne of Christ relative to the church of the Bible.

Conclusion:

1. Clearly, the church is the subject of extensive prophecy.
 - a. The church of the Bible was in the eternal purpose of God.
 - b. Denominations were never in the eternal purpose of God.
2. Prophecies concerning the church are inter-related with other prophecies.
 - a. Every prophecy of the kingdom is a prophecy of the church.
 - b. Every prophecy of the King is a prophecy regarding the Head of the church.
3. The church is a specific and unique (divine) institution.
 - a. Only the Lord's church was in the eternal purpose of God.

- b. Jesus built the church over which he is the head and for which he will return one day to take to heaven, Matt. 16:18; John 14:1-3.
- c. The only church purchased with the blood of Jesus Christ is the church or kingdom of prophecy, which Jesus built and over which he is head, Acts 20:28; Col. 1:18.

Invitation:

1. Considering the importance of the church, everyone ought to desire to be a member of it.
 - a. The saved comprise it, Acts 2:47.
 - b. Jesus Christ is the Savior of it and no other church, Eph. 5:23.
2. Jesus said regarding salvation for non-Christians that they must believe and be baptized, Mark 16:16.
3. The inspired apostles Peter and John relayed divine instructions for erring Christians to repent and pray, Acts 8:22; 1 John 1:9.