

Preaching
the Whole
Counsel of God
Volume 4

Sermon Outlines
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The Church in Prophecy #II

Daniel 2:31-45

Thesis: To depict in prophecy the time in which the church was to be established, and was established.

Introduction:

1. The occasion for which the prophecy was given is found in Dan. 2:1-30.
2. The prophecy appears in Dan. 2:31-35.
3. Daniel interpreted the prophecy in Dan. 2:36-44.
4. King Nebuchadnezzar believed the prophecy and acknowledged God, Dan. 2:45-47.

Body:

I. The subject of the prophecy was the establishment of a divine kingdom, Dan. 2:44.

- A. The kingdom and the church are references to the same divine institution.
 1. The Old Testament is filled with kingdom prophecies, 2 Sam. 7:12-16; Isa. 2:1-2; 61:11; 62:1-2; Dan. 7:13-14; Joel 2:28-3:2; etc.
 2. The New Testament plainly discloses that the terms “kingdom” and “church” were used interchangeably to refer to the same divine institution, Matt. 16:18-19; Col. 1:13, 18; Rev. 1:9; 1 Cor. 15:24-28; Mark 9:1; Matt. 3:1-2; 4:17; Luke 22:29.
- B. The kingdom was to be established in the days of the fourth earthly kingdom in the prophecy (**time**).
 1. The **place** of the kingdom’s establishment was to be Jerusalem, Isa. 2:2-3.
 2. The **founder** of the divine kingdom is described in prophecy and its New Testament application to Jesus Christ with the illustration of “the stone,” Dan. 2:35, 45; Psa. 118:22; 1 Pet. 2:7.
 3. The divine kingdom would have a **King**, who is Jesus Christ, Isa. 9:6-7; Rev. 15:3.

4. The **headquarters** for the divine kingdom is *out of this world*, John 18:36.
- C. Old Testament prophecies cite the duration of the divine kingdom.
 1. Dan. 2:44 reveals that the divine kingdom “shall never be destroyed” and “it shall stand forever.”
 2. 1 Chron. 7:11-15 and 2 Sam. 7:12-17 record the prophet Nathan apprising David that the divine kingdom would be eternal.
 3. Likewise, Dan. 7:13-14 states that the divine kingdom would endure forever.
- D. Old Testament prophecies address the throne of the divine kingdom.
 1. The throne of the kingdom will continue forever, Psalms 89:3-4, 34-37.
 2. The throne of David and his son, Solomon, is called “the throne of the Lord,” 1 Kings 2:12; 1 Chron. 29:23.
 3. That throne of the divine kingdom on which Christ sits is in heaven, Acts 2:33.

II. Four earthly kingdoms in the prophecy signal when the divine kingdom was to be established.

- A. The first earthly kingdom in Daniel’s prophecy.
 1. It was represented by a head of gold, Dan. 2:32, 38.
 2. This was a reference to the Babylonian kingdom.
 3. Nebuchadnezzar was the king at the time of Daniel’s prophecy; Belshazzar was sitting on Babylon’s throne when that kingdom was overthrown later, Dan. 5:24-31.
 4. Babylon fell to the Medes and the Persians in 538 B.C.
- B. The second earthly kingdom in Daniel’s prophecy.
 1. This kingdom was represented by breast and arms of silver, Dan. 2:32.
 2. This was the Medo-Persian kingdom, Dan. 8:20.
 3. Cyrus of Persia and Darius of Media were the kings of this earthly kingdom with whom Daniel interacted, Dan. 6:28.
 4. Persia fell to the Greeks in 331 B.C.

- C. The third earthly kingdom of Daniel's prophecy.
 - 1. This kingdom was represented by belly and thighs of brass, Dan. 2:32.
 - 2. This was the Grecian kingdom, Dan. 8:21.
 - 3. Alexander the Great was the first king of the Greek kingdom.
 - 4. Greece fell to the rising power of Rome in about 63 B.C.
- D. The fourth earthly kingdom of Daniel's prophecy.
 - 1. This kingdom was represented by legs of iron and feet of iron and clay, Dan. 2:33, 40-43.
 - 2. This kingdom was the Roman Empire.
 - 3. Julius Caesar was the first of the line of Roman kings; Augustus Caesar was reigning when Jesus was born.
 - 4. The Roman Empire later divided.
 - 5. It was during this fourth earthly kingdom that the kingdom of prophecy or the church was established.

Conclusion:

- 1. The Roman kingdom is recognized universally as the fourth kingdom of Daniel's prophecy.
 - a. The first three kingdoms of Daniel's prophecy were explicitly named, Dan. 2:38; 8:20-21.
 - b. The Roman kingdom was the fourth worldly kingdom to rule the Bible lands from the giving of Daniel's prophecy.
 - c. Even premillennialists recognize that Daniel's prophecy calls for the establishment of a divine kingdom when Rome rules the biblical world; therefore, they look for Rome to rise again, since they deny the Lord's kingdom was established 2,000 years ago during the time of the Roman Empire.
 - d. Luke 3:1-2 indicates that the Roman Empire was the fourth kingdom ruling the biblical world during the ministry of Jesus Christ and just before the establishment of the divine kingdom.
- 2. The historical sequence of earthly kingdoms ruling the biblical world corresponds with the prophecy of Daniel and the establishment of the kingdom of prophecy or the church.

- a. The prophecy of Daniel occurred about 600 B.C.
 - b. Babylon fell about 538 B.C.
 - c. The Medo-Persian empire fell in 331 B.C.
 - d. The Grecian empire fell about 63 B.C.
 - e. From about 63 B.C. onward for hundreds of years, Rome ruled the Bible lands.
3. Daniel's prophecy (and the rest of the Old Testament prophecies respecting the divine kingdom) was fulfilled in the days of the Roman Empire.
 - a. Gen. 3:15 was fulfilled in the victorious Christ, King of the kingdom and Head of the church.
 - b. The Seed of promise provided a blessing to all people, Gen. 12:1-3.
 - c. God established his divine kingdom in the last days in Jerusalem, Isa. 2:2-3.
 - d. The divine kingdom of which Daniel prophesied was set up in the days of the Roman kings, Dan. 2:44.
 - e. The "last days" of Old Testament prophecy respecting the establishment of the divine kingdom were applied in the New Testament to the establishment of the Lord's church or the kingdom of prophecy, Joel 2:28-3:2; Acts 2:16-21.
 - f. Prophecies about the Seed, the throne of David, the High Priest, Messiah, divine kingdom and last days were fulfilled in the establishment of the Lord's church.
 4. The church was to be established in the first century.
 - a. Old Testament prophecies and New Testament fulfillment collaborate to teach this truth.
 - b. The church did not begin in the days of Abraham, David or even John the Baptist.
 - c. The kingdom of prophecy — the church, though, has been established and is not some future objective.
 - d. Christians are citizens of the divine kingdom and members of the Lord's church now!

Invitation:

1. Every accountable soul can be a citizen in the divine kingdom or the church by humbly submitting to the divine plan for his salvation.
2. When asked regarding their guilt for murdering the Son of God, the apostle Peter advised his auditors how to be saved

from their sins, Acts 2:38.

3. Later, Peter also advised an erring Christian how to be forgiven for his sins, Acts 8:22.

Saved Like Paul

Acts 22:16

Thesis: To illustrate how souls in the Christian Age are saved by examining the conversion of Saul of Tarsus (better known as the apostle Paul).

Introduction:

1. Saul of Tarsus is better known to Bible students and dearly loved as the apostle Paul.
 - a. “Saul” is the Hebrew form of his name, whereas “Paul” is the Greek equivalent.
 - b. “Tarsus” was Saul’s hometown in Asia Minor (i.e., Turkey).
2. The New Testament records more about Saul or the apostle Paul than any Bible character except for Jesus Christ.
 - a. The second half of the Book of Acts pertains to the activities of the apostle Paul.
 - b. The apostle Paul was the human, Spirit-guided penman for at least 13 and maybe 14 of the 27 books of the New Testament (more than any other writer).
3. Saul of Tarsus was a fierce foe of Christianity in the first century before his conversion.
 - a. The Book of Acts records the conversion of several persons, which separately or collectively reveal God’s plan of salvation for this age.
 - b. However, the conversion of Saul of Tarsus is the most comprehensively documented case of conversion in the Book of Acts (chps. 9, 22, 26), by which one can know with certainty how God saves today, in the Christian Age.

Body:

I. Background and Events Leading to Saul’s Conversion.

- A. Paul’s Ancestry.
 1. He was a foreign born Jew, Acts 22:3.
 2. Saul was not a proselyte to Judaism, but he could trace his lineage to the Patriarch, Israel (Jacob) and was a member of one of the two tribes (Benjamin)

that was not dispersed among the Gentiles by Assyria, Phil. 3:5.

B. Paul's Nationality.

1. He was a freeborn Roman citizen, Acts 16:37; 22:25-29.
2. His native city was Tarsus in the Roman sub-province of Cilicia in what is now southwest Turkey.

C. Education.

1. Though born in what we now know as Turkey, he was reared and educated in Jerusalem, Acts 22:3.
2. Saul was taught the Law of Moses by Gamaliel, a highly esteemed Jewish scholar, Acts 22:3.
3. Saul of Tarsus received the best education available in his day.

D. Saul's Religion.

1. Saul was a strict practitioner of Judaism as he knew it.
2. He was a Pharisee, as was his father before him; Pharisees were among the strictest sects of Judaism in the first century, Acts 26:5; Phil. 3:5.

E. Saul's Zeal.

1. His misguided zeal toward what Judaism had become led him to seek blank warrants from the high priest to arrest Christians in Damascus, Acts 9:1-2; 22:5; 26:12.
2. He had already vigorously persecuted the church in Judaea, Acts 8:3; **22:4**; **26:9-11**; 1 Cor. 15:9; 1 Tim. 1:13; **Gal. 1:13-14**.
3. Saul had even consented to and may have been the ringleader in the murder of Stephen, Acts 7:58-60; 8:1.
4. Saul's insatiable vindictiveness against Christians led him to travel six to eight days from Jerusalem to Damascus in search of Christians.

II. Headed for Damascus.

A. Indisputably, Saul of Tarsus was *unsaved* before going to Damascus.

1. Saul was a vicious enemy of Christianity.

2. Thereby, he persecuted Jesus Christ, Acts 9:4-5.
 3. Therefore, Saul was *unsaved* on the road to Damascus as he neared that city.
- B. Equally indisputably, Saul received remission of sins before departing Damascus.
1. Proponents of Christianity agree that Saul of Tarsus was converted, but disagree upon precisely where, when and how he was converted.
 2. As a result of his conversion, before departing Damascus, Saul preached the Gospel, which formerly he had opposed, Acts 9:19-25.
 3. Another result of his conversion was fierce opposition by his former cohorts, Acts 9:23-25.

III. The Conversion of Saul of Tarsus.

- A. Acts 9:3; 22:6.
1. Saul was an *unsaved* soul *on the road to Damascus* as he neared that city about noon.
 2. Before his encounter with Jesus Christ, he was still intent on imprisoning Christians.
- B. Acts 9:4; 22:7.
1. Was Saul *saved* when he fell to the ground and heard a voice saying, “Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?”
 2. At that point, he did not know who was speaking to him, Acts 9:5; 22:8.
 3. Saul was, therefore, still an unbeliever in Christ and could not be saved, John 8:24; Rom. 10:13-17.
- C. Acts 9:5-6; 22:8, 10.
1. Obviously, Saul was still an unbeliever when he said, “Who art thou Lord?” and, hence, *unsaved*.
 2. Saul’s use of “Lord” in his inquiry merely indicates his recognition that whoever was addressing him was superior to him (Acts 10:4).
 3. Neither Saul nor Jesus Christ believed Saul was saved at this point, because Saul inquired what to do and Jesus Christ responded accordingly, Acts 9:6; 22:10.
 4. Since our Lord told Saul to go into the city of Damascus and he would be told what he “must

do,” **Saul was not saved *on the road to Damascus!***

- D. Acts 9:8-9; 22:11.
1. Saul entered Damascus where he fasted and prayed for three days.
 2. Was Saul *saved* yet?
 3. As yet, Saul had not been told what he “must do” and found no relief from his sin and guilt though he prayed fervently.
 4. Later, the apostle Paul wrote that the Gospel was committed to “earthen vessels” (humanity), 2 Cor. 4:7; Rom. 10:13-17.
 5. Therefore, in the earlier conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch, the preacher, Philip, rather than the angel or the Holy Spirit preached the Gospel, Acts 8:26-39.
 6. Likewise, Jesus Christ did not present God’s plan of salvation to Saul on the road to Damascus, but told him to go into Damascus and it would be told him what he “must do.”
 7. Saul, despite fasting and prayer and despite Jesus appearing to him personally on the road to Damascus, needed Ananias (an earthen vessel) to teach him.
- E. In Acts 9:10-14, Ananias understandably was hesitant to approach Saul of Tarsus.
- F. Acts 9:15-16.
1. Was Saul saved when Jesus Christ discussed with Ananias why Ananias needed to find Saul?
 2. Saul was not present for the discussion.
 3. Jesus simply explained the plans he had for Saul, contingent upon his conversion.
- G. Acts 9:17.
1. Was Saul of Tarsus saved when Ananias called him “brother Saul,” laid hands on him to remove Saul’s blindness and announced that he was to be filled with the Holy Spirit?
 2. “Brother” refers to the ancestral relationship Ananias and Saul shared as Jews and does not

- indicate that Saul was saved by this point.
3. Further, miraculously removing blindness never before or after, and certainly not now, is proof of salvation.
 4. Being filled with the Holy Spirit is nowhere in the Bible indicative of salvation, Num. 22:28-30; Acts 8:12, 14; 10:44, 48; 11:15; 19:1-6.
 5. However, the Holy Spirit enabled the apostles and prophets to convey God's Word to mankind, John 14:16, 26; 15:26-27; 16:13; Acts 1:8; 2 Pet. 1:21.
 6. Saul was not the recipient of the Holy Spirit at the hands of Ananias, for the administrator of the baptism of the Holy Spirit was Jesus and the ability to convey miraculous power otherwise was administered only by apostles, Matt. 3:11; Acts 8:12, 14; 19:1-6.
 7. Saul was *not saved* yet, because nothing in verse 17 indicates that he was and following events show yet retained his sins.
- H. Acts 9:18; 22:16.
1. Saul of Tarsus retained his sins until they were washed away in baptism!
 2. This makes baptism the *point at which* one's sins are removed.
 3. The teaching of Ananias constitutes the "must do" of which Jesus spoke to Saul on the road to Damascus, Acts 9:6.
 4. Obviously, according to the texts detailing the conversion of Saul, he was neither saved on the road to Damascus nor by prayer and fasting, but when his sins were washed away in baptism.

IV. Saul's (i.e., Paul's) Conversion Experience Concurs with Other Conversion Passages in the New Testament.

- A. Baptism alone does not save, but baptism is the point at which one's sins are remitted when a person obeys the Gospel, Heb. 5:8-9; Rom. 1:16.
- B. The New Testament uniformly teaches that baptism is the point at which one's sins are taken away, 1 Pet. 3:21; Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; Gal. 3:27; Eph. 1:3.

- C. Baptism is preceded by faith, repentance and professing Christ, Rom. 10:17; Luke 13:3; Acts 8:37.

Conclusion:

1. We should be willing to be saved like the man we best know as the apostle Paul (Saul of Tarsus).
2. We can be assured of salvation if we do what Paul did to have his sins removed.
3. We have no divine assurance of salvation if, instead, we attempt to have our sins removed some other way.

Invitation:

1. Are you willing to be saved like Paul?
2. Jesus said, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved," Mark 16:16 (e.g., 1 + 2 = 3).
3. Erring Christians 'crucify our Lord afresh and put him to an open shame,' Heb. 6:6.

The Urgency of Conversion

Acts 3:19

Thesis: To emphasize the essentiality of conversion to obtain eternal life.

Introduction:

1. The conversion of lost souls has always appeared more urgent to God than to most of mankind.
 - a. God never left man without instruction in any of the religious dispensations: Patriarchy, Judaism and Christianity.
 - b. However, man has always been slow to be converted or turn to God.
2. Acts 3:19 depicts the urgency of conversion.
 - a. There is nothing more important and essential to establishing and maintaining fellowship with God than having one's sins "blotted out."
 - b. May be forgiven, or pardoned. The expression "to blot out sins" occurs also in Isa 43:25; Ps 51:1,9; Jer 18:23; Neh 4:5; Isa 44:22. The expression "to blot out a name" is applied to expunging it from a "roll," or "catalog," or "list," as of an army, etc. Ex 32:32-33; Deut 9:14; 25:19; 29:29, etc. The expression to "blot out sins" is taken from the practice of creditors charging their debtors, and when the debt is paid, cancelling it, or wholly removing the record. The word used here properly refers to the practice of writing on tables covered with wax, and then by inverting the stylus, or instrument of writing, smoothing the wax again, and thus removing every trace of the record. This more entirely expresses the idea of pardoning than blotting does. It means wholly to remove the record, the charge, and every trace of the account against us. In this way God forgives sins. (*Barnes' Notes*. CD-ROM. Seattle: BibleSoft, 1997)
3. The Gospel is the only means by which anyone living today can be converted, Rom. 1:16.

- a. Manmade schemes of conversion devised and taught by denominations lack the capacity to save, Matt. 15:9.
- b. Corrupted Gospels also lack the ability to convert souls, Gal. 1:6-9.

Body:

I. Who are the participants in the act of conversion?

- A. Many imagine that conversion is wholly the work of God.
 1. This theory is not taught in the Bible and would strip mankind of his freewill and all accountability, e.g., Calvinism, Universalism.
 2. If God alone is responsible for one's conversion, no amount of biblical instruction or persuasion by preachers would have any affect on one's salvation or condemnation.
 3. The New Testament teaches that obedient souls will be saved and disobedient souls will be lost, Heb. 5:8-9; 2 Thess. 1:7-9; Phil. 2:12.
 4. "Whosoever" has the capacity to hear God's Word, believe it, repent of sins, profess Jesus as Lord and choose to be immersed (and has not done so yet) is the rightful participant on the human side in the act of conversion, John 11:26; Rom. 10:13; Rev. 22:17.
- B. Others imagine that conversion is wholly the work of men.
 1. Humanism is an anti-God theory that dethrones God and essentially deifies mankind.
 2. Still others who purport to be Christians substitute their own wills for the written will of God, Col. 2:23.
- C. The Bible teaches that God and men are co-workers in the conversion of humanity, 1 Cor. 3:9.
 1. There is nothing in a conversion unless both God and man exercise their respective roles.
 2. God has done his part already, John 3:16; Eph. 2:8-9; Titus 3:5.
 3. Mankind must do the part assigned to him by God: hear, believe, repent, confess Christ, be baptized,

Rom. 10:17; John 8:24; Acts 17:30; 10:48.

II. Who will not be converted?

- A. The Bible amply records that not every soul will choose to be converted, Matt. 7:13-14.
 - 1. The disobedient will be lost, 2 Thess. 1:7-9.
 - 2. Persons who do not believe more than “devils” will be lost, Jam. 2:14-26; Heb. 11:6; Mark 16:16.
 - 3. Those whose names do not appear in the Lamb’s Book of Life, because their deeds condemn them, will be cast into the lake of fire, Rev. 20:12-15; 21:8.
 - 4. The condemned will experience “everlasting punishment,” Matt. 25:46.
- B. Not even Jesus Christ himself converted everyone with whom he came in contact, John 5:40.
 - 1. Ungodly, religious men were responsible for the crucifixion of Jesus, Matt. 12:14; 27:1; John 11:53.
 - 2. The rejection of Jesus was predictable and prophesied, Matt. 13:15; 23:37-38.

III. Who will be converted?

- A. All accountable souls have the ability to be converted.
 - 1. The Gospel is universal in applicability, Matt. 28:29-30; Mark 16:15-16; Col. 1:23.
 - 2. It is the responsibility of the Lord’s church to herald it to the entire world, Corinthians 3:10-11; 2 Corinthians 4:7.
- B. All souls who allow their hearts to be acted upon by the Gospel will be converted.
 - 1. The Gospel has penetrating power, Acts 2:37; 7:54.
 - 2. The Gospel, if allowed, will motivate the total person, Matt. 22:37.
- C. All souls who will practice the *Divine* redemptive plan will be converted.
 - 1. Conversion involves a transition from sin and darkness to the kingdom of Christ, Col. 1:13.
 - 2. Since the difference between being lost and being a citizen of the kingdom of Christ affects the eternal disposition of one’s soul, accountable souls ought to seek conversion immediately upon becoming

aware of their sinfulness and how God wants them to have their sins removed, Acts 8:26-40; 16:27-34.

Conclusion:

1. All the Gospel and nothing but the Gospel can save souls, Rom. 10:1-3; Acts 20:27.
2. God has done his part regarding human redemption, Rom. 5:8.
3. It is up to man to do his part regarding his own salvation.
4. Every accountable soul can choose his eternity by his willingness to be converted.

Invitation:

1. “Whosoever” knows that his or her soul is blackened with sin can choose to be converted today.
2. Unbaptized believers can put their Lord on in baptism, whereas Christians who have turned from God can turn again to God, Gal. 3:27; Acts 3:19 ASV.

Now Is the Accepted Time

2 Corinthians 6:1-2

Thesis: To show that now, in the Christian Age, is the most opportune time to obey the Gospel.

Introduction:

1. Every accountable soul (i.e., any person who knows the difference between right and wrong) sins sometimes, 1 John 1:8.
2. Unless a person obtains forgiveness for his sins, he will die (spiritually), Rom. 6:23.
3. Now is the time (i.e., the Christian Age) to be saved from sins, because complete forgiveness of sins was not actually possible in the former ages (i.e., Patriarchy, Judaism).
4. Now is the time to be saved from sins, because yesterday is past and tomorrow may never come.

Body:

- I. There was a time when the blessings of salvation could not be fully realized.**
 - A. Neither Patriarchy nor Judaism contained any provision for the absolute forgiveness of sins.
 1. For instance, the yearly animal sacrifices under Judaism did not cleanse the sinner's conscience of his past sins; the worshipper's former sins and more recent sins were remembered annually, Heb. 10:1-4.
 2. However, the animal sacrifices under Patriarchy and Judaism prefigured and foreshadowed the perfect sacrifice of Christ (i.e., in place of the animals), after which past sins would be remembered no longer, because they would be forgiven, Heb. 9:6-13; 10:1-4.
 - B. Old Testament prophecies foretold of an age (i.e., the Christian Age) when true salvation would be proclaimed and forgiveness of sins would be available.
 1. The apostle Paul quoted Isaiah in 2 Cor. 6:2 and

applied the availability of full salvation to the Christian or Gospel Age, Isa. 49:8.

2. Isaiah prophesied that someday all nations (i.e., Jews and Gentiles) would be taught salvation, Isa. 2:2-3; 62:1-2.
- C. The apostle Paul declared that persons living from his day forward have access to full salvation through the Gospel, 2 Cor. 6:1-2.
1. That Gospel saves, Rom. 1:16-17.
 2. Jesus Christ personally brought the Gospel to mankind and implemented a plan whereby everyone in each generation and subsequent generation could become aware of the saving Gospel, John 1:17; Matt. 28:19-20; 2 Tim. 2:2.

II. There is a time when a soul neither can obey nor needs to obey the Gospel.

- A. Young children and souls who have never been accountable for themselves do not and cannot obey the Gospel.
1. Children are born without sin and do not inherit the sins of either their parents or their forefathers, Ezek. 28:15; 18:20.
 2. To the contrary, small children were used by Jesus as examples worthy of imitation by those who would be citizens of the heavenly kingdom, Matt. 18:3-4; 19:14.
 3. Young children and persons who have never been accountable for themselves because they lack the capability to obey the Gospel (i.e., hear, believe, repent, profess Jesus Christ and **voluntarily** be baptized, Rom. 10:9-10, 17; Acts 2:38), Heb. 5:8-9.

III. A time will come when no one will be able to obey the Gospel.

- A. Once death whisks one from among the land of the living, he no longer has the opportunity to seek salvation.
1. The Lord's narrative in Luke 16:19-31 reveals that dead men who did not seek salvation in this life of a change of heart, for themselves and their families, **too late**.

2. Death and judgment await every soul, so it behooves the living to seek salvation now, Heb. 9:27.
 3. Typically, though, man does not know when he will die, Jam. 4:13-14; 1 Pet. 1:24.
- B. The Second Coming of Christ will close the door of opportunity for souls to seek salvation.
1. No one knows when Jesus will return, Matt. 24:36.
 2. The Second Coming of Christ and punishment of the wicked will occur simultaneously, 2 Thess. 1:7-9.
 3. All of humanity will be judged and the unsaved will be assigned to the lake of fire, Rev. 20:12-15.

IV. Now is the accepted time, behold now is the day of salvation.

- A. God the Father has done his part regarding the salvation of humanity.
1. God's grace and mercy permit us to approach his salvation, Eph. 2:8; Titus 3:5.
 2. The Father sent his Son into the world to be the perfect sacrifice for sins, Rom. 5:8; 2 Cor. 5:21.
- B. Jesus Christ has done his part for the salvation of mankind.
1. Our Lord voluntarily left heaven ultimately for a sacrificial death on the cross that mankind could have salvation, John 6:38.
 2. Jesus has prepared mansions in heaven for those who pursue salvation in this life, John 14:1-3.
- C. The Holy Spirit has done his part that mankind might know about salvation.
1. Just as the Holy Spirit conveyed divine revelation to Old Testament prophets, he also apprised New Testament preachers of the salvation message they were to preach, 1 Pet. 1:21; Matt. 10:19-20.
 2. Consequently, the Holy Spirit is behind the revelation of God, which we call the Bible.
- D. It is time for each accountable soul to do his part regarding his own salvation, Phil. 2:12.

Conclusion:

1. Salvation is attainable today, whereas full salvation was not available previously under Patriarchy and Judaism.
2. Salvation is attainable today, but not yesterday and not tomorrow, if either we die or Christ returns.

Invitation:

1. Is now the day of your salvation? If not, why not?
2. Erring Christians need only repent and pray, Acts 8:22.
3. Unbaptized believers need to obey the command to be baptized, Acts 10:48.

Non-Conversions in Acts

Acts 24:24-27

Thesis: To note the tragic non-conversions in the Book of Acts and to persuade erring Christians and non-Christians to obey the Gospel before it is too late.

Introduction:

1. There are a number of reasons for which one might study the Book of Acts.
 - a. Acts 2 records the birthday of the church.
 - b. The Book of Acts chronicles the first 30 years or so of the church.
 - c. Several cases of conversion are recorded in the Book of Acts.
 - d. The Book of Acts records the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies respecting the establishment of the kingdom or church, Isa. 2:2-3; Joel 2:28-3:2; Acts 2:1-21; 62:1-2; Acts 11:26.
2. The Book of Acts also includes information about other events.
 - a. It records the Jewish antagonism and persecution against the church.
 - b. It notes the efforts of Judaizing teachers to corrupt church doctrine.
3. Further, Acts documents non-conversions, failures, not of the Gospel or its heralds, but of the lost.
 - a. A study of conversions reveals what one must do to be saved.
 - b. A study of non-conversions teaches what **not to do** in response to Gospel preaching.

Body:

I. Stephen's audience, Acts 6:9-7:60.

- A. Stephen spoke by the inspiration of God, 6:3, 5, 8, 10.
 1. Stephen's speech was irrefutable, 6:10.
 2. He rehearsed Jewish history and prophecy to prove its fulfillment in Jesus Christ and the church.

3. He concluded his sermon by condemning sin and demanding repentance, 7:51-53.
 4. There was no deficiency in the message or with the messenger!
- B. Stephen's audience rejected the Gospel.
1. The Jewish audience was prejudiced against the Gospel.
 2. While Stephen was militant, the unbelieving Jews were radical and resorted to murder!
 3. The penetrating power of the Gospel cut these Jews to the heart, 7:54.
- C. Later, the apostle Paul also addressed the same audience.
1. Then, his Jewish audience stopped listening when he mentioned the intention of God to save the "Gentiles," too, Acts 22.21-22.
 2. It is not uncommon for audiences to stop listening when they hear a *word* that troubles them (e.g., baptism, church, giving, work, church attendance).

II. Felix, Acts 24:24-27.

- A. Even imprisoned, the apostle Paul seized every opportunity to preach the Gospel.
1. He was not hesitant to preach of "righteousness, temperance and judgment to come" to a governor, 24:25.
 2. Paul condemned sin and demanded repentance.
 3. There were no deficiencies with either the Gospel message or its herald.
- B. Felix, though, rejected the Gospel, 24:25.
1. The governor was moved to fear and trembling at the preaching of the apostle, Jam. 2:19.
 2. However, Felix did not obey the Gospel in the two years Paul was imprisoned in Caesarea, 24:27.
 3. Felix found it *inconvenient* to obey the Gospel and indicated he was waiting for a "convenient season," which as far as we know he never found, 24:25.

III. Paul's audience at Athens, Acts 17:16-34.

- A. The apostle preached to the citizens of the city-state of Athens, noted for its culture.

1. He taught them concerning the unknown God, whom they worshipped ignorantly, 17:23.
 2. Paul's preaching was forceful and divinely inspired, Gal. 1:10-11.
 3. There were no deficiencies with either the preaching or the preacher.
- B. Sadly, few obeyed the Gospel that Paul preached.
1. Instead, Paul was mocked, 17:32.
 2. Unfortunately for them, most of the Athenians trusted in frail human wisdom, 1 Cor. 1:18-25.
 3. Instead of about 3,000 obeying the Gospel as occurred on the birthday of the church in Jerusalem, only a handful became Christians that day in Athens, Acts 2:41; 17:34.

IV. Agrippa, Acts 26.

- A. The apostle Paul preached boldly to this king.
1. He was convinced that Agrippa believed the testimony of the Gospel, 26:27.
 2. However, without acting upon his belief, the king was no better off than "devils," Jam. 2:19.
 3. *Almost persuaded* is useless! Acts 26:28.
 4. Once more, neither the Gospel nor the Gospel preacher was deficient, though this account too is numbered with the non-conversions in the Book of Acts.
- B. The narrative in Acts leaves King Agrippa in the same unsaved state as when it first introduced him and before Paul preached the Gospel to him.
1. As far as anyone knows, Agrippa never obeyed the Gospel.
 2. Unfortunately, today, many souls are not fully persuaded to obey the Gospel of Christ, and lamentably, they will share the same eternal disposition as King Agrippa.

Conclusion:

1. The Book of Acts is a Book of Conversions.
2. Sadly, the Book of Acts is also a Book of Non-Conversions.
3. The same Gospel of Christ, preached with the same fidelity and boldness, can save souls today as easily as it did in the first

century.

4. It is also true that the same Gospel of Christ, preached with the same fidelity and boldness, can be resisted as it was in the first century.

Invitation:

1. It is very possible that in any audience there are present some who are *almost persuaded*, but still lost because they have not yet obeyed the Gospel of Christ.
2. We invite anyone who has yet to be baptized into Jesus Christ or erring children of God to respond to the Lord's invitation today, Matt. 11:28-30; Gal. 3:27; 1 John 1:9.

Premillennialism

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

Thesis: To examine the denominational doctrine of premillennialism and contrast it with what the Bible really teaches about the end of time.

Song: *I Love Thy Kingdom Lord*

Introduction:

1. For centuries, extending nearly to the first century, Bible believers have entertained essentially three conflicting views of millennialism or a 1,000-year reign of Christ on earth.

2. Postmillennialism:

- a. “This interpretation maintains that present gospel agencies will root out evils until Christ will have a spiritual reign over the earth, which will continue for 1,000 years. Then the second advent of Christ will initiate judgment and bring to an end the present order” (*Unger’s*).
- b. “Another position views Christ’s spiritual rule as working through preaching and teaching to bring gradual world improvement leading up to Christ’s return. This is the postmillennial view” (*Nelson’s*).
- c. Postmillennialism is typically viewed today as unproven and thus false since, historically through the present, the Gospel of Christ has not prevailed over the world’s populace despite the passing of about 2,000 years.

3. Amillennialism:

- a. “Advocates of this view maintain that **no Millennium** is to be looked for except that which, it is claimed, is in progress now in this gospel age. This theological interpretation spiritualizes or, rather, gives a mystical meaning to the vast kingdom promises in the OT. Zion is construed not to mean Zion but to refer to the Christian church” (*Unger’s*).
- b. The prefix “a” attached to a word negates the word to which it is attached (e.g., moral vs. amoral; Gnostic vs. agnostic; pistos [faith or belief] vs. apistos [faithless or unbelief]).

- c. “The millennium is viewed by interpreters in several different ways. One position holds that the millennium only refers to Christ’s spiritual rule today from heaven. This symbolic view is known as the amillennial interpretation” (*Nelson’s*).
- d. This is the minority view among Bible believers today and the understanding of conservative biblical interpreters, who make a distinction between figurative and literal language. Consequently, in the main, this is the conclusion regarding a millennial rule by Christ on earth to which the churches of Christ usually arrive.

4. Premillennialism:

- a. Dispensational Premillennialism: “The essence of this position, is that the second advent [Second coming] of Christ will occur at the end of the present age, after which He will establish a physical kingdom on earth. This thousand-year reign will be followed by the re-creation of the universe and the unhindered fellowship of the redeemed of all ages with God. ... The doctrine that Christ will return to establish a literal kingdom on the earth in fulfillment of Old Testament promises...” (Karleen).
 - b. Historic Premillennialism: “There is what is sometimes called ‘historic premillennialism,’ which regards the millennium as a further stage in the achievement of Christ’s kingdom, an interim stage between the church age and the age to come. (Sometimes 1 Cor. 15:23-28 is interpreted as supporting this idea of three stages in the fulfilment of Christ’s redemptive work.) ‘Dispensationalism,’ on the other hand, teaches that the millennium is not a stage in God’s single universal redemptive action in Christ, but specifically a period in which the OT promises to the nation of Israel will be fulfilled in strictly literal form” (*New Bible Dictionary*).
 - c. Dispensational Premillennialism is the more popular form of Premillennialism today.
5. Some contemporary doctrines are so widely accepted that they crossover denominational fellowships despite glaring contrasts in other areas of theology.

- a. One such doctrine that is not inhibited by denominational boundaries is the **charismatic movement**, which calls for the professed revival of miracles today and often manifests itself in **ecstatic utterances**.
- b. Likewise, Dispensational Premillennialism permeates nearly every so-called Christian religious group today.
- c. Hal Lindsey's *The Late Great Planet Earth* (1970) and presently, Tim LaHaye and Jerry B. Jenkins' *Left Behind* series of books for adults and children and box office movie, *Left Behind*, have steeped religious **and secular society** in Dispensational Premillennialism.

Body:

I. The fundamental error of premillennialism is the biblically incorrect application of prophecies.

- A. Premillennialists incorrectly interpret all kingdom prophecies to refer to a physical kingdom over which the Christ would reign on earth.
 1. "Most of the opposition to premillennialism comes from the assumption that an earthly kingdom with Israel at the head would involve a retrogression from the spirituality brought in by Christ through His death, resurrection, and ascension. But premillennialists hold that the promise of the fulfillment of the covenants and promises to Israel in the OT demand such an earthly kingdom" (*Unger's*).
 2. "The thousand-year period mentioned in connection with the description of Christ's coming to reign with His saints over the earth (Rev 19:11-16; 20:1-9). Many Old Testament passages refer to the millennium (Isa 11:4; Jer 3:17; Zech 14:9)" (*Nelson's*).
 3. References to a 1,000-year reign appear only in a **highly figurative** book of the Bible, whereas other biblical references to a 1,000 years use it figuratively — not literally, Rev. 20:1-9; Psa. 90:4; 2 Pet. 3:8.
 4. Isa. 11:4; Jer. 3:17; Zech. 14:9 are kingdom prophecies, but they say nothing about a 1,000 year

reign.

5. Additional prophecies are lifted from their context and misapplied to the belief in a physical millennial kingdom on earth, Zech. 14:1-21.
- B. However, all Old Testament prophecies have already been fulfilled, with the exception of references to the final judgment, Isa. 2:2-3 Dan. 2:31-45; 9:27; Joel 2:28-3:2.
1. All of the kingdom prophecies in the Old Testament referred to the event that transpired on the Pentecost of Acts 2, establishment of the church; the apostle Peter said so, Acts 2:16; 3:24.
 2. Likewise, New Testament kingdom prophecies also referred to the establishment of the church, Matt. 3:1-2; 4:17; 16:18-19; Mark 9:1.
 3. All Old Testament prophecies referring to the kingdom and its King have already been fulfilled, Col. 1:13; Rev. 1:9.

II. Another primary failure of premillennialism is to correctly discern between literal and figurative language in the Bible.

- A. It is *religiously irresponsible* to presume that kingdom prophecies refer to a literal kingdom in view of the indisputable fact that Jesus taught that his kingdom was spiritual and not physical, John 18:36.
- B. However, a physical kingdom is precisely the kind of kingdom that the Jews (including the apostles, Acts 1:6) wanted, John 6:15.
1. Many of our Lord's early disciples forsook him because of his spiritual teaching, John 6:66.
 2. Consequently, the Jews had the true Messiah crucified because he was not the type of Messiah (a ruler over a physical kingdom) that they wanted. Having the same defective attitude, premillennialists also reject the true Messiah and his spiritual kingdom in favor of a Messiah over a physical kingdom.
- C. Premillennial interpretation of Scripture typically transforms figurative passages into literal references to a

physical kingdom.

III. Premillennialists manufacture new and sometimes horrible doctrines.

- A. Denying that Jesus now reigns over a spiritual kingdom (church) dethrones him, 1 Cor. 15:24-28; Col. 1:13; Rev. 1:9.
- B. Refusal to acknowledge that God was able to establish the kingdom in fulfillment of Dan. 2:44 demeans God.
 - 1. The kingdoms of Dan. 2:44 were consecutive without intervening kingdoms.
 - 2. This prophecy could only be correctly fulfilled and without defrocking God from being God if the kingdom were established during the time of the Roman Empire.
- C. Denying that the church and the kingdom are references to the same divine institution and avowing that the church was instituted instead of the kingdom is a plain denial of New Testament doctrine, Matt. 16:18-19; Eph. 3:10-11.
- D. Premillennialism treats the death of Christ as an accident!
 - 1. However, the death of Christ is clearly taught in both testaments, Psa. 22; Isa. 53; Matt. 20:17-19.
 - 2. An accidental death undermines the Deity of the Godhead.
- E. The premillennial restoration of Jewish animal sacrifices displaces and makes of no effect the sacrifice of Christ on the cross, Zech. 14:1-21; Heb. 9:12-15, 22-26.
- F. Neither the words “rapture” nor “premillennial” appear anywhere in the Bible.
 - 1. So-called proof texts of 1 Thess. 4:13-17; 1 Cor. 15:52 and Rev.1:7 are **too noisy** and **too visible** to fit the premillennial rapture.
 - 2. The rapture interjects **too many comings** of Christ, **too many resurrections** and **too many judgments**, Heb. 9:27-28; Matt. 24-25; John 5:28-29.
 - 3. Under the theory of the rapture, the saints do **not** spend **long enough** with Jesus at his next coming,

- i.e., seven years vs. forever, 1 Thess. 4:17.
- G. The seven-year tribulation is unknown in scripture.
 - 1. The so-called proof text is Dan. 9:26-27.
 - 2. However, *eisegeisis* rather than *exegesis* of the passage must be employed.
 - H. A thousand year literal kingdom on earth is taught nowhere in the Bible.
 - 1. Rev. 20:1-6 is no more literal than the dragon of Rev. 12:4 whose tail drew a third of the stars of the heavens.
 - 2. Also, all of the following are absent from the premillennial proof text of Rev. 20:1-6: the second coming of Christ, a bodily resurrection, a reign on earth, a literal throne of David, Jerusalem, Palestine, anyone on earth, Christ on earth.
 - I. To make Jesus king on earth would cause Scripture to contradict itself.
 - 1. Jesus is priest and king at the same time, Zech. 6:12-13.
 - 2. Jesus could not be a priest on earth under Judaism, Heb. 7:12-14; 8:4.
 - 3. Therefore, Jesus could not be a king on earth over a physical kingdom.
 - J. Premillennialism confuses the Lord's Supper since Jesus said he would not partake of the communion with his followers until in the kingdom, yet the communion is clearly apart of the worship in the church, Matt. 26:29; 1 Cor. 11:23-26.
 - K. Premillennialists draft references to "Armageddon" from the figurative language of the Book of Revelation (16:16) and conjure a doctrine of literal war that ushers in the Second Coming of Christ.
 - 1. The Valley of Megiddo in Palestine is far too small to literally accommodate the superpower nations that premillennialism supposes will gather to fight in Armageddon.
 - 2. References to Armageddon are figurative.

Conclusion:

- 1. Believers have long desired a physical kingdom of Christ on

earth, not much unlike the misguided anticipation of the Jews in Christ's day.

- a. However, the Bible does not teach anywhere that the Messiah was to establish a physical kingdom on earth.
 - b. Yet, dispensational premillennialism has pervaded popular religion and society, despite lacking biblical support for it.
2. Premillennialism owes its existence to twisted interpretations of Old Testament prophecies and erroneous affirmations that kingdom prophecies have never been fulfilled.
 3. Premillennialism further depends for its existence on incorrectly interpreting figurative language in the Bible as though it were literal.
 4. Premillennialists formulate a host of doctrines that are not taught in the Bible.
 5. Many of these premillennial doctrines undercut the character and essence of Deity.
 6. Premillennialists must outright contradict plain biblical teachings to support their doctrine.
 7. Premillennial doctrine requires the Bible to contradict itself.
 8. Premillennialism is full of *made-up* words and doctrines that are not found in the Bible.

Invitation:

1. Eternal hope lies not in anticipation of a future millennial kingdom on earth.
2. True hope, based on Bible truth, points souls toward an eternity in heaven with God.
3. Jesus is coming once more, at which time obedient souls will be comforted and disobedient souls will be punished with fire forever, 2 Thess. 1:7-9.
4. Obey the Gospel today, Heb. 5:8-9.
 - a. Erring Christian: repent and pray, Acts 8:22.
 - b. Non-Christian: hear and believe, Rom. 10:17; repent, Acts 17:30; publicly acknowledge Jesus as Christ, Rom. 10:9-10; be immersed in water for the remission of sins, Rom. 6:3-5; remain faithful until death, Rev. 2:10.

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Patience

James 1:2-3

Thesis: To come to a better understanding of patience by examining what the Bible has to say about it.

Song: *It Won't Be Very Long, Where the Gates Swing Outward Never*

Introduction:

1. Two Greek nouns are translated as “patience.”
 - a. Hupomone literally means “abiding under” and appears in the New Testament 32 times, translated as “patience” 31 times and “enduring” once (*Vine’s*).
 - b. Makrothumia means “forbearance, patience, longsuffering” and is translated “longsuffering” in the New Testament 12 times and twice as “patience,” Heb. 6:12; Jam. 5:10 (*Vine’s*).
 - c. Forms of these two words also appear as verbs and an adverb, plus two additional Greek words that appear as adjectives are each translated once as “patient” (*Vine’s*).
2. Patience is a crucial trait for successful Christian living.
 - a. Patience tempers the disposition.
 - b. Patience contributes to fruitfulness in the kingdom.
 - c. Patience complements faithfulness.
 - d. Patience develops through trials and suffering.
 - e. Bible examples of patient saints can help us develop patience, too.
 - f. Patience is a necessary part of hope and salvation.
 - g. “Waiting” is fundamental to “patience.”
 - h. Christian living is never all that it can be unless we learn from the Bible about patience.

Body:

I. Patience tempers the disposition.

- A. Patience is an appropriate substitute for anger, Prov. 15:18; Ecc. 7:8-9.
- B. God will avenge his people and patience will be rewarded; the prosperity of the wicked is no reason to

lose patience, Psalm 37:7-9.

- C. The apostle Paul instructed first century Christians to exercise patience toward all people, 1 Thess. 5:14.

II. Patience contributes to fruitfulness in the kingdom.

- A. A spiritual harvest requires patience just as any farmer must patiently wait for harvest time, Luke 8:15.
 - 1. The spiritual harvest is not hastened by *Miracle Grow*; there are not overnight harvests.
 - 2. The Parable of the Sower illustrates that the bumper crop resulted from only a quarter the seed sown and only a third of the seed that rooted.
- B. Despite difficulty, Christians must produce fruit, John 15:1-6; 1 Cor. 3:6-9.

III. Patience complements faithfulness.

- A. God promises eternal life to those who continually and patiently seek godly glory, holy honor and immeasurable immortality, Rom. 2:7.
- B. Christians should be patient and not become weary in well doing, Gal. 6:9.
- C. Faith coupled with patience will help us stay the course and someday “inherit the promises,” Heb. 6:11-12; that was the theme of the Book of Hebrews to the Jewish Christians who were abandoning Christianity and returning to Judaism..
- D. We must not despise the longsuffering of God, 2 Pet. 3:8-10.

IV. Patience develops through trials and suffering.

- A. Tribulations, if handled right, result in patience, Rom. 5:3; Jam. 1:2-3.
- B. The servants of God must exercise patience in the face of distress, necessities, afflictions and persecutions, 2 Cor. 6:4-6.
- C. The apostle John in his day saw “tribulation” and “patience” as companions to citizenship in the Lord’s kingdom, Rev. 1:9; 2 Tim. 3:12.

V. Bible examples of patient saints can help us develop patience, too.

- A. The apostle Paul practiced patience in response to great persecutions and forfeitures of personal privileges, 2 Cor.

11:24-28; Phil. 3:4-8; 2 Cor. 12:12.

1. The apostles were patient when persecuted by the Sanhedrin, Acts 4-5.
 2. Paul and Silas patiently endured beating and imprisonment, Acts 16:16-24.
- B. The New Testament instructs Christians to demonstrate patience when suffering, just as Jesus did, 1 Pet. 2:19-23.
1. Jesus Christ is our example for showing patience when suffering, Col. 3:12-13.
 2. Especially elders must have patience, 1 Tim. 3:2-3.

VI. Patience is a necessary part of hope and salvation.

- A. Patience, hope and prayer are inseparable biblical companions, even in the face of tribulations, Rom. 8:25; 12:12.
- B. Patience and hope participate in the redemption of souls, Luke 21:19 ASV; Heb. 10:36.
- C. Part of the biblical definition of “hope” includes the concept of “patience,” 1 Thess. 1:3.
- D. The Scriptures are the source of patience and hope, Rom. 15:4-5.

VII. “Waiting” is fundamental to “patience.”

- A. Christians must exercise patience while waiting for the return of Jesus Christ, 2 Thess. 3:5; Jam. 5:7-8.
- B. God’s children must not tire of patiently waiting for eternal salvation, Lam. 3:26; 2 Pet. 3:1-10; 1 Thess. 4:13-18.

VIII. Christian living will never be all that it can be unless we learn from the Bible about patience.

- A. Patience should be diligently sought by Christians, 1 Tim. 6:11; 2 Tim. 2:24-25; Eph. 4:1-2; Col. 1:10-11.
- B. Patience is one of the Christian virtues of which the apostle Peter wrote, which we are obligated to adopt, 2 Pet. 1:5-6.
- C. The Christian race must be run with patience, Heb. 12:1.
- D. According to the inspired apostle Paul, preaching “sound doctrine” teaches patience, Titus 2:1-2.

Conclusion:

1. Elders should be examples of patience.
2. Christians must show patience to all men.

3. Heavenly promises hinge on learning patience.
4. Patience is learned from the Scriptures.
5. Trial and suffering are *opportunities* to develop patience.
6. Patience is a steppingstone to patience.
7. Patience is for all places at all times.
8. To have patience is to be Christ-like.
9. Patience is a virtue.
10. Patience, hope and prayer are partners.
11. Often, patience simply involves waiting!

Invitation:

1. God, in his patience (longsuffering), waits for man to obey the Gospel, but he will not wait forever, 2 Pet. 3:9-10.
2. Erring children of God need to repent and pray, whereas unbaptized believers must repent and be baptized, Acts 9:22; 2:38.

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She Departed Not from the Temple

Luke 2:25-38

Thesis: To acknowledge the godly living of an aged sister and encourage survivors to imitate her example.

Introduction:

1. Two obscure, elderly people, a man and a woman, acknowledged baby Jesus as the Christ — the Savior of mankind.
2. Each of them had lived long, godly lives.
3. For each of them, seeing the Christ child was the perfect conclusion to their holy lives.
 - a. The man said, “Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: For mine eyes have seen thy salvation,” Luke 2:29-30.
 - b. It was recorded of the woman that she “departed not from the temple, but served God with fasting and prayers night and day,” Luke 2:37.

Body:

I. Our departed sister lived a long life.

- A. There is much uncertainty regarding how long any person will live on this earth.
 1. This fact of life has always been apparent to humanity, Job 14:1-2.
 2. The New Testament also portrays how long one may live as an uncertainty, Jam. 4:13-17.
- B. There is no uncertainty that every living person will one day cross the threshold of death from life to eternity.
 1. Observation tells us that every living creature eventually passes away (e.g., obituaries).
 2. Scripture also affirms that every person has an appointment with death (one appointment for which no one will be late or can avoid), Heb. 9:27.

- C. The lifespan for modern mankind under ideal circumstances is revealed in the Bible.
 - 1. Lifespans before the Noah's Flood were very lengthy (e.g., Methuselah, 969, Gen. 5:27).
 - 2. However, man's time on the earth has always been determined by God, Job 7:1.
 - 3. Gradually, the lifespan of humans leveled off at an average of 70 to 80 years, Psa. 90:10.
 - 4. Regardless of the number of years a person may live, it seems at the last so short a time, Job 7:6; 14:1.

II. Our departed sister found great satisfaction in Jesus Christ.

- A. Jesus was the Lord of her life for many decades.
 - 1. It was obvious to all that knew her, that she allowed Jesus Christ to regulate her life; she did her best to imitate Jesus Christ, 1 Cor. 11:1.
 - 2. She consciously chose decades ago to conform her life to the Gospel rather than to the ungodly world around us, Rom.12:1-2.
 - 3. She was zealous of every good work, Titus 2:14.
- B. She was quite dismayed after her health prevented her from attending church services.
 - 1. Our sister delighted in going into the house of God, Psa. 122:1.
 - 2. She was one whom it was not necessary to remind with Heb. 10:25.

III. Our departed sister was ready to go and be with the Lord.

- A. She made adequate preparation by seeking true salvation.
 - 1. Her confidence regarding eternity rested on the words of Jesus, which she took to heart and enacted in her life, Mark 16:16; Luke 13:3; Rom. 10:9-10.
 - 2. She knew that Jesus went to prepare a place in heaven and that he would return to take a prepared people with him to heaven, John 14:1-3; 1 Thess. 4:13-18.
- B. She faithfully practiced Christianity and was an example worthy of imitation.

1. Her Christianity was not something that was at the mercy of worldliness or convenience, Matt. 13:21-22; 19:21-22.
 2. She was faithful unto death, Rev. 2:10.
- C. She was at peace with her fellow man and God.
1. Our sister was a good neighbor and citizen.
 2. She had sought peace with God in his own appointed way, Rom. 5:1.

IV. Our sister cannot return to us, but we can make preparation in this life to go to her, 2 Sam. 12:23.

- A. This time of sorrow will pass for those she left behind.
1. Experience tells us that our sorrow will be softened by the passing of time.
 2. The living need to remember that though we experience sorrow, great joy, no pain and no tears await those who die in the Lord, as our dear sister has, Rev. 14:13; 21:4.
 3. For now, our fond memories will carry us through the days that lie ahead in our lives.
- B. If we make adequate preparation and practice Christianity diligently, we will be reunited with our beloved sister in the afterlife.
1. We can have the same confidence regarding our approaching eternity if we make the same preparation to meet God that our dear sister made while she was yet alive, Amos 4:12.
 2. We, like the apostle Paul, can choose to live our lives in such a way that upon reflection we are certain of our salvation from sin in this life and equally certain of our future in heaven, 2 Tim. 4:6-8; 1 John 2:3.

Conclusion:

1. Like Simeon in Luke 2:25, our sister was devoutly religious.
2. Like Simeon, our sister was content to depart this life, having seen the salvation of the Lord, Luke 2:29-30.
3. Like Anna the prophetess in Luke 2:37, our dear sister never departed from the temple of the Lord and served God with fasting and prayer, night and day.

Invitation:

1. Sadly, some of you will never see our dear departed loved one again, because you have not and will not make the adequate preparation, as she has, to live with God in heaven forever.
2. Happily, for others present today, a joyous reunion with our sister awaits you in heaven when we, too, pass from the scenes of life or when time ends and eternity for us commences.

The Time of My Departure Is at Hand

2 Timothy 4:6-8

Thesis: A funeral sermon portraying faithfulness and readiness with the anticipation of an eternal reward.

Introduction:

1. The apostle Paul wrote the Book of 2 Timothy during the second time he was imprisoned in Rome.
2. He was uncertain whether he would be released, as he had been from an earlier Roman imprisonment, or be executed.
3. Secular history relates that the apostle Paul was executed in June of A.D. 68 by order of Emperor Nero.
4. Though Paul had doubts about his *earthly future*, he had absolutely no doubts regarding his *future in eternity*, 2 Tim. 4:6-8.

Body:

- I. **Second Timothy 4:6 reads, “For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand.”**
 - A. The apostle Paul had made adequate preparation to meet God in eternity.
 1. He had become a Christian, whose conversion is amply chronicled in three chapters of the Book of Acts (9, 22, 26; 9:6; 22:16).
 2. He tirelessly served God with his whole being despite forfeiture of worldly aspirations and severe persecution, Phil. 4:3-11; 2 Cor. 11:23-28.
 - B. Further, the apostle Paul was willing to leave this old world and live with Jesus in heaven.
 1. He was in a quandary whether to desire to depart this life for a better, eternal life or remain with those he loved, Phil. 1:21-24; 2 Cor. 5:8.
 2. Similarly, an old saint in Jerusalem at the birth of Jesus, having seen the Christ child, desired to

depart this life *in peace* for eternal bliss, Luke 2:25-35.

- C. Though not an apostle, our departed loved one was *ready to leave* this old world for the eternal world on the other side of the threshold of death.
 - 1. The dearly departed made adequate preparation to meet God by becoming a Christian — just like the apostle Paul did!
 - 2. This child of God also worshipped and served God *in God's own appointed way*.
 - 3. Tired from the rigor of years and at peace with God, this dear saint welcomed the doorway of death to the next world.

II. Our text for today continues in 2 Timothy 4:7, “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith.”

- A. The apostle Paul used two illustrations from first century sports to depict his aptitude for serving God faithfully.
 - 1. He exercised himself as a boxer in training would condition himself for contests in the ring.
 - 2. In another figure, he portrayed himself as a different kind of athlete, a runner who successfully completed a grueling, cross-country course.
- B. The last phrase in 2 Timothy 4:7 is the most important thing that could ever be said about any human being — “I have kept the faith.”
 - 1. “The faith” is the *one* system of faith of which Paul and Jude wrote, Eph. 4:5; Jude 3.
 - 2. It is the same as the pure Gospel, Gal. 1:6-9, which formerly was a mystery but now is revealed and to be heralded by the church, Eph. 3:3-11.
- C. Second Timothy 4:7 is applicable to the soul whose worn out overcoat of a body lies here today.
 - 1. This child of God also fought the good fight and completed the Christian race, 1 Cor. 9:24-27; Heb. 12:1.
 - 2. Our loved one, kept the faith, dying in the Lord, for which a reward is forthcoming, Rev. 14:13.

III. Finally, our text reads in 2 Timothy 4:8, “Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.”

- A. Though the apostle Paul did not know with certainty whether he would survive the Roman imprisonment in which he found himself when he penned 2 Timothy, he was confident regarding the *heavenly outcome* of his discipleship.
1. He compared the eternal reward of heaven with a victorious athlete’s crown of olive leaves in the first century, 2 Tim. 2:5; Jam. 1:12; 1 Pet. 5:4; Rev. 2:10.
 2. His confidence was inspired by the righteousness of the Great Judge, Acts 10:42; Rev. 20:11-15.
 3. The apostle affirmed that the same eternal reward that he anticipated is available for every other human being as well, “whosoever will,” Rev. 22:17.
- B. Our silent dear one over whose bodily remains we grieve today shared with the apostle Paul a confidence respecting the journey between worlds to a blissful eternity.
1. The *key to the peace of mind* with which to anticipate passing from life through death to yonder world is making peace with God — *on his terms*, Rom. 5:1; 10:17.
 2. Faithful children of God ought to joyfully desire the soon return of Jesus Christ, Rev. 22:20.

Conclusion:

1. The righteous dead have no disappointments for their passing, but are comforted in the bosom of Abraham in a place Jesus styled as paradise, Luke 16:19-31; 23:43.
2. Further, the righteous dead have no pain, sorrow or tears, Rev. 21:4.
3. Faithful children of God who have passed from among the living are called “blessed” — meaning, “happy,” Rev. 14:13; 22:14.

4. Therefore, for the righteous, the return of Jesus Christ at the end of time is described in the Bible as “blessed” or “happy,” Titus 2:13; Rev. 16:15.

Invitation:

1. Everything that 2 Timothy 4:6-8 says about the apostle Paul regarding life and death, and which we have applied to our loved one, could be said regarding everyone of us — if we come to and abide with God *on his terms*.
2. The joys and blessings found in eternity with God that were anticipated by this child of God are conditioned upon becoming a Christian, plus remaining faithful in worship and service this side of eternity.
3. Each of us needs to ask himself or herself, “Am I following the saintly dead to eternal reward, or am I unprepared to meet God in judgment,” 1 Cor. 11:1; Amos 4:12.

Wresting the Scriptures

2 Peter 3:15-16

Thesis: To declare and warn against the ways in which Scripture is often abused today.

Introduction:

1. Holy Scripture is divine in origin and content, 2 Tim. 3:16-17.
 - a. New Testament Scripture came to mankind in the same way in which man received Old Testament Scripture, 2 Pet. 1:20-21.
 - b. New Testament Scripture is the result of words taught by the Holy Spirit, 1 Corinthians 2:12-13.
2. The apostles were promised inspiration by which they were to speak and write.
 - a. Jesus promised the Holy Spirit to his apostles whereby they would know all things, John 16:13.
 - b. The apostles were enabled by the Holy Spirit on the Pentecost following the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ, Acts 2:4.
 - c. The apostle Paul wrote “the commandments of the Lord,” 1 Cor. 14:37.
 - d. New Testament Scripture is not attributable to human ingenuity, but to Jesus Christ, Gal. 1:11-12.
3. The Bible contains several warnings about perversions of Scripture.
 - a. The text with which we began this lesson is one such passage, 2 Pet. 3:15-16, about “wresting” or to “twist” NKJV.
 - b. Sometimes people prefer alternatives to Gospel truth, 2 Tim. 4:3-4.
 - c. Sometimes people alter the Gospel, Gal. 1:6-9.
 - d. Therefore, faithful Christians must scrutinize teachers and preachers to discern between false teachers and proclaimers of the Truth, 1 John 4:1.
4. “Wresting the Scriptures” means:
 - a. To wrestle with, fight against, twist or pervert.

- b. Contemporaries have been heard to say, “You can prove anything by the Bible”; this statement could only be true through perversion of Scripture.
- c. People often teach things today that the Bible was never intended to teach.
- d. “Proof texts” out of their “biblical contexts” are “pretexts” for teaching error.

Body:

I. Scriptures pertaining to “faith” are often “wrested” or ‘twisted.’

- A. Many today affirm “faith only.”
 - 1. They attempt to appeal to Scripture to prove that doctrine, Rom. 3:28; 5:1.
 - 2. Yet, the type of faith addressed in Romans is obviously an **obedient faith**, Rom. 1:5; 16:26.
- B. However, neither Paul nor any other inspired writer teaches “faith only.”
 - 1. The apostle Paul contrasted the Old Covenant and its meritorious works with the New Covenant and its active or obedient faith, Eph. 2:8-9.
 - 2. James also taught faith and obedience or faith in action, Jam. 2:24.
- C. The doctrine of “faith only” is wresting or twisting Scripture to one’s destruction.
 - 1. “Faith only” is not substantiated by any passage of Scripture.
 - 2. The doctrine of “faith only” contradicts other elements to which is attributed a part in salvation: hearing, repenting, confessing Jesus Christ, baptism, faithfulness.

II. Scriptures pertaining to “grace” are often “wrested” or ‘twisted.’

- A. Clearly, the apostle Paul taught salvation by grace, Eph. 2:8-9.
 - 1. Many today, however, teach salvation by “grace only.”
 - 2. This makes salvation unconditional, excluding even faith!
 - 3. Common sense dictates that if the saved are

unconditionally saved by God, then God must be responsible for the equally unconditional loss of the lost; yet God is not a respecter of persons, Rom. 2:11; Acts 10:34-35.

- B. “Grace only” turns God’s grace into a license to sin, turning the grace of God into lasciviousness, Jude 4.
 - 1. If men are unconditionally saved by grace, there are no sins which if committed would adversely affect salvation.
 - 2. By inspiration, the apostle Paul anticipated the error of grace only with its built in license to sin, Rom. 6:1-2.

III. Scriptures pertaining to “baptism” are often “wrested” or ‘twisted.’

- A. Various errors are taught regarding baptism.
 - 1. Error: Baptism does not pertain to salvation.
 - 2. Error: Baptism is Holy Spirit baptism.
 - 3. Error: Baptism puts one into a denominational body after salvation.
- B. Scripture portrays a different role for baptism than conveyed by the errors just mentioned.
 - 1. There is only one baptism valid today, Eph. 4:5.
 - 2. That baptism is water baptism, 1 Pet. 3:20-21.
 - 3. That baptism is immersion in water, Rom. 6:3-5; Col. 2:12.
 - 4. That baptism is the point at which one’s sins are removed, Acts 22:16; 1 Pet. 3:21.
 - 5. Bible baptism puts one into Jesus Christ and into the church of the Lord, Gal. 3:27; Acts 2:41, 47.

IV. Scriptures are often “wrested” or ‘twisted’ to teach that man cannot fall from grace so as to be lost.

- A. The Bible is said to contain over 2,500 warnings against falling from grace.
 - 1. Warnings about being “stedfast” or being careful not to fall would be meaningless were it impossible to fall, 1 Cor. 15:58; 2 Pet. 2:20-22.
 - 2. The crown of life is only promised to the faithful, implying that the unfaithful will not receive it, Rev. 2:10.

- B. Scripture is twisted to teach the “impossibility of apostasy” and make Scriptures seem to contradict each other.
1. Paul affirmed it was indeed possible to fall from grace, Gal. 5:4.
 2. Even Christians can be overcome, Gal. 6:1.
 3. Even faithful Christians need to be careful lest they fall, 1 Cor. 10:12.
 4. The apostle Peter wrote that a child of God can ‘fall from his steadfastness,’ 2 Pet. 3:17.
 5. One can sin so as to be irrecoverable (on his part — not on God’s part), Heb. 6:4-6.

Conclusion:

1. Several other Scriptures are twisted to teach false doctrines.
 - a. Matt. 16:18: “One church is as good as another.”
 - b. Matt. 28:19: “There is only one person in the Godhead.”
 - c. Matt. 16:18-19: “The kingdom has not come yet.”
 - d. Rev. 1:7: “The Second Coming is already passed.”
2. Wresting the Scriptures will bring destruction upon those who twist it, 2 Pet. 3:15-16.
 - a. False teachers wrest Scripture, 2 Pet. 2:1.
 - b. Unstable, inexperienced, unlearned children of God sometimes wrest Scripture as well, Eph. 4:14.
3. Scripture will endure despite of the efforts to ruin or distort them.
 - a. The words of Jesus Christ are immortal, Matt. 24:35.
 - b. The Word of God is eternal, 1 Pet. 1:23, 25.

Invitation:

1. The immutable Scriptures will save or condemn each soul.
2. Mankind must take Scripture at face value, allowing it to mean what it meant when it was first penned, and to act accordingly.
3. The lost are those who pervert Scripture or fail to act according to its instruction (i.e., erring Christians, nonChristians).

Personal Responsibility in a No-Fault World

1 Timothy 5:8

Thesis: To emphasize the biblical need for personal responsibility in an irresponsible world.

Introduction:

1. Biblical instruction concerns mankind's physical and spiritual well-being.
 - a. The Bible addresses man's physical well being when its instructions are pragmatic or practical, e.g. Prov.; 1 Cor. 7; Eph. 5; 6:1-4.
 - b. The Bible addresses man's spiritual well being when its instructions concern salvation issues, e.g. redemption, Christian living, Christian service, Christian worship.
 - c. However, man historically neglects or refuses to abide by God's instructions, Rom.3:23; 1 Cor. 10:1-11; Jer.6:16.
2. From near the time mankind first inhabited the earth, he "passed the buck" or refused to accept personal responsibility.
 - a. When guilty of violating one of only four instructions God gave to the first pair, Eve blamed the serpent and Adam blamed Eve directly and God indirectly, Gen. 3:12-13.
 - b. Another classic example of failure to accept personal responsibility is King Saul when he disobeyed God and brought back the Amalekites' best animals and King Agag as a trophy, 1 Sam. 15:2-26.
 - c. The parable of the Prodigal Son and the account of two sons sent to labor in the vineyard illustrate selfish refusal to accept personal responsibility, Luke 15:11-32; Matt. 21:28-30.
3. Today, an increasing number of people have no sense of personal responsibility for any number of things.
 - a. These days, marriages are contracted lightly and often not much later dissolved (perhaps through **no-fault divorce**) with little apparent awareness of personal responsibility.

(Over two thirds of homes in which children reside in our nation are **now one parent homes!**)

- b. While we do not fault persons who have genuine needs and are **unable** to take care of themselves, in many families, welfare and receiving charitable gifts has become *a way of life*, passed down from generation to generation. (Many people seem to think that the world **owes them a living!**)
4. However, God holds humanity and especially Christians to a higher standard of personal responsibility than the irresponsible world chooses for itself.

Body:

I. What is the personal responsibility of those who are potential recipients of charitable relief?

- A. Under ordinary circumstances, God expects people to provide for their own physical well-being, e.g. food, clothing, shelter.
 1. Most of life's daily burdens are one's own responsibility, but sometimes burdens become more than a person can bear alone, Gal. 6:2, 5.
 2. The Bible notes that under ordinary circumstances parents are to provide for their young children, whereas children are to provide for their aged parents, 2 Cor. 12:14; Matt. 15:5-6.
- B. Sometimes, though, people become **unable** to meet their own **needs**, and they are deserving of assistance.
 1. First, the potential recipient of benevolence must be needy, Acts 2:45; 4:34-35; Rom.15:26.
 2. Second, the potential recipient of benevolence must not have family to whom he or she can appeal, i.e. must not have another recourse, 1 Tim. 5:16.
 3. Third, recipients of benevolence ought to be grateful, Luke 17:12-19; Acts 9:39.
- C. Contemporary *parable*:
 1. The eldest son of a family of seven came home on leave from the Air Force, with a duffle bag of dirty laundry in tow (which he had no intention of washing for himself).
 2. Upon time to return to his duty station, the eldest son's father had to sell his gun collection for plane

fare, because this son squandered all his own money.

3. Later in life, the eldest son's bank foreclosed on the land that he had been given by his parents, at which time he moved with his family into his mother's home.
4. Still later in life, his mother felt compelled to move from her home, leaving it to her eldest son.
5. Finally, the eldest son's bank foreclosed on the mother's house, too, depriving his youngest sibling of her inheritance.
6. Permitted to do so, some people, like leaches, will suck the life-blood from whomever they can, even their siblings and their parents. (This is a true story that occurred in Pennsylvania.)

D. Another contemporary *parable*:

1. A young married man with two daughters bought a house while he and his family received welfare.
2. He augmented his family's welfare income by being paid cash *under the table* for work he did at a junkyard.
3. However, when this young man was required to work summers in the nearby State Park in exchange for the funds his family received, he considered that to be "slave labor" and unfair.
4. Afforded thereby an opportunity to retain integrity and dignity, he chose rather to despise the State from whom he and his family received a *free ride*. (This is a true story that occurred in Pennsylvania.)

II. What is the personal responsibility of those who are able to provide charitable relief?

- A. God requires Christians and the church to respond benevolently to both fellow Christians and non-Christians **who have needs beyond their ability to meet**.
1. The early church in Jerusalem responded with love offerings from the sale of property for poor saints, Acts 4:32-37.
 2. The apostle Paul encouraged collections among the

Gentile churches for benevolence among the Jewish churches, Acts 11:27-30; Rom. 15:25-27; 2 Cor. 8-9.

3. The primary recipients of benevolent money collected was for needy Christians, but it was not withheld from needy non-Christians, 2 Cor. 9:13; Gal. 6:10.
 4. The practice of “pure religion” by either individual Christians or the church requires benevolent action corresponding to opportunity and resources, Jam. 1:27; 4:17.
- B. God forbids Christians and the church to respond benevolently to either Christians or non-Christians who, though they have needs, have either the ability or other resources with which to meet those needs.
1. For instance, widows who have relatives who can and will support them are not the ongoing responsibility of the Lord’s church for their livelihood, 1 Tim. 5:4.
 2. The Bible harshly condemns one who refuses to accept his personal responsibility for providing for himself and his family, 1 Tim. 5:8.
- C. Contemporary *parable*:
1. The number two child of a family with four boys suffered brain damage at birth.
 2. As one might expect, there were a number of things in life that this child could not do well.
 3. Therefore, to *protect* him, his parents largely secluded him at home from the world, except to attend school.
 4. To make life *fairer* for him, his parents also applied the same restrictions to his three brothers.
 5. Consequently, the number two child was prevented from trying things at life in which he might fail — or succeed.
 6. Consequently, his three brothers likewise were prevented from experiencing fuller lives as youths.
 7. All four boys failed to develop ordinary social skills, and further failed to develop any sense of

self-worth and confidence with which to face life.

8. Instead of one damaged son, all four boys were damaged!

9. Though meaning well, the parents inadvertently harmed their children when they thought that they were helping them. (This is a true story from Pennsylvania.)

D. Another contemporary *parable*:

1. A thirteen-year-old boy arrived one day in a new foster home.

2. He was nearly unable to dress himself, afraid of the world and a bed wetter.

3. His mother had never let him get dressed by himself or even button his own buttons, but she treated him almost like the infant she brought into this world.

4. Medical examinations of the boy disclosed that he neither had physical problems nor lacked sufficient intelligence to don his own clothes or avoid bedwetting.

5. This boy's mother had not allowed her son to mature, and essentially, she had crippled him, leaving him unable to care for himself and lacking even the basest social skills.

6. Sometimes the wrong kind of help really harms. (This is a true story from Tennessee.)

Conclusion:

1. Especially Christians need to realize the biblical need for personal responsibility in an irresponsible world.

2. However, the recipients of benevolence have personal responsibilities respecting that relief.

3. Even those who extend benevolence have personal responsibilities respect the relief they give.

4. Neither individuals nor congregations can or ought to help those who will not help themselves, or who would not help themselves if they could.

5. Sometimes helping when we ought not help **enables** irresponsible persons to continue as they are and not change.

6. God's Word is so practical that either in what it directly says or

what biblical principles imply mankind can know precisely for what God holds us responsible, i.e. how we can order our lives.

Invitation:

1. There is nothing more practical and no greater demonstration of personal responsibility than to turn to God's Word regarding redemption.
2. Specifically, the New Testament contains God's plan of salvation for both the non-Christian and the erring Christian, Mark 16:16; Acts 8:22.

Some Servants Who Are Needed in the Church

Esther 4:14

Thesis: To encourage Christians to develop the admirable and holy qualities of godly men and women about whom we read in the Bible.

Introduction:

1. Esther's uncle, Mordecai, told her that especially she had a crucial role to play in the preservation of her people.
 - a. She needed to accept that role despite lethal perils she would face.
 - b. However, if Esther cowered and did not rise to the occasion, God would find another servant to do his bidding.
2. Likewise, each member of the church is either an asset or a liability, and either helps or hinders the work and growth of the Lord's church.
 - a. The Lord's church is bigger than anyone of us, so that we are dispensable and the church can get along without us, but we do not want to lose a single soul.
 - b. Obviously, the progress of the local congregation depends on its own members, their lives and labors for God, rather than outsiders, visitors, guest speakers, etc.
 - c. Neither does the work depend upon any one person (preacher, elder, patriarch or any other single member), but **all members** must work together.
3. The church must be composed of the right kind of people — dedicated Christians bearing godly characteristics.

Body:

- I. **The church needs servants who have knowledge — like Timothy, 2 Tim. 1:5; 3:15.**
 - A. The need for a thorough knowledge of God's Word cannot be over emphasized.
 1. Proverbs 11:9 says, "...through knowledge shall

- the just be delivered.”
2. Jesus said that “the truth,” which involves knowledge, will set men free, John 8:32.
 3. The apostle Peter wrote about the relationship between the Word of God and Christian growth, 2 Pet. 2:2.
 4. A lack of knowledge in the first century, especially among Jewish Christians was hurtful to the early church, Heb. 5:12-14.
- B. Following man’s pseudo-wisdom and pseudo-knowledge is valueless respecting one’s eternal soul.
1. Humans are masters of self-deception, Prov. 16:25.
 2. It is an exceptional person who recognizes that the answers that matter lie beyond himself, Jer. 10:23.
 3. Heightened zeal and enthusiasm are not guarantees that one is either righteous or obedient to God, Rom. 10:1-3.
 4. The wisdom and knowledge of the world leads humanity away from divine wisdom and knowledge whereby redemption and eternal life is attainable, 1 Cor. 1:18-25.
- C. Knowledge is necessary to resist evil satisfactorily.
1. Christians must avoid evil and sin, Rom. 12:9; 1 Thess. 5:21-22.
 2. Knowledge is invaluable in abstaining from evil, Psa. 119:104-105; Titus 1:9-11.
- D. The church needs men and women who are interested in studying and learning as much of God’s Word as they possibly can.
1. We cannot know what God expects of us or holds in store for us without studying the Bible.
 2. Reading God’s Word is good, but studying God’s Word is essential, 2 Tim. 2:15.

II. The church needs servants who are righteous — like Noah, Gen. 6:8-9; 2 Pet. 2:5.

- A. Noah did not pursue popularity with his fellow man, but rather he completely obeyed the commands of God.
1. The ark floated above the deluge because Noah obeyed God, Gen. 6:22.

2. Noah's righteousness motivated him to be God's servant, Heb. 11:7.
- B. Noah was a "preacher of righteousness" because of his right doing.
 1. Performing the commandments of God leads to righteousness, Psa. 119:172.
 2. Not abiding by the commandments of God is unrighteous or sinful, 1 John 5:17.
- C. The church needs servants of integrity and character who will obey God in spite of opposition and personal peril.
 1. The apostles stood firm with God and his Word despite intimidation by the Sanhedrin, Acts 4:19-20.
 2. On a second occasion before the Sanhedrin, and for which they were beaten, the apostles allied themselves with God, Acts 5:29.

III. The church needs servants who have patience — like Job, Jam. 5:11.

- A. No other Bible character compares with Job for his patience.
 1. Job Chapter One describes Job's loss of all his children and all of his wealth.
 2. Job's reaction was unique among men and praiseworthy, Job 1:20-22.
- B. One topic for which Christians must exercise patience is the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.
 1. Many people despise the longsuffering of God, 2 Pet. 3:8-12.
 2. We must simply make sure that we are ready irrespective of when our Lord returns, Matt. 24:42-51.
- C. Like Job, Christians must be patient in the face of adversity.
 1. Patience is one of the Christian graces toward we should strive, 2 Pet. 1:5-6.
 2. The half brother of Jesus, James, wrote that patience comes by successfully negotiating trials of life, Jam. 1:2-4.
- D. The church needs reliable and dependable souls — not

quitters!

1. Adversities cannot be allowed to triumph over us, 2 Tim. 3:12; 1 Pet. 4:16.
2. We must endure unto the end, Matt. 24:13; Rev. 2:10.

IV. The church needs servants of faith and trust — like Abraham, Gen. 15:6; Heb. 11:8-10.

- A. Abraham's faith was unsurpassed.
 1. He left home and all with which he was familiar at the bidding of God, Gen. 12:1-4.
 2. Abraham also had faith in God and trusted God regarding the promise of a son, despite Abraham's advanced age, Rom. 4:19-22.
- B. Abrahamic faith is necessary in order for Christians to fulfill their purpose on earth and spend eternity in heaven.
 1. We must have no less faith and trust in God than Abraham had, Heb. 11:6.
 2. We must learn from God's Word respecting our purpose on earth and how to prepare for eternity, Ecc. 12:13-14; Matt. 6:33.
- C. Great faith will enable Christians to make sacrifices when necessary.
 1. This degree of faith will permit us to carry our crosses daily and follow Jesus, Luke 9:23.
 2. Great faith will allow Christians to put Jesus first in their lives, Luke 14:26-27.
 3. Not even wealth and possessions will crowd Jesus out of our lives if we have faith and trust in God, Matt. 19:21-22.

V. The church needs servants who will preach or teach the Gospel — like Paul, 1 Cor. 9:16.

- A. Christians need to be faithful always to God especially when preaching or teaching.
 1. Faithful Christians are not in the men-pleasing business, Gal. 1:10.
 2. We are required to hold "back nothing" and proclaim "all the counsel of God," Acts 20:20, 27.
 3. Though we may become enemies even to some

brethren when we present God's Word as it is, we must not apologize for the Gospel that saves us, Gal. 4:16; Rom. 1:16.

- B. We need to be determined to defend the Gospel of Christ.
 - 1. Like, Paul, we need to be "set for the defense of the Gospel," Phil. 1:17.
 - 2. We must reject without hesitation any altered or counterfeit gospels, Gal. 1:6-9.
 - 3. Christians are fully persuaded that there is only one, unalterable system of faith or Gospel, Jude 3.
- C. The Word of God has come down to us through much suffering and persecution.
 - 1. The apostle Paul forfeited many ordinary pleasures in this life to take the Gospel to the world, Phil. 3:4-11.
 - 2. He further suffered unimaginable hardships and persecutions to bring the Gospel to the lost, 2 Cor. 11:23-28.
- D. Every Christian can proclaim the Gospel in some way, e.g. teach classes, home Bible studies, correspondence courses, godly living, etc.
 - 1. **Why**, to exhibit care for lost souls, Rom. 10:1.
 - 2. **Why**, to fulfill the Great Commission, Mark 16:15-16.
 - 3. **Why**, to save lost souls, Luke 19:20; Rom. 10:13-17.

VI. The church needs servants who will lead God's children to success — like Nehemiah, Neh. 2-6.

- A. Nehemiah was a competent leader.
 - 1. He had a difficult task before him, to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem and remove the Jewish reproach.
 - 2. Under Nehemiah's leadership, the Jews rebuilt the walls in a record 52 days.
 - 3. They accomplished this Herculean task under the threat of war.
- B. Nehemiah typifies the kind of leadership needed in the Lord's church.
 - 1. A congregation grows in direct relationship to its

- leadership (provided there is a *followership*).
2. Church leaders must lead in the way of truth and resist evil encroachments.
- C. The New Testament sets the criteria for church leaders (elders) in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1.
1. The church needs leaders who will not lead it astray, but who will feed it a steady diet of God's Word, Acts 20:28-30.
 2. Elders, as a congregation's leaders, are to rule without being dictators and to provide the proper example, Heb. 13:17; 1 Pet. 5:3.

Conclusion:

1. There is nothing the church cannot accomplish when its members are willing to develop such godly characteristics as we have discussed.
2. Christians with these and other godly characteristics contribute to the growth rather than the decline of the church.
3. Do you contribute to the success or failure of the church (there is no middle ground, Matt. 12:30)?

Invitation:

1. Erring Christians are doomed in that condition and contribute to the failure of the church; therefore, come back to the Lord, Acts 8:22; 1 John 1:9.
2. Non-Christians are doomed outside of Christ and, of course, in that condition they cannot contribute to the success of the church; come, obediently, to the Lord, Heb. 5:9; Mark 16:16.

Adam, a Type of Christ

Rom. 5:14-19; 1 Cor. 15:22, 45-49

Thesis: To show a biblical comparison of Adam and Christ, by which we can learn something about our Lord.

Introduction:

1. The Old Testament contains types of New Testament anti-types.
 - a. A type is a “representative form” or “characteristic” of something else.
 - b. Adam is a type of Jesus Christ.
 - c. Judaism was never intended by God to be his final revelation to man, but contains types, figures, patterns, and shadows of New Testament anti-types, Heb. 9:9, 23; 10:1-2.
2. Old Testament types perfectly fit the New Testament church, its doctrine and the Christ.
 - a. Therefore, we can learn something about the Lord by examining an Old Testament type.
 - b. Types confirm the church of the Bible to be the fulfillment of the long standing will of God, Eph. 3:10-11.

Body:

I. Comparisons between Adam and the Christ.

- A. Adam was created by miracle, Gen. 1:27; 2:7 — Jesus was conceived by miracle, Matt. 1:18, 23.
- B. Adam is the head of the physical family, 1 Cor. 15:45-49 — Jesus is the head of the spiritual family, Eph. 3:14-15.
- C. Adam under went deep sleep, Gen. 2:21 — Jesus experienced the sleep of death (from which he also arose), John 19:30.
- D. Adam’s side was opened, Gen. 2:21 — Jesus’ side was opened, too, John 19:34.
- E. From Adam a rib was taken, Gen. 2:21 — Jesus shed his blood, John 19:34.
- F. From Adam’s rib woman was formed, Gen. 2:22 — with

Jesus' blood the church was purchased, Acts 20:28.

- G. Adam named his bride (generally, "woman"; specifically, "Eve"), Gen. 2:23 — Jesus named his bride (generally, "churches of Christ"; specifically, "Christians"), Rom. 16:16; Acts 11:26.
- H. Adam and Eve cleaved to each other, Gen. 2:24 — Christians should cleave to the Lord and each other, Luke 14:26; Rom. 12:10.
- I. Adam's family is propagated through seed, Gen. 1:27, 28 — the family of Christ is also propagated by seed (which is the Word of God), Luke 8:11.

II. Observations and Lessons.

- A. Rom. 5:14-19.
 - 1. Adam, representative of humanity, introduced sin into the world, which led to death, the consequence of sin.
 - 2. Jesus Christ, representative of the Godhead, introduced righteousness into the world, which leads to life.
 - 3. In both cases, individuals participate by their actions in either sin and death or righteousness and life.
- B. 1 Cor. 15:22.
 - 1. Adam and Jesus Christ brought opposite gifts to mankind.
 - 2. However, in both cases, mankind must appropriate either gift.
 - 3. What the creation (Adam) failed to do for himself, the Creator (Jesus) did for mankind.
- C. 1 Cor. 15:45.
 - 1. Adam was made after the order of creation and also bore the image of God (a Spirit Being).
 - 2. Adam, however, through sin, allowed the earthly side of him to err and overcome the spiritual side.
 - 3. Jesus Christ, himself a Spirit Being, re-introduced the spiritual into the world.
 - 4. Christians in particular will bear the image of the spiritual over the image of our earthly existence.

Conclusion:

1. Examining types and their anti-types (fulfillments), one can easily see some of the significant features of the anti-type.
2. The anti-type (in this case, Jesus) is more important than the type.
3. Though we are dual beings, possessing both body and spirit, we must nurture the spirit rather than gratifying lusts of the flesh.
4. Adam introduced sin and death, whereas Jesus introduced righteousness and life.
5. Christians must follow Jesus instead of Adam.

Invitation:

1. Jesus Christ is our fitting example, who if we follow will lead us to heaven, 1 Pet. 2:21.
2. If we obey Christ, he will save us, Heb. 5:8, 9
3. If we love Christ, we will obey him, John 14:15
4. His commandments relative to salvation include: John 8:24; Luke 13:3; Matt. 10:32; Mark 16:16; Rev. 2:10.

Saved by the Blood of Christ

Ephesians 1:7

Thesis: To demonstrate that redemption occurs only when one's soul has been cleansed by the blood of Jesus Christ.

Song: *There Is Power in the Blood*

Introduction:

1. There are other elements in Scripture to which saving power is attributed in addition to the blood of Christ.
 - a. Faith or Belief, Rom. 5:1
 - b. Repentance, Luke 13:3
 - c. Confessing Christ, Rom. 10:9-10
 - d. Baptism, 1 Pet. 3:21
 - e. Faithfulness, Rev. 2:10
 - f. Obedience, Heb. 5:8-9
 - g. The Gospel, Rom. 1:16
 - h. Hope, Rom. 8:24
 - i. Grace, Eph. 2:8
 - j. Mercy, Titus 3:5
 - k. Calling on the name of the Lord, Rom. 10:14
 - l. Works, Jam. 2:24
 - m. Knowledge, 2 Tim. 3:15
 - n. Laying aside evil and receiving the Word in its place, Jam. 1:21
 - o. Preaching, 1 Cor. 1:18, 21
 - p. Love, 1 John 2:10
 - q. Etc.
 - r. Either all of these elements to which is attributed saving power work together for the redemption of a soul, or they oppose each other and the Bible is false.
2. Unlike some of these elements, which possess saving power, blood has always been associated with God's approval of man.
 - a. Blood sacrifices were typical of acceptable worship in the Patriarchal Age.
 - b. Blood sacrifices also characterized acceptable worship in the Mosaic Age.

- c. The bloody animal sacrifices of the two former religious ages typified the blood of Christ shed as our Lord was sacrificed on Calvary's cross.
 - d. The blood of Jesus Christ cleanses from sin all the souls that come in contact with it.
3. Incidentally, we cannot study our subject from *Goodnews for Modern Man (Today's English Version)*.
- a. *Goodnews for Modern Man* is an unreliable translation.
 - b. It not only contains gross mistranslations, but omits much of God's Word, including many passages which pertain to the blood of Christ, Acts 20:28; Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:14; 1 Pet. 1:18-19; Rev. 1:5; 5:9.

Body:

I. Blood sacrifices characterized approved worship in the Patriarchal Age.

- A. The first recorded act of worship was by Cain and Abel, Gen. 4:3-5.
 - 1. Cain offered fruits and vegetables in worship; with this God was not pleased.
 - 2. Abel, however, offered the firstlings of his flock; this sacrifice God accepted.
 - 3. The sacrifice God accepted was an animal sacrifice, which involved the blood of the animal.
- B. After the flood receded, Noah also offered animal sacrifices, Gen. 8:20-21.
 - 1. Noah offered a multitude of burnt offerings, using one of every clean beast and clean fowl.
 - 2. These sacrifices also necessarily involved the blood of the animals.

II. Blood sacrifices characterized approved worship in the Mosaic Age and typified the redemption of souls by the blood of Jesus Christ in the Gospel Age.

- A. Blood was of primary importance in animal sacrifices under Judaism.
 - 1. The blood of animal sacrifices played a role in worship under Judaism, Num. 18:17.
 - 2. Irrespective of the animal being sacrificed, blood was an important part of worship under Judaism, Lev. 3:1-17.

B. The Old Testament was sealed with animal blood.

1. The law, the people, the tabernacle and the vessels of the tabernacle were sprinkled with the blood of animal sacrifices, Heb. 9:18-21.
2. The blood of animal sacrifices was sprinkled on Aaron and his garments, Exod. 29:18-21.
3. The blood of animals made atonement for sins, Lev. 17:11.
4. The high priest entered the Most Holy Place once annually with the blood of animal sacrifices to atone for sin, Heb. 9:7; Exod. 30:10; Lev. 16:1-34.

C. The blood of animals could not save from sin, but typified the saving power of the blood of Jesus Christ.

1. Through animal sacrifices God overlooked sins for a year at a time, but the sins were not taken away, Heb. 10:1-4.
2. Animal sacrifices (and the blood they shed) were only types and figures of the sacrifice of Christ and his shed blood, Heb. 9:22-24.
3. Only the blood of Christ can cleanse the conscience of sin, Heb. 9:12-14.

III. The blood of Jesus Christ, our Sacrifice, is essential to the redemption of humanity.

A. The blood of Christ is crucial to salvation.

1. The blood of the cross reconciles, Col. 1:20.
2. The blood of Christ brings one nigh to God, Eph. 2:13.
3. The church was purchased by the blood of Christ, Acts 20:28.
4. We are washed from our sins by the blood of Christ, Rev. 1:5.
5. All kindreds, peoples and nations of men have been redeemed by the blood of Jesus, Rev. 5:9.
6. We shall overcome by the blood of Christ, Rev. 12:11.
7. The robes of martyrs' robes are washed white by the blood of the Lamb, Rev. 7:14.
8. We are justified by the blood of Christ, Rom. 5:9.
9. By Christ's blood are we redeemed, Eph. 1:7; Col.

- 1:14; 1 Pet. 1:18-20; Heb. 9:12.
10. We have faith in the blood of Christ, Rom. 3:25.
 11. The blood of Christ will one day allow the saved to enter the holy place of heaven, Heb. 10:19.
- B. The New Testament is sealed by the blood of Jesus Christ.
1. The New Testament is called the “everlasting covenant” and it is sealed by the blood of Jesus, Heb. 13:20.
 2. Jesus’ “blood of the covenant” sanctifies, Heb 10:29.
- C. The blood of Christ saves souls under both Testaments (in each of the three religious ages).
1. Animal sacrifices atoned for sins annually but did not remove the sins, Heb. 10:1-4.
 2. Unlike atonement, redemption through the blood of Christ takes sins away, Heb. 9:12.
 3. The blood of Christ also converts atonement to redemption for faithful souls who lived under Patriarchy and Judaism, Heb. 9:15.

IV. How can we come in contact with the cleansing power of the blood of Jesus Christ?

- A. The blood of Christ is the only cure or vaccine against the disease of sin and the spiritual death it causes.
1. Of course, no one can (or should desire) to come in contact with the literal blood of Christ.
 2. However, the Bible does reveal how one may symbolically come in contact with the blood of Christ and receive redemption.
- B. Jesus shed his blood in his death, and the Bible tells how to get into the death of Christ, John 19:34.
1. We are buried by baptism into the death of Christ, Rom. 6:3-11.
 2. The apostle Paul also told the Colossian church that we are “Buried with him in baptism...” Col 2:12.
 3. Baptism is, then, the means by which one gets into the death of Christ, contacts the blood of Christ and is redeemed.

- C. The New Testament also teaches in other passages that baptism is the point at which one's sins are taken away.
1. Baptism remits sins, Acts 2:38.
 2. Faith and baptism save, Mark 16:16.
 3. Baptism washes sins away, Acts 22:16.
 4. Baptism cleanses one's conscience and saves, 1 Pet. 3:21.
 5. By baptism one puts on Christ, Gal. 3:27.
- D. Christians also have access to the blood of Christ.
1. The blood of Christ is continually applied to practicing Christians to keep them redeemed, 1 John 1:7, 9.
 2. Through penitence and prayer, the sins of Christians are cleansed by the blood of Christ, Acts 8:22.

Conclusion:

1. All of the elements to which Scripture attributes saving power work together for the redemption of souls.
2. The blood of sacrifices has always been acceptable to God, first for atonement and lastly for redemption.
3. The animal sacrifices and blood shed therein typified, prefigured and foreshadowed the perfect sacrifice of Christ and his shed blood.
4. Both Testaments were sealed in blood, the first by animal blood, and the second by the blood of Christ.
5. Contacting the blood of Christ is essential to redemption.
6. The blood of Christ is responsible for the redemption of souls under both testaments.
7. The blood of Christ is the sole vaccine from the eternally fatal disease of sin and death.
8. The blood of Christ is contacted by being baptized into the death of Christ.
9. Christians continually apply the blood of Christ to their souls to ensure sustained redemption.

Invitation:

1. One may either apply the blood of Christ to his soul for redemption, or he may despise the blood of the covenant.
2. Preceding baptism, one must hear God's Word only, Rom. 10:17; repent, Acts 17:30; and confess Christ, Rom. 10:9, 10.

3. The power of the blood of Christ is useless until it is applied to the soul; do you need its saving power right now?

Peril from within the Gates of Zion

Acts 20:30

Thesis: To identify and to inoculate against dangers from within the church.

Introduction:

1. The fall of the Roman Empire illustrates the greatest danger to the Lord's church.
 - a. The Roman Empire did not fall because it was beaten into submission by a military foe, but it decayed internally.
 - b. Likewise, the Babylonian Empire hundreds of years before the Roman Empire was felled from within when Babylon's citizens opened the gates of the walled city and permitted the enemy to enter.
2. The churches of Christ, were they to fail their God-ordained mission, will not fail due to denominational opposition, military oppression or any other source outside the Gates of Zion.
 - a. If the churches of Christ fail to be true to Jesus, it will be because of failures by God's people.
 - b. The greatest peril faced by the churches of Christ is from within.
 - c. The church as Jesus Christ designed it is perfect, but the church as it is comprised for fallible humans is less than perfect.
3. Since the primary threat to the Lord's church lies within, the New Testament contains numerous warnings, condemnations and commands respecting these dangers.

Body:

- I. **Brethren who love preeminence imperil the Lord's church.**
 - A. The infamous name of Diotrephes is well known, 3 John 9-11.
 1. He was a Christian who obviously had much

- influence in his local congregation.
 - 2. He had to have things his own way.
 - 3. He said evil things about good brethren.
 - 4. Diotrephes even despised the apostles of Christ, of whom John was one.
 - 5. He cast out of the church brethren who did not cower before him.
 - 6. Diotrephes could not have lorded over the church unless more timid or apathetic brethren let him control the church.
 - 7. The apostle John said that Diotrephes was evil and did not know God.
- B. Preeminence in the church belongs to Jesus Christ alone.
- 1. As head of the church, Jesus alone is preeminent, Col. 1:18; Eph. 1:22-23.
 - 2. No human can rightfully claim preeminence for himself, 3 John 9.
- C. The New Testament is firm and clear respecting church discipline toward erring members who seek to lead a congregation.
- 1. For instance, false teachers and preachers must not be permitted to lead a congregation into error, Rom. 16:17-18.
 - 2. Faithful Christians must turn away from erring brethren who would rule or ruin a congregation have a false form of godliness, 2 Tim. 3:1-7.
 - 3. The disorderly cannot be allowed to guide a local congregation, 2 Thess. 3:6.
 - 4. Every congregation must be cautious that factious persons are not permitted to disrupt the local church, Titus 3:10-11 ASV.

II. Busybodies imperil the Lord's church.

- A. Busybodies can be men or women, though 1 Tim. 5:13 mentions female busybodies.
- 1. The phrase “learn to be idle” suggests one has to work at being idle busybodies — it does not happen accidentally.
 - 2. The word “idle” means worthless as members of society or of the church.

3. The phrase “wandering from house to house” indicates a special effort and going out of one’s way to cause harm.
 4. The words “tattlers” and “speaking things they ought not” refers to evil speech pouring forth from an evil heart.
 5. Busybodies always do harm and never do good by their busybody activities; they delight in their endeavors.
 6. A woman’s role is primarily in the home, guiding it, 1 Tim. 5:14.
- B. The apostle Peter in addition to the apostle Paul warns about Christians of either sex being busybodies, 1 Pet. 4:15.
1. Busybodies are classed with murders, thieves and other evildoers.
 2. Busybodies are erring Christians!
 3. Busybodies meddle in others’ business, making themselves experts in things that are none of their business.
- C. There is as much Scripture relating to this kind of sin as most other sins, and the consequence of unforgiven sin of any kind is the same, Rom. 6:23.

III. Indifferent and apathetic Christians imperil the Lord’s church.

- A. The church of Laodicea was indifferent and apathetic, Rev. 3:14-16.
1. Christianity was of little importance and consequence to the Christians in Laodicea.
 2. Apathetic and indifferent Christians are of little value to Jesus Christ.
 3. Indifferent Christians cannot effectively lead a congregation and will not enthusiastically accept even the basic Christian responsibilities.
 4. Apathetic Christians will not take a stand for what is right and are unreliable servants of Christ.
 5. Indifferent and apathetic Christians are lost!
- B. The church in Ephesus lost its first love, Rev. 3:1-4.
1. The Ephesian Christians were not apathetic and

- indifferent toward biblical truth.
 - 2. They appreciated strong teaching.
 - 3. The Ephesian church even convicted false teachers.
 - 4. The Ephesians were skilled at *church work*.
 - 5. However, they had lost their first love and had become insensitive toward evangelism.
 - 6. They were content to keep house and may have been a family congregation whose interest did not extend beyond their own.
 - 7. The church at Ephesus was not pleasing to God and was lost!
- C. The Laodicean and Ephesian churches were worthy of divine rebuke and needed to repent.

IV. Preacheritis imperils the Lord's church.

- A. Having favoritism toward preachers causes unrest in a congregation and is divisive, 1 Cor. 1:10-13; 3:1-9.
- 1. Preacheritis is a carnal sin, which the apostle Paul rebuked and for which the Corinthians needed to repent.
 - 2. We are only permitted to follow preachers to the extent that they are following Christ, 1 Cor. 11:1.
- B. Ultimately, every accountable soul must follow Jesus Christ.
- 1. Jesus Christ would have humanity carry their respective crosses and follow him alone, Luke 14:27.
 - 2. Jesus Christ is our supreme example, 1 Pet. 2:21.

Conclusion:

- 1. The early church had internal problems that threatened the holiness of various congregations, and we have only noted a few of them herein.
- 2. Those sins imperiled the Lord's church from within and were no less dangerous than opposition and persecution from either Jews or Gentiles.
- 3. The church as Jesus Christ designed it is perfect, but the church as it is comprised for fallible humans is less than perfect.

Invitation:

- 1. Therefore, we must be ever vigilant to be all that God wants us to be and to refrain from sinful and destructive behavior that

will imperil the church of our Lord.

2. Consequently, erring Christians must repent of sins, 2 Cor. 13:5; 1 John 1:9.
3. We also invite non-Christians to obey the Gospel whereby they can be saved, Rom. 1:16; 2 Thess. 1:7-9.

No Shame Religion

Romans 1:16

Thesis: The encouragement to live and to teach the Gospel of Christ without reserve.

Song: *I'm Not Ashamed To Own My Lord*

Introduction:

1. Grandparents customarily go around TELLING everyone about their grandchildren (e.g., license plates, co-workers, neighbors, friends, fellow Christians).
2. New parents, likewise, . . . (e.g., general public — yard signs, newspapers, hospital pictures, family, friends, neighbors, co-workers).
3. Newlyweds . . . (e.g., wedding invitations, newspaper, friends, neighbors, co-workers, general public — rings).
4. We are not ashamed of our grandchildren, newborns, brides [or grooms] and want to TELL EVERYONE!
5. Do we as eagerly TELL EVERYONE about Jesus (family, friends, neighbors, co-workers, and general public)?

Body:

I. Christianity Is a Telling Religion!

- A. The sin-sick and dying world is desperately crying (begging) — like the Macedonian call — for someone to tell it about the Gospel through which it can be saved (Acts 16:9-10).
 1. Penitent Jews on Pentecost cried, “What shall we do?” Acts 2:37.
 2. Saul (Paul) asked, “What wilt thou have me to do?” Acts 9:6.
- B. Churches need to take the Gospel to the lost.
 1. Thessalonian Christians went out of their way to tell others about the Gospel, 1 Thess. 1:6-8.
 2. The church at Antioch of Syria sent out several missionaries, including the apostle Paul on each of his three missionary journeys, Acts 13:1-3.

3. The Holy Spirit cause Paul to write that God's primary choice for declaration of the Gospel is through preachers, and that preachers must be sent, Rom. 10:13-15.

C. Individuals also need to take the Gospel to the lost.

1. John Doe Christian and Jane Doe Christian (i.e., non-preaching members) were largely responsible for taking the Gospel message to the world, Acts 8:1-4.
2. The Great Commission was initially given to the apostles, but thereafter, the Great Commission responsibility was passed to others as well, Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15, 16; Luke 24:46, 47; Acts 1:8; 2 Tim. 2:2.
3. The New Testament is not merely a book for preachers' sermon resource material; it is not simply an instruction manual for preachers.

II. What We Say, to Whom We Say It and What We Do, Before Whom We Do It, Tells on Us.

A. The New Testament teaches varying but universal Christian responsibility.

1. In the Parable of the Virgins one learns that more than purity is required of the followers of Jesus Christ, Matt. 25:1-13.
2. In the Parable of the Talents one learns that in addition to moral purity, one must actively serve the Master, Matt. 25:14-30.
3. In the Parable of the Judgment one learns that he may stand condemned for what he fails to do, Matt. 25:31-46.

B. Christians must be fruitful to be faithful.

1. Unfruitful Christians, like unfruitful orchard tree branches, are good for nothing and will be burned, John 15:1-6.
2. The Parable of the Soils teaches that only fruitful Christians persevere, Matt. 13:2-8.
3. Every person is known (man and God both know) by his good or evil fruits, Matt. 7:16-20.

Conclusion:

1. I am proud of my bride, my children . . .
2. There are other things I like or enjoy about which I talk to people (e.g., trains, computers).
3. I am not ashamed of Jesus or his Gospel, but proud of my Lord, his Gospel, his church and anxious to tell church members and the lost world about them.
4. I am not ashamed to teach and live the Gospel (e.g., one true church, immersion in water for the remission of sins is urgent, people with whom we work and play outside of Christ are lost and they need to know that).
5. Surely, you are not ashamed of Jesus and his Gospel; aren't you proud enough of the Lord and his Word to live it to the fullest and to teach it widely.

Invitation:

1. If you are not ashamed of Jesus, it will show in the way you approach God's Word regarding salvation, Christian living, Christian service, worship, etc.
2. If you are not ashamed of Jesus, submit to be baptized, live the Gospel to its fullest and tell everyone about the Gospel of Jesus Christ.
3. If an erring child of God, please return to your Savior before it is too late.

The Three Crosses

Luke 23:39-43

Thesis: To paint a biblical picture of two types of souls and point honest hearts to the middle cross of the Savior.

Song: *Near the Cross*

Introduction:

1. Jesus of Nazareth was crucified just outside the city of Jerusalem on Golgotha or Calvary, Matt. 27:33-35; Luke 23:33.
2. Two other men were led to that place of execution along with Jesus, Luke 23:32.
3. All three were crucified, one thief on each side of Jesus; Jesus was on the middle cross, Luke 23:33.

Body:

I. The one thief and his cross represented rebellion and arrogance; that scene depicted impenitent, lost humanity.

- A. One thief scoffed at Jesus Christ.
 1. He blasphemed (*blasphemo*) our Lord, saying, "...If thou be Christ, save thyself and us," Luke 23:39.
 2. His scorn for the Messiah was greater than his excruciating physical pain.
 3. Further, Jesus had done nothing to arouse malicious sarcasm.
 4. The statement of this thief indicated that he was rebellious, arrogant and impenitent, and that he cared little about his soul, even though he was about to cross the threshold of death into eternity.
- B. This malefactor represents a host of lost souls.
 1. Millions of souls have crossed the threshold of eternity with no or little concern for their souls either; they, too, are forever lost.
 2. Many souls about us live outside even the human standards of righteousness, which often are less stringent than God's standard of righteousness.

3. They rebel against civil authority and are often openly without either remorse or penitence when caught and punished.
 4. Some sinners even profess that they do not want to go to heaven, and they do not desire the companionship of godly people in this life.
- C. The same thief also represents a great number of souls who do not truly believe in Christ, have not obeyed him and are lost.
1. This thief was an unbeliever.
 2. He was only interested in salvation on his own terms; similarly, even sincere lost souls today want to be saved on their own or denominational terms.
 3. Further, this thief was highly skeptical and would have tested the Lord, desiring signs of him. People are no different today, despite the fact that the Lord already validated himself as the Savior through the miracles he performed, Mark 16:20; Heb. 2:3-4; John 20:30-31.

II. The second thief and his cross represented penitence and depicted the only attitude through which souls can be saved.

- A. The speech of the second thief acknowledged Jesus as the Christ, Luke 23:40-43.
1. Evidently, the earthly ministry of Jesus was publicly known.
 2. This thief also recognized Jesus as God (*theos*) or Deity, Luke 23:40.
 3. He also admitted that he and the other thief were guilty of their crimes whereas Jesus was innocent, Luke 23:41.
 4. This thief believed Jesus to be the Messiah or Savior who was to establish the long prophesied kingdom.
 5. The one thief believed enough to trust his eternity to the man on the middle cross, which was more faith than the apostles exhibited at this critical moment.
- B. This thief not only believed, but he repented.

1. He appealed for salvation to the only Savior this world has ever known.
 2. As Jesus saved that thief by then applicable terms (the New Testament was not in effect yet, Heb. 9:16-17), so must souls now living turn to Jesus for salvation according to the presently applicable terms — the Gospel, Rom. 1:16.
 3. The forgiveness of sin did not and does not necessarily negate the consequence of sin; the thief was still punished for his crimes, and rightfully so, Rom. 13:1-7.
- C. The penitent thief rebuked his sinful cohort and defended Christ.
1. Followers of our Lord oppose unrighteousness, 1 Pet. 5:8-9; Jam. 4:7.
 2. Followers of the Lord further defend righteousness, Phil. 1:17; Jude 3.
 3. Penitent souls turn in heart and conduct from their former sins and evil associations, 2 Cor. 6:14-18.

III. Our Savior occupied the middle cross.

- A. The middle cross was viewed from contrasting perspectives.
1. The impenitent thief saw a man, evil like himself, and an imposter Savior.
 2. The penitent thief saw on the middle cross the Son of God and man's only Savior.
- B. Jesus Christ suffered vicariously or in our stead for us.
1. The thieves died for themselves, whereas Jesus died for the sins of others, 2 Cor. 5:21; 1 Pet. 2:21-24; 3:18.
 2. Jesus Christ's death on the middle cross was also a fulfillment of prophecy, Isa. 53:4-12.
 3. The sacrificial blood of Jesus Christ saves our souls, 1 Pet. 1:18-20; Eph. 1:7.
- C. Jesus Christ is the Savior to whom all who would be saved must turn.
1. His mission was to save the lost, Luke 19:10; Matt. 1:21-23.
 2. Jesus saves the faithful, John 8:24; Mark 16:16.

3. Jesus further requires repentance and public acknowledgement that he is the Christ, Luke 13:3; Matt. 10:32-33.
4. Souls who desire salvation must obey Jesus, Luke 6:46; Heb. 5:8-9.
5. Jesus Christ adds the saved to his church, Acts 2:47.

Conclusion:

1. Impenitent sinners are lost and will remain lost until they repent.
2. Penitent sinners need to obey the Gospel plan of salvation.
3. The road to salvation begins with the statement, "I have sinned," Neh. 1:6.
4. Jesus Christ's shed blood is the propitiation for sins that allows God's grace to save mankind, Rom. 3:23-25.

Invitation:

1. Does your speech and conduct more nearly identify with the impenitent thief or the penitent thief?
2. How you react to the middle cross will affect you in this life and determine where you spend your eternity!
3. If an unbaptized believer, you need to put Jesus on in baptism and thereby have your sins washed away, Gal. 3:27; Acts 22:16.
4. If an erring child of God, you need to come back to the Savior today, 1 John 1:9.

I Know That My Redeemer Lives

Job 19:23-26

Thesis: To encourage the children of God to have the same degree of hope that Job had.

Song: *I Know That My Redeemer Lives*

Introduction:

1. Job had the utmost confidence in the Lord to whom he faithfully trusted his eternity.
 - a. Job desired to publish his confidence and hope widely and forever.
 - b. It was his praiseworthy desire that others, inclusive of future generations, could possess the same confidence and hope that he had.
2. Job's hope and confidence was threefold, in which threefold hope we should eagerly participate.
 - a. Job was confident that the Redeemer lives.
 - b. Job further expressed confidence that the Messiah would come to rescue him and other faithful pilgrims.
 - c. Job was hopeful and confident concerning his own and others' ultimate resurrection from the grave.
3. In these confidences, Job found hope to offset dire circumstances.
 - a. There is hope for the afflicted and dying.
 - b. There is hope for the children of God in less dire circumstances as well.

Body:

I. The Redeemer lives.

- A. The Redeemer about whom Job was speaking is Jesus Christ whose coming was promised through out the Old Testament, beginning in Gen. 3:15.
- B. It is upon the truth that our Redeemer lives humanity bases its hope for eternity.
 1. If our God were dead as some declare, we could

- have no hope.
 - 2. Had the grave and death been able to hold Jesus Christ captive, we could have no hope.
 - C. We have a living Savior.
 - 1. Idolaters worship dead idols of wood, stone and metal.
 - 2. Moslems revere a dead prophet.
 - 3. Jews have rejected the world's only Savior.
 - 4. Only Christians have a **living Savior!**
 - D. Our Redeemer lives in heaven.
 - 1. Jesus ascended to heaven, Acts 1:9-10.
 - 2. Jesus is in heaven at the right hand of the Father, Acts 7:55-56.

II. The Messiah will come to rescue the righteous.

- A. Job apparently referred to the first coming of the Lord, which was future to Job but is now a past event to us.
 - 1. Job spoke of Jesus Christ standing on the earth, Job 19:25.
 - 2. However, when Jesus Christ comes the second time, he will not stand on the earth, Zech. 6:12-13; Heb. 8:4; 1 Thess. 4:16-17.
- B. The Second Coming of the Messiah is the hope in which both Old Testament and New Testament people rely for a joyful eternity.
 - 1. Without the first coming of the Redeemer, there could be no Second Coming.
 - 2. Without the Second Coming subsequent to our Lord's resurrection, it would not matter if the Lord came the first time.
- C. The Second Coming of the Lord is the cardinal hope of Christians and the dreadful fear of the ungodly.
 - 1. That Jesus is coming again is happy news for faithful children of God, 1 Thess. 4:13-18; 1 Cor. 15:1ff.
 - 2. That Jesus is coming again terrorizes the wicked, 2 Thess. 1:7-9; Rev. 6:15-16.

III. The general resurrection is pending.

- A. Job believed in a bodily resurrection.
 - 1. He said, "And though after my skin worms destroy

- this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God,” Job 19:26.
2. The bodily resurrection is also a valid Christian hope, 1 Cor. 15:49-54; Phil. 3:20-21.
- B. There will be a general resurrection.
1. Both the righteous and the wicked will be raised from the dead, John 5:28-29.
 2. Both the righteous and the wicked will be raised at the same time, though some Scripture only addresses the resurrection as it pertains to the righteous, 1 Cor. 15; 1 Thess. 4:13-18.
- C. Our ultimate hope regarding a future habitation with God in heaven depends on our righteousness and our resurrection from the dead.
1. Our resurrection is as certain as our Lord’s resurrection from the dead, 1 Cor. 15.
 2. There would be no hope for anyone were there no resurrection from the dead, 1 Cor. 15:19.

Conclusion:

1. We have a common hope with Job and all of God’s people of all ages.
 - a. Our Redeemer lives!
 - b. Our Redeemer is coming again for us!
 - c. Our Redeemer will resurrect us!
2. Job exclaimed how he wished his hopes and confidences were declared in a book and graven with an iron pen and lead in rock.
 - a. His words, however, have been immortalized beyond his expectations in God’s Book — the Bible.
 - b. Modern man has often derived comfort from Job’s words as we sing them in song, *My Redeemer Lives!*

Invitation:

1. My Redeemer lives in me because I have hearkened to the Gospel call.
2. Does the Redeemer live in you?
 - a. He doesn’t if you have never been baptized for the remission of sins, Acts 2:38.
 - b. He doesn’t if you are an unfaithful child of God, Acts 8:22.

God Is an Equal Opportunity Employer

Galatians 3:28

Thesis: To emphasize the opportunity and responsibility of all mankind has to serve God.

Introduction:

1. Galatians 3:28 teaches that all races, all classes of society and both genders can be one in Jesus Christ.
2. Both testaments of the Bible demonstrate that God does not discriminate against anyone on the basis of age, family heritage or educational opportunities.
 - a. Moses was 80 when God called him to deliver the Israelites and 120 when Israel arrived at the Jordan River.
 - b. Samuel was a child when God called him to be a prophet; likewise, David was a youth when God called him to serve him.
 - c. Ruth was from hated and evil Moab; on the other hand, John the Baptist was from a priestly family.
 - d. The apostle Paul received the best available education of his day, whereas Peter, Andrew, James and John were uneducated fishermen.
3. God is no respecter of persons, Acts 10:34; Rom. 2:11.
4. However, God does discriminate on the basis of one's religious belief or the lack of religious belief, Heb. 5:8-9; John 12:48.

Body:

- I. **After one's compliance with God's plan of salvation, God does not hold against him his past sins.**
 - A. One's past is contrasted with his present faithfulness to God, Rom. 6:17.
 - B. The children of God were drawn from every imaginable type of sin and debauchery to become Christians, 1 Cor. 6:9-11; Col. 1:21; 3:5-7; Eph. 2:2; Titus 3:3-5.
 - C. The great apostle Paul himself had been responsible previous to his conversion for the death and

imprisonment of Christians, Acts 7:58; 8:1; 9:1-2; 22:3-5; 26:9-12.

- D. The apostle Peter had denied Jesus Christ and the other disciples fled.
- E. God does not remember against anyone the sins he has discharged through forgiveness, Heb. 8:12; 10:15-17.
- F. God's plan of salvation for people living in the New Testament era is fundamental to the forgiveness of sins.
 - 1. One must turn to God's Word exclusively, Rom. 10:17; Gal. 1:6-9; 2 John 7-9.
 - 2. One must believe that Jesus is the Christ, John 8:24.
 - 3. One must repent of his sins, Acts 17:30.
 - 4. One must publicly acknowledge that Jesus is the Christ, Rom. 10:9-10; Acts 8:37.
 - 5. One must be immersed in water for the remission of sins, Acts 2:38; 22:16; Mark 16:16; 1 Pet. 3:21; Rom. 6:3-5; Col. 2:12.
 - 6. One must continue to be faithful to Jesus, Matt. 24:13; Rev. 2:10; 1 Cor. 15:58.

II. God permits and expects each Christian to work at Christianity.

- A. If there is any work for Christians to do (and there is), then Galatians 3:28 implies that all races, all classes of society and both genders can and must work.
- B. However, Galatians 3:28 does not teach that each Christian has the same task to perform.
 - 1. For instance, God designated different roles for men and women in both the home and in the church, 1 Cor. 14:34; Titus 2:3-5.
 - 2. God charged men with leading Christian worship, leading the church and being responsible for the home, 1 Tim. 2:8-15; 3:1-13; Eph. 5:21-33; 6:4.
- C. Yet, Christians have many mutual responsibilities.
 - 1. The Parable of the Talents teaches that each child of God must do his part or anticipate divine disfavor, Matt. 25:14-30.
 - 2. Christians are many members of one spiritual body, where each child of God must do his or her

part for the body to be coordinated and effective,
Rom. 12:4-8; 1 Cor. 12:12-31.

III. An equal opportunity employer is useless without willing workers.

- A. Any congregation where its members do not work together for Christ is a paralyzed, uncoordinated and lame spiritual body.
- B. When it comes to fruitful works for the Lord, each child of God is either part of the solution or he is part of the problem.
- C. No one can or should do everything, but everybody can and must do something.
- D. Jesus spoke at length of Christianity in the vein of individual responsibility, for which there will be an individualized Judgment, Matt. 25:31-46; 2 Cor. 5:10.

IV. Moses made the mistake of offering excuses to God, hoping to avoid doing what God assigned him to do.

- A. Moses' attempt to evade his responsibility angered God, Exod. 3:11, 13; 4:1, 10, 13.
- B. Esther's uncle warned her of the severe personal consequences were she to evade her responsibility to rescue her people, Esth. 4:8-14.
- C. Jesus illustrated the tragic consequences of ignoring the invitation of God to feast with him in his kingdom, Luke 14:16-24.

Conclusion:

- 1. There is a place of service for each child of God in the church of God.
- 2. The apostle Paul referred to irresponsible persons who would not work for a living, which in principle, is equally important respecting working spiritually for our Lord, 2 Thess. 3:10.
- 3. If God's people do not do the work of the Lord, it will not be done.

Invitation:

- 1. Jesus has a job for you to do, which you cannot perform until you become a faithful child of God.
- 2. Unbaptized believers must repent and be baptized, Acts 2:38.
- 3. Erring Christians must repent and pray, Acts 8:22; 1 John 1:9.

Revive Us Again

Psalm 85:6

Thesis: To plead for a revival or renewed vitality in worship and service of God.

Song: *Revive Us Again*

Introduction:

1. The nation of Israel frequently needed a revival, Ezra 9:8-9; Hab. 3:2.
 - a. The Israelites had been a rebellious nation throughout their history, for which cause God permitted foreign nations to dominate them, and which culminated in the 70 years of Babylonian captivity
 - b. Each time the Israelites repented and turned back to God, God covered their sins and restored their nation again.
 - c. The psalmist called for a revival of Israel and petitioned God for divine guidance, Psa. 85:1-13.
 - d. Without a revival, the consequences for Israel would have been severe and eternal.
2. Likewise, the Lord's church today, as well as the world in general, needs a revival of first century Christianity in our day.
 - a. Too many like ancient Israel "are at ease in Zion" or indifferent to God-ordained religion, Amos 6:1; Rev. 3:14-22.
 - b. Like Israel in the time of the Judges, sometimes even the Lord's church today seeks to imitate the ungodly world around it instead of following Jesus Christ, 1 Sam. 8:5; 1 Pet. 2:21.
 - c. Dear God, revive us again! Psa. 85:6.

Body:

I. We need a revival in biblical preaching.

- A. Biblical preaching is Gospel preaching!
 1. Jesus commissioned the apostles to preach the Gospel, Mark 16:15-16.
 2. The apostle Paul directed Timothy to preach the Gospel, which is the Word of God, 2 Tim. 4:1-2.

3. Paul condemned any alteration of the pure Gospel, Gal. 1:6-9.
 4. True Gospel preachers are compelled to preach the Gospel, 1 Cor. 9:16.
- B. The Gospel must be preached with urgency!
1. The apostles prayed for courage to preach the Gospel with boldness, Acts 4:29; Eph. 6:19.
 2. Even severe persecution could not dissuade first century preachers from boldly preaching the Word of God, 1 Thess. 2:2.
 3. Love for God and fellowmen motivated them to preach the Gospel or the Truth, Eph. 4:15.
- C. Only biblical preaching should occur in the pulpit.
1. The pulpit is no place for secular politics, except as politics sometimes addressed biblical and moral issues.
 2. The pulpit is no place for entertainment.
 3. The pulpit is no place for opinions, theories, philosophy or purely human wisdom.
 4. The pulpit is no place for the compromise of biblical truth, irrespective if compromise is clothed with manmade doctrine, human preferences that conflict with the Word of God, the social Gospel or anything else that appears more palatable to mortals than the unadulterated Word of God, Matt. 15:9, 13; Phil. 1:17; Jude 3.
 5. The pulpit is no place for spineless preaching.
- D. Biblical preaching is balanced.
1. Balanced preaching includes “all the counsel of God,” Acts 20:27.
 2. Balanced preaching contains both the “do’s and don’ts” of Christianity, 1 Tim. 4:2.
 3. Biblically balanced preaching saves souls, Rom. 1:16.

II. We need a revival in Christian worship.

- A. Acceptable worship must be according to “spirit and truth,” John 4:23-24.
1. Spiritless or heartless worship has never been acceptable to God, Mal. 1:6-13.

2. Worship must accord with the form of doctrine God has given us, which is the New Testament, Rom. 6:17.
 3. Our worship, as every other aspect of Christianity, must be authorized, Col. 3:17.
 4. God condemns manmade substitutes in religion, 1 Sam. 15:22-23.
- B. Christian worship must be conducted in a manner befitting the occasion, coming before Almighty God.
1. We must not make a mockery of worship as the Corinthian church did by corruption the Lord's Supper, 1 Cor. 11.
 2. We must not make a mockery of worship as the Corinthian church did through confusion and disorderliness, 1 Cor. 14:33, 40.
 3. We must remove from our minds and hands unnecessary distractions that otherwise prevent us from worshipping our God in a way that pleases him.
- C. Biblically authorized Christian worship is five fold, in no particular order.
1. The first century church had **preaching** and the **Lord's Supper** in worship every first day of the week, Acts 20:7.
 2. The **collection** was part of New Testament Christian worship every first day of the week, 1 Cor. 16:1-2.
 3. The primitive church also **prayed** and **sang hymns** in the worship assembly, 1 Cor. 14:15.

III. We need a revival in biblical knowledge.

- A. Salvation is impossible without knowledge, infant baptism notwithstanding.
1. Jesus taught that baptism is for believers, Mark 16:16.
 2. The apostle Paul wrote that knowledge and faith precede salvation, Rom. 10:13-14.
 3. The writer of Hebrews contrasted Judaism with Christianity by teaching that under Christianity a person knows the Word of God **before** he becomes

- a member of the church, Heb. 8:8-11.
- B. Christian zeal must be guided and regulated by biblical knowledge.
 - 1. The Jewish nation of the first century was a classic example of zeal devoid of biblical knowledge, Rom. 10:1-3.
 - 2. Though often discounted by mere mortals, true knowledge is divine in origin and comes from above, 1 Cor. 1:21.
 - C. Bible knowledge only comes through regular Bible study.
 - 1. Paul praised Timothy for his study of God's Word, 2 Tim. 2:15.
 - 2. Likewise, the Bereans were praised for comparing religious teaching with God's Word, Acts 17:11.
 - 3. Christians are called upon by God to arm themselves with biblical knowledge so that they can answer the questions asked by the world around them, 1 Pet. 3:15.
 - D. We need a working knowledge of the Bible.
 - 1. The Jews' knowledge of God's Word was deficient, John 5:39; Acts 3:14-17.
 - 2. It is not enough to know the words, etc. in the Bible, one must be able to apply biblical knowledge.
 - 3. Parrots say words, but only accountable souls can make appropriate biblical application of the Word of God.

IV. We need a revival of our dedication and willingness to serve Jesus Christ.

- A. Each accountable person needs to evaluate the priorities in his life.
 - 1. Jesus Christ must be foremost in our lives, Matt. 6:33.
 - 2. God demands that we love him before we love even our families, Matt. 10:37-39.
- B. We must conform to God rather than conform to the ungodly world in which we live, Rom. 12:1-2; 1 Pet. 2:5.
- C. Our dedication to Jesus Christ will reflect itself in our

regular attendance of church assemblies, Heb. 10:25; Psa. 122:1.

- D. We can demonstrate our dedication to Jesus Christ by financially supporting his church.
 - 1. The apostle Paul instructed that Christians give as they purpose or decide in their hearts, 2 Cor. 9:6-7.
 - 2. One's giving should be regulated also according to his prosperity and should occur each Lord's Day, 1 Cor. 16:1-2.
- E. The way in which we live our lives also demonstrates our dedication to serving Jesus Christ.
 - 1. The grace of God saves those who have expunged sin from their lives and embraced godliness, Titus 2:11-12.
 - 2. Further, faithful Christians practice pure religion, Jam. 1:27.
- F. Faithful Christians evidence their dedication to Jesus Christ by actively working for the Lord.
 - 1. There will be no end to laboring for the Lord this side of the grave, 1 Cor. 15:58.
 - 2. We must not tire of serving God, Gal. 6:9.
 - 3. Both references indicate that God reserves a reward for his faithful servants.

V. We need a revival in our determination to be active participants in spreading the Gospel.

- A. It is not enough that we may be keepers of orthodoxy.
 - 1. Unlike the Pharisees of Jesus' day, we must be doers, too, Matt. 23:2-3.
 - 2. Besides sins of **commission**, one may be guilty of sins of **omission**, Jam. 4:17.
- B. We must do more than 'talk a good ballgame,' we must live Christianity.
 - 1. Talking without doing leads to a sad eternity, Matt. 7:21-23.
 - 2. Talking without doing essentially denies Jesus Christ as Lord, Luke 6:46.
- C. Jesus Christ died on the cruel cross of Calvary that we and the whole world might have the opportunity to be saved.

1. We have the obligation to take the saving message of the Gospel to as many around us and throughout the world as we can, Mark 16:15.
2. We need to teach others who can be extensions of ourselves whereby the Gospel might have a larger audience, 2 Tim. 2:2.
3. We need to go out of our way to take the Gospel to others, 1 Thess. 1:8.

Conclusion:

1. Without a continual revival of God's people, there will be a dearth of faithful children of God.
 - a. We need a revival in our preaching.
 - b. We need a revival in our worship.
 - c. We need a revival in Bible knowledge.
 - d. We need a revival in dedication to Jesus Christ.
 - e. We need a revival in our determination to take the Gospel to the world.
2. Before anyone of us can be of any assistance to others, we must first make sure that our lives are in order before God.
 - a. We must say with the psalmist, "revive us again."
 - b. The spirit of Psalm 85:5 needs to permeate the Lord's church today.

Invitation:

1. To revive us again is also an appropriate plea toward erring Christians; once loyal children of God who have strayed need to return to the Lord, penitently and prayerfully, Acts 8:22.
2. Unbaptized believers also need a spiritual revival, baptism into Christ whereby that child-like innocence is recaptured, Gal. 3:27; Matt. 18:3.

Seek Ye First the Kingdom of God

Matthew 6:24-34

Thesis: To inspire Christians to greater service in the kingdom with less concern and anxiety for material matters.

Song: *Seek Ye First the Kingdom of God*

Introduction:

1. This is not a lesson directed primarily to the **unsaved**, but rather it is primarily intended for the **saved**.
 - a. The saved need to know how to remain saved and to be encouraged toward that end.
 - b. In addition, the saved need encouragement from time to time about taking the Gospel to others that they might be saved, too.
2. Matthew 6:33 contains a charge from Jesus Christ by which both the saved and the unsaved can realize spiritual and material benefits.
 - a. Every accountable person needs to put **first things first!**
 - b. Christians as well as unbaptized believers need to put God's kingdom first in their lives.
 - c. Does God guide your life through his inspired Word, the Bible, Prov. 3:5-6?
3. To help us put first things first and put God's kingdom first in our lives, the following must occur.
 - a. We must seek the law of God earnestly, i.e. study the Bible daily, 2 Tim. 2:15; Acts 17:11.
 - b. We must apply the Gospel to our own lives, Rom. 2:1.
 - c. We must teach the Gospel to others, Heb. 5:11-14; Ezra 7:10.

Body:

- I. **Matthew 6:24-32 lists the physical necessities of life for which all men seek, sometimes with anxiousness.**
 - A. Verse 24 advises us that we cannot serve two masters with equal devotion.

1. We cannot successfully serve our divine master who is Jesus Christ while serving the adversary who is the devil, 2 Cor. 6:14-17.
 2. We cannot will to be rich and still serve God with the devotion he deserves, 1 Tim. 6:9-10.
- B. Verse 25 warns followers of Christ not to be overly concerned about material matters.
1. The pursuit of this world's riches leads to much anxiety.
 2. Service to Jesus Christ leads to peace of mind and contentment.
 3. Obviously, the work ethic and responsible behavior whereby one may provide for his family and himself is not belittled, 1 Tim. 5:8; 2 Thess. 3:10; Rom. 12:11.
 4. The acquisition of food, clothing and shelter is the chief concern of the worldly, but the children of God ought to realize the importance of seeking the kingdom of God first.
- C. Verse 26 illustrates the providence of God toward birds, the same providence of God on which the children of God should rely while seeking the kingdom first.
- D. Verse 27 demonstrates the futility of anxiousness over material prosperity; worrying never solved anything.
- E. Verses 28-29 further illustrate with references to wildflowers the providence of God toward his creation, of which mankind is part; therefore, there is no reason for mankind to exhibit more concern for material things over spiritual matters.
- F. Verses 30-31 states that the lilies of the field for which God cares are insignificant when compared to mankind.
1. Jesus explicitly instructs the children of God not to be anxious or worrisome about material prosperity.
 2. Jesus affirms that the providence of God is reliable, so that man need not have more concern for material things than spiritual matters.
 3. When we become obsessed with the quest for acquiring material prosperity, we exhibit a lack of faith in God.

- G. Verse 32 refers to the Gentiles to represent all persons who are not the children of God and who seek primarily material prosperity in this life.
1. Non-Christians are not acquainted with the providence of God.
 2. The chief goal of non-Christians is the acquisition of things!
 3. Jesus intended to contrast the priority of non-Christians with the priority of Christians.
 4. Therefore, Christians act like non-Christians when they prioritize their lives respecting this material world in which we live, instead of seeking first the kingdom of God.

II. Matthew 6:33 notes that it is more important to seek the kingdom of God than the physical necessities of life.

A. Definition of terms:

1. “Seek” means to search or strive for.
2. “Ye” refers to those who determine to be the children of God.
3. “First” means primarily, above or before all else.
4. “Kingdom of God” refers to the Christian’s daily goal as well as the eternal goal (when the kingdom is removed to heaven).
5. “His righteousness” refers to right doing or according to God and his Word.
6. “All things” refers to the material blessings intimated in the preceding verses, i.e., food, clothes, shelter.

B. The contrast of life goals is sharp and vivid.

1. Non-Christians make their chief aim in life the amassing of wealth.
2. Christians will attain physical blessings anyway through the providence of God as they seek first the kingdom of God.
3. Therefore, Christians should not act like non-Christians who diminish spiritual pursuits in favor of material prosperity.

III. Matthew 6:34 records Jesus directing those who would truly follow him to prioritize their lives to seek spiritual

matters and that the physical necessities of life will also come our way.

- A. Life on this planet is accompanied with varying measures of material blessings anyway, Matt. 5:45.
- B. Seeking the kingdom of God is more important because its blessings are more enduring.
 - 1. Christians receive blessings in this life that are not afforded non-Christians, Rom. 8:28; Eph. 1:3.
 - 2. Blessings afforded Christians outlast planet earth, Rev. 2:10; 2 Pet. 3:9-11.

IV. What should “seek ye first the kingdom of God” mean to us?

- A. Ordinarily, if we seek the kingdom of God first, we will have **enough** of this world’s physical blessings anyway, 1 Tim. 6:6-8.
- B. When we do seek the kingdom of God first, we will devote ourselves to swelling the borders of the kingdom of God with the infusion of converts to the Gospel.
 - 1. Every Christian’s **vocation** needs to be Christianity!
 - 2. Every Christian’s **avocation** needs to be the way in which he makes a living for his family and himself.
 - 3. Christianity should be our whole life and everything else, including material prosperity, should be secondary to us.
- C. When we arrive at the persuasion that nothing in this life is more important than spiritual matters, we will finally be seeking the kingdom first.
 - 1. Christians will practice Christianity, inclusive of Christian living.
 - 2. Christians will long for and seek every opportunity to spend time with other Christians and to worship God every time they can.
 - 3. Individual Christians and congregations will make every effort to influence the world with the Gospel of Christ, and Christians will truly be lighthouses in a sin darkened world, Matt. 5:16.

Conclusion:

- 1. God’s providence coupled with honest labor will abundantly

provide for faithful children of God.

- a. God's provisions may seem meager compared to our high hopes.
 - b. However, God's provisions will be sufficient.
2. Therefore, we can and must put the kingdom of God first in our lives.

Invitation:

1. Are you choked with the cares of this world?
 - a. If so, the Word of God will not grow in your heart, Luke 8:14.
 - b. Cares for this life will be a snare in the last day, Luke 21:34.
2. Erring Christians who are willing to put Christ and his kingdom first in their lives again can do so through penitence and prayer, Acts 8:22; 1 John 1:9.
3. Unbaptized believers can put Christ and his kingdom first in their lives by submitting to God's plan of salvation recorded upon the pages of the New Testament, Mark 16:16; Luke 13:3; Matt. 10:32-33; 28:18-20.

Seeking and Serving the Lord

1 Chronicles 28:9

Thesis: To encourage greater activity in seeking and serving the Lord.

Introduction:

1. In the context surrounding 1 Chronicles 28:9:
 - a. King David assembled all the chief men of Israel.
 - b. He then announced that God had selected Solomon from among David's sons to be the next king.
 - c. He also announced that God had chosen Solomon to build the temple (David had prepared the materials to build the Temple, but God had forbidden him to build it because he was a man of war).
2. David's inspired advice and instruction to Solomon appears in 1 Chron. 28:9.
 - a. The instruction was befitting the monumental task Solomon was about to undertake soon — to be king and to build the Temple.
 - b. Shortly after the context of 1 Chron. 28, David died and Solomon became king, 1 Chron. 29.
3. Today, we intend to examine the instruction David gave to Solomon.
 - a. This charge to Solomon is well worth application to us.
 - b. We need to seek and serve God with the same active intensity with which Solomon was charged.

Body:

I. Know thou the God of thy father.

- A. The reference is to the Lord God whom we also worship.
 1. There is no justification here for worshipping false gods or ancestor worship.
 2. David was not advising Solomon that religiously whatever was good enough for mom and dad was

- good enough for him, too (*Old Time Religion*).
3. Instead, like Joshua years earlier, David commanded Solomon to worship the true God whom he worshipped, Josh. 24:15.
- B. Know thou God.
1. Know implies an intimate awareness of God and his Word that is only attainable through study, 2 Tim. 2:15.
 2. We are to know God as Creator and Ruler, Psa. 100:3.
- C. Knowing God equates to obeying God.
1. We know that we know God through obedience to God, 1 John 2:3.
 2. Empty professions of God instead of obeying will result in God refusing to acknowledge the disobedient, Matt. 7:21-23.
 3. God will deny knowing or approving of those who are unprepared (and thereby disobedient), Matt. 25:12.

II. Serve him with a perfect heart.

- A. Faithful children of God are servants of God.
1. We must serve God foremost, Matt. 6:24.
 2. The children of God must serve God only as God and whole-heartily, 1 Sam. 7:3; Josh. 22:5; Deut. 6:13.
 3. We must serve Jesus Christ, Col. 3:24.
 4. Like the Thessalonians, man needs to turn from sin and “serve the living and true God,” 1 Thess. 1:9; Heb. 9:14.
- B. What is a perfect heart?
1. Mankind never attains sinless perfection, but he can serve God with a heart that has been perfected or made complete.
 2. The perfect heart selflessly follows the Lord, Matt. 19:21.
 3. Completeness or perfection is our goal, Matt. 5:48.
 4. Though perfection is our goal, we are not perfect or complete in this life, Phil. 3:12.
 5. Yet, the Bible calls faithful children of God

perfect, 1 Cor. 2:6; Phil. 3:15; 2 Cor. 13:11; Eph. 4:13; Col. 1:28; 4:12; Heb. 12:23; 13:21; Jam. 3:2.

III. With a willing mind.

- A. It is not enough that men outwardly do the will of God.
 - 1. For instance, to be acceptable to God, giving in New Testament worship must be not only be according to one's prosperity, but it must be as one purposes in his heart, 1 Cor. 16:1-2; 2 Cor. 9:6-7.
 - 2. For instance, he who would serve as an elder must "desire" and be 'willing' to serve, in addition to meeting the qualifications set forth in the New Testament for elders, 1 Tim. 3:1; 1 Pet. 5:2.
 - 3. God wants 'willing' disciples, Jud. 5:2.
- B. The willing mind is not self-willed.
 - 1. Self-willed men cannot be elders, Titus 1:7.
 - 2. Often, ungodly persons are self-willed, 2 Pet. 2:10.
 - 3. The "will worship" that some practice is an example of being self-willed and ungodly, Col. 2:23.

IV. The Lord searcheth all hearts and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts.

- A. The Lord examines the hearts of men to discern whether they are "perfect."
 - 1. God shall try the works of men with fire, 1 Cor. 3:13.
 - 2. God shall try men's hearts, 1 Thess. 2:4; 1 Pet. 4:12.
 - 3. Since God will examine us, we should first examine ourselves, 2 Cor. 13:5; Gal. 6:4.
- B. Our omniscient God will judge even the secrets of men.
 - 1. Nothing can be secreted from God at the Great Judgment, Ecc. 12:13-14; 2 Cor. 5:10.
 - 2. Not only can no one fool God in Judgment, plea-bargaining will not be allowed, Matt. 7:21-23.

V. If thou seek him, he will be found of thee.

- A. Anyone who seeks the Lord will find him.
 - 1. This is a comforting hope for us embedded in Scripture.
 - 2. The world is just not looking for God or looking

for God in the wrong place.

3. Jesus assures in Scripture that seekers will be finders, Matt. 6:33; Luke 11:10.
- B. One cannot find God unless he seeks him.
1. God can be found through the Gospel.
 2. God cannot be found in the creeds and institutions devised by men.

VI. If thou forsake him, he will cast thee off forever.

- A. God turns from those who turn from him.
1. God can save, but he will not save those who turn from him in sin, Isa. 59:1-3.
 2. God responds to those who respond to him on his conditions, John 9:31.
- B. God will cast off the unrighteous for eternity.
1. The general resurrection will be followed by the assignment of the righteous and the unrighteous respectively to heaven and to hell, John 5:28-29.
 2. There are only two eternal destinies awaiting accountable souls at the Judgment, Matt. 25:46.
 3. After the return of Jesus Christ, disobedient souls will be banished from the presence of God to a place of unending torment, 2 Thess. 1:7-9.

Conclusion:

1. David counseled Solomon to seek and serve the Lord.
 - a. Solomon was to **know, serve** and **seek**.
 - b. No one can render acceptable service to God while being religiously apathetic or indifferent, Rev. 2-3.
2. To forsake God has grave consequences.
 - a. God can be forsaken through sins of commission and sins of omission, Jam. 4:17.
 - b. Sin of any kind that is still chargeable against a person when he dies results in spiritual death, Rom. 6:23.
3. Each of us needs to actively serve God.
 - a. Indifference and apathy (lukewarmness) will eternally condemn one.
 - b. Heb. 11 lists a number of Bible characters who actively served God, who serve as our examples of godly service.
 - c. Let each of us determine to not be like Solomon who failed the solemn charge given to him by his father, David.

Invitation:

1. Rather, let us imitate the faithful of Hebrews 11; 1 Cor. 11:1.
2. Faithful service begins with obedience to the Gospel and continues based on continued obedience of the Gospel, Rom. 1:16; 6:17; Mark 16:16.

The Perfect Church

1 Thessalonians 1:8

Thesis: To ponder the exemplary, faithful service of some of God's first century servants and compare our service to theirs.

Introduction:

1. Sometimes young preachers are overheard saying they are in search of the perfect church with which to labor.
 - a. Older preachers know better; perfection is not a human characteristic, so the collection of souls into a congregation will make a less than perfect congregation.
 - b. A wise, old preacher once said, "There is no perfect congregation, and if there were a perfect congregation, it would be imperfect once you arrived!"
 - c. Hence, there is no point looking for a perfect congregation.
2. There are, though, servants whose admirable service is commendable and is recorded by inspiration.
 - a. A congregation of such persons would appear to be composed of perfect servants.
 - b. We might think that a congregation like that is perfect.
 - c. What if this congregation and every congregation were comprised of outstanding servants who are recorded in the New Testament?

Body:

- I. What if every member were like Peter and John as they stood before the Sanhedrin, Acts 4-5?**
 - A. When commanded not to preach Jesus, they refused, Acts. 4:19-20.
 - B. When beaten and threatened, they continued to preach the Gospel, Acts 5:40-42.
- II. What if every member were like Stephen as he stood before the Sanhedrin and subsequent mob?**
 - A. Stephen boldly proclaimed the Gospel to its severest critics, Acts 6-7.
 - B. Stephen condemned sin without respect to persons.
 - C. Stephen did not waver even in the face of death.

III. What if every member were like the apostle Paul who suffered greatly to preach the Gospel of Christ, Acts 13-28; 2 Cor. 11:23-28; Phil. 3:4-11?

- A. Paul preached the same Gospel to kings, Gentiles, Jews, infidels, elders, Christians and fellow apostles — without respect to persons.
- B. He condemned sin wherever he found it and demanded repentance.

IV. What if every member were like Ananias, Acts 9, 22?

- A. Ananias was afraid to serve, but he was willing to do the bidding of the Lord anyway, Acts 9:10-19.
- B. Ananias was devout and of good report, Acts 22:12.

V. What if every member were like Dorcas?

- A. Dorcas was a benevolent Christian woman who provided coats and garments for the needy, Acts 9:36-39.
- B. She was full of good works and almsdeeds, Acts 9:36.

VI. What if every member were like the Bereans, Acts 17:11?

- A. The Bereans received the Word of God with all readiness of mind.
- B. They also searched the Scriptures daily to confirm what they were being taught.

VII. What if every member were like Peter in Gal. 2:11-14 and Simon in Acts 8?

- A. When Peter sinned and his sin was brought to his attention, he repented.
- B. Likewise, Simon repented of his sin when he became aware of it.

VIII. What if every member were like the Thessalonians, 1 Thess. 1:8?

- A. The congregation in Thessalonica was dedicated and zealous, which after it had obeyed the Gospel, members of that church broadcast the Gospel message to others, too.
- B. They did not suppose that the proclamation of the Gospel was solely the preacher's responsibility.
- C. That first century congregation went out of its way to sow the seed of the kingdom outside its own city in two Roman provinces, Luke 8:11.

Conclusion:

1. Biblical examples of faithful servants in the New Testament could be multiplied.
2. Indeed, it would be wonderful if more Christians today were like these Bible characters we have examined today.
3. The Bible, though, also lists unprofitable servants in the early church, to include: Ananias and Sapphira, the man who had his father's wife, Demas, Diotrephes and others.

Invitation:

1. Do you contribute to the success or failure of the church here?
There is no middle ground, Matt. 12:30!
2. Erring Christians certainly contribute to imperfection in the church, 1 John 1:9.
3. Unbaptized believers are not assets to the local church and need to be baptized for the remission of their sins, Acts 2:38.

Cart Before the Horse

Matthew 6:24-34

Thesis: To show how otherwise religious people put Bible things in the wrong order.

Introduction:

1. Many things in life need to be placed in proper order or sequence.
 - a. Within the context of Matthew 6:24-34, Jesus addressed spiritual and material priorities.
 - b. People today, as in our Lord's day, often pursue material things before spiritual things.
 - c. Commonly, humanity opts for careers, houses, cars, education, etc. before considering spiritual matters.
2. Even when it comes to spiritual matters, frequently people misalign God's teaching on various biblical subjects, i.e. get them in the wrong order or sequence.
 - a. Mankind often reverses the order of religious doctrine to suit humanity instead of pleasing God.
 - b. It is not unusual for God's order of spiritual things to be ignored in the religious community.

Body:

- I. **Some religions and religious people teach that baptism comes before being taught.**
 - A. So-called "christening" of infants by some is mistakenly called baptism.
 1. Jesus stated the proper order or sequence of faith and baptism in Mark 16:16.
 2. Faith cannot occur until one can be and is taught the Word of God, Rom. 10:17.
 3. Therefore, baptizing babies (who can neither be taught the Word of God nor believe) is not biblically correct.
 - B. There is no biblical need to baptize babies, and the Bible does not teach that manmade doctrine.
 1. The error of supposing that babies are born sinful

led to the practice of baptizing babies to remove that supposed sin.

2. Babies and children are pure from sin until they become accountable souls, Ezek. 18:20; Matt. 18:3-4.

II. Some religions and religious people teach that a person is saved before he obeys the Gospel.

- A. Most denominations deny that mankind must actively participate in his own redemption.
 1. Many people practice “faith only,” though the only time the Bible uses those two words together, it reads, “not by faith only,” Jam. 2:24.
 2. Jesus is the Savior of the obedient, and he will be the punisher of the disobedient, Heb. 5:8-9; 2 Thess. 1:7-9.
- B. Denominations teach that to be saved one need only “accept Jesus into your heart as your personal savior.”
 1. Jesus, though, taught that only those who did his will would be promoted to heaven at the Great Judgment, Matt. 7:21-23.
 2. If one truly loves Jesus, he will obey him, John 14:15 ASV, 21.

III. Some religions and religious people teach that a person is saved before baptism.

- A. There is no religious subject about which there is more controversy than baptism.
 1. Some talk about so-called *modes* of baptism, i.e. sprinkling, pouring, immersion, Rom. 6:3-5; Col. 2:12.
 2. People disagree regarding the *purpose* of baptism, Acts 2:38; 22:16.
 3. Religious doctrine is diverse respecting so-called *kinds* of baptism, i.e. water, Holy Spirit, fire, Eph. 4:5.
- B. Most denominational doctrine excludes any saving quality from baptism.
 1. It is true that baptism does not save alone or by itself, Mark 16:16.
 2. However, the Bible clearly teaches that baptism is

the *point at which* salvation occurs, 1 Pet. 3:21.

3. Baptism is the means of symbolically entering the death of Christ, where his blood was shed, which blood saves from sin, John 19:34; Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:14; Rev. 1:7.

IV. Some religions and religious people teach that one enjoys the new life before he is in Jesus Christ.

- A. Denominations commonly teach that the new life in Jesus Christ occurs by faith or grace alone.
 1. One becomes a new creature (enjoys a new life) *in* Jesus Christ, 2 Cor. 5:17.
 2. The apostle Paul taught that salvation is *in* Jesus Christ, 2 Tim. 2:10.
 3. Further, all spiritual blessings are exclusively *in* Christ, Eph. 1:3.
- B. One gets *into* Jesus Christ through baptism.
 1. One gets *into* and puts on Christ through baptism, Gal. 3:27.
 2. A person is *baptized into* Christ when he is *baptized into* the death of Christ, Rom. 6:3.

V. Some people practice trial marriages before committing to marriage.

- A. The world often tolerates or encourages what God disallows.
 1. In America, sex is treated as though it were a god, which dominates almost every aspect of our lives, e.g. advertising, etc.
 2. Couples test their compatibility by living together without marriage.
 3. Even marriages are often entered with the idea that “If it doesn’t work we’ll just get a divorce and go our separate ways,” e.g. throw-away-marriages.
 4. God, though, does not share such a loose view of either fornication or matrimony, 1 Cor. 6:9-10; Gal. 5:19-21; Matt. 19:9.
- B. Marriage is of divine origin.
 1. God instituted marriage in the Garden of Eden, Gen. 2.
 2. God makes a distinction between fornication and

‘the marriage bed,’ Heb. 13:4.

3. God has set the order or sequence of marriage before men and women begin living together.

VI. Many people put their pursuit of the world before their interest in God.

- A. Most of the world is irreligious.
 1. Mankind busies himself with seeking *all the gusto one time around*, e.g. atheists, agnostics, infidels, hedonists.
 2. Humans usually seek pleasure foremost in life, unlike Moses of old, Heb. 11:25.
- B. The denominational world seeks its own doctrine before seeking divine doctrine.
 1. Jesus Christ declared that human doctrine is vain, Matt. 15:9.
 2. The human will in religion substituted for the divine will in religion is called “will worship,” Col. 2:23.
 3. Religiously corrupt organizations and their members will be rooted up, Matt. 15:13.
- C. Even the children of God sometimes put the world before their pursuit of God, Rom. 12:1-2.
 1. For instance, sometimes Christians are tempted to be “lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God,” 2 Tim. 3:4.
 2. The three avenues by which anyone is tempted are also the same avenues by which the children of God are tempted, too, 1 John 2:15-17.
 3. Even Christians can put almost anything before their devotion to God, e.g. material pleasures, vocation.
 4. However, one cannot adequately serve two opposing masters, Matt. 6:24, 33.
 5. Unfortunately, we sometimes like to see how close we can get to sin without sinning (hiring a chauffer illustration), 1 Thess. 5:22; Rom. 12:9; 1 Cor. 15:33 ASV.

VII. Sometimes people want to teach others before they themselves are adequately taught.

- A. Teaching is a grave responsibility, Jam. 3:1 ASV.
- B. The newly converted, though they have an abundance of enthusiasm, should not be thrust into a teaching responsibility until they are educated in the Word of God, 2 Tim. 2:2; Heb. 5:11-14; 1 Pet. 2:2.

VIII. Sometimes people attempt to lead others before they are proven.

- A. Elders have the most important responsibility on the earth, Heb. 13:17.
- B. Elders must not be novices or unproven in service; they each must meet all the biblical qualifications, 1 Tim. 3:1-7; Titus 1:6-9.

IX. Sometimes even the children of God attempt to rest before the work is done.

- A. *Rest* only occurs before *work* in the dictionary!
 - 1. As much as there is always work to be done, the child of God must always be working for the Lord, 1 Cor. 15:58.
 - 2. We must not allow weariness to dissuade us from working for the Lord, Gal. 6:9.
 - 3. Only the sainted dead are privileged to rest from their labors, Rev. 14:13.
- B. Every child of God should have the attitude of Jesus Christ concerning work, John 9:4.
 - 1. There is too much work to be done for the Lord for preachers, elders and deacons to do it all.
 - 2. Only the children of God who faithfully work for the Lord will enjoy the eternal rest of heaven, Heb. 3:10-11; 4:8-11 ASV.

X. Many die before they are ready to meet God in Judgment.

- A. There is no second chance after death to put one's life in order or do things differently, Heb. 9:27; Luke 16:19-31.
- B. Everyone who hopes to be with God eternally in heaven must make life-long preparation this side of the grave, Rev. 2:10; Matt. 10:22; 2 Tim. 4:6-8.

Conclusion:

- 1. The world desperately needs the Bible — the only faithful

spiritual guide — by which mankind can properly order his life.

2. In what ways might you have the *cart before the horse*?

Invitation:

1. Erring Christians have the cart before the horse if they are not actively pursuing spiritual matters first in their lives, Matt. 6:33.
2. Unbaptized believers have the *cart before the horse* if they attend to anything else before becoming children of God, Acts 2:38.

We Are! We Have! We Aim!

Romans 16:16; 1 Thessalonians 2:14

Thesis: To identify the churches of Christ.

Introduction:

1. For the next few minutes, please note with me some identifying characteristics of the churches of Christ, under the headings:
 - a. We Are,
 - b. We Have,
 - c. We Aim.
2. In the process of the lesson today, we will compare the present day churches of Christ with the first century churches of Christ, Rom. 1:16; 1 Thess. 2:14.
 - a. Thereby, the churches of Christ today will either be revealed to be identical to or unlike the church about which one can read in the Bible.
 - b. If found to be identical, everyone should strive to become and remain a faithful member of it.
 - c. If found to be unlike the first century church, we should abandon it!
3. For several years, I have wanted no part of a church that is not **the church** for which Jesus Christ died.
 - a. If I were ever to discover that the church of Christ as we know it is not of divine origin, I would have no part of it.
 - b. If I found that what we call a denomination to be the true church of the Bible, I would embrace it.
 - c. I urge each of you also to have an *open mind* regarding true, God-appointed religion.

Body:

I. We Are.

- A. We are simply a congregation of Christians.
 1. We are **Christians only**, Acts 11:26; 26:28; 1 Pet. 4:16.
 2. The churches of Christ have not denominated to themselves a human name, Rom. 16:16; Acts 11:26.

3. The churches of Christ have not adopted denominational creeds to distinguish themselves from other professed Christians, 1 Cor. 1:10-13.
- B. We are simply the church of Christ (the church belonging to Christ).
1. A church of Christ is one congregation among many churches of Christ, Rom. 16:16.
 2. We are content to be simply **the church** to which Jesus adds the saved, Acts 2:47.
 3. That church was established in Jerusalem in A.D. 33 in fulfillment of ancient biblical prophecies, Isa. 2:2-3; Dan. 2:31-46; Luke 24:44-49; Acts 2:1-46.

II. We Have.

- A. We have no head but Jesus Christ.
1. Jesus alone is the head of the church, Eph. 5:23-24; Col. 1:18.
 2. Jesus alone has absolute authority over his church, Matt. 28:18; Acts 2:36; 1 Cor. 15:24-28.
 3. The churches of Christ have not “disallowed” Jesus Christ to be the head of his church as first did the Jews, and after have the denominations also (e.g. popes, contemporary apostles, earthly headquarters), 1 Pet. 2:4, 7.
- B. We have no creed but the Bible alone.
1. The churches of Christ appeal exclusively to the Bible for faith and practice.
 2. The Word of God has been revealed through inspired men, 2 Pet. 1:20-21; John 16:12-14; 1 Cor. 14:37.
 3. The Bible (Gospel or New Testament) is complete and able to save souls, Rom. 1:16; 2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Pet. 1:3.
 4. The churches of Christ have not turned to or written their own human creeds, Matt. 15:9.
- C. The churches of Christ have no pleas but the Gospel.
1. The churches of Christ preach the Gospel without addition or subtraction, Gal. 1:6-9; Rev. 22:18-19.
 2. The churches of Christ do not elevate human methods or ideas over inspired revelation, 1 Pet.

4:11.

3. The churches of Christ search for “Thus saith the Lord” (414 times in KJV) or book, chapter and verse instructions from God within the Bible.

III. We Aim.

- A. The churches of Christ aim to restore the New Testament order.
 1. The churches of Christ defer to the authority of Jesus Christ.
 2. We encourage the unity of the true followers of our Lord, John 17:20-21.
 3. We aim to evangelize the world with the seed of the kingdom, Matt. 28:19-20; Luke 8:11.
 4. We aim to return to the apostolic order heralded in the Word of God.
 5. We aim to go back before the Reformation and Catholicism to first century Christianity.
- B. The churches of Christ aim to serve their fellow man by serving the Lord Jesus.
 1. We aim to speak the truth in love, Eph. 4:15.
 2. We are not willing that any should perish, but we desire all to be saved, Rom. 10:1; 2 Pet. 3:9.
 3. We aim to become all things to all men (adapt ourselves) that by all means we might save some, 1 Cor. 9:19-22.
 4. We aim to avoid compromising the truth, John 17:17; 8:32.

Conclusion:

1. We are Christians, the churches of Christ, identical in faith and practice to first century Christians and the churches of Christ.
2. We have no head but Jesus Christ and no religious direction but his Word.
3. We aim to **restore** in our century first century Christianity!

Invitation:

1. Non-Christians can help us restore New Testament Christianity by obeying the Gospel of Jesus Christ, Heb. 5:8-9.
2. Erring Christians can help restore New Testament Christianity by being restored to the faith, Acts 8:22.
3. Faithful Christians can contribute to the restoration of

Christianity by unwavering faithfulness and active service,
Rev. 2:10; Titus 2:14.

Love, Badge of Discipleship

John 13:34-35

Thesis: To portray love as a leading characteristic by which Christians can be identified.

Introduction:

1. As light dispels and replaces darkness, love in a Christian's life can dispel and replace less admirable characteristics, 1 John 1:5-7; 2 Cor. 6:14; 1 Pet. 2:9.
2. There is not enough room in the Christian's heart for love AND hate or envy or backbiting, etc.
3. Christians need to learn love from the God of love rather than learning ungodliness from the world, 1 John 4:8, 16; 2:15-17; Jam. 4:4; Rom. 12:1-2.

Body:

I. Man's love for God.

- A. Man has been enjoined to love God in every age:
 1. Old Testament: Deut. 6:5.
 2. New Testament: Mark 12:30.
- B. Love has been inseparably linked to obedience in every age:
 1. Old Testament: Deut. 7:9; 10:12-13; 11:1.
 2. New Testament: 2 John 6; 1 John 2:5; 5:2-3.
- C. Love must hate and oppose evil, Psalms 97:10; Romans 12:9.
- D. The righteous are preserved because of their love for God, Psalms 145:20; Romans 8:28.
- E. God knows those who love him, 1 Cor. 8:3.
- F. God loves those who love him, and lovers of God can find him, Proverbs 8:17.
- G. Loving God is not merely an academic or mental activity, but loving God must be demonstrated by loving one's fellow men, 1 John 4:20.
- H. A powerful motive for loving God is because he loved us first, when we were unlovable, 1 John 4:19; Romans 5:8.
- I. Proper love for God dispels fear of the Judgment, 1 John 4:17-18.

II. Man's Love for Jesus Christ.

- A. One's love for Jesus Christ must be supreme, Matt. 10:37.
- B. Love for Jesus Christ is demonstrated by loving one's fellows, Matt. 25:34-40.
- C. Love for Jesus Christ is demonstrated through obedience, John 14:15, 21, 23-24.
- D. Anyone who fails to love Jesus Christ is accursed, 1 Cor. 16:22.
- E. One's love for Jesus Christ must be sincere to be the recipient of God's grace, Eph. 6:24.

III. Man's love for man.

- A. Man has been enjoined to love his fellow man in every age:
 - 1. Old Testament: Lev. 19:18.
 - 2. New Testament: Matt. 19:19; Jam. 2:8; John 13:34-35.
- B. Love in action toward mankind is a prerequisite to salvation, Matt. 25:34-40; 1 John 2:10-11; 3:14; 4:20.
- C. One's love for his fellow man must be sincere and not hypocritical, Rom. 12:9; 1 Pet. 1:22.
- D. Love toward brethren in Christ must come before love for the rest of mankind.
 - 1. Christians are supposed to prefer Christians, Rom. 12:10.
 - 2. Love of brethren precedes love for non-Christians and national or political loyalties, 1 Pet. 2:17.
 - 3. Brethren should be a source of love and consolation in an otherwise cruel world, 1 Pet. 3:8-9; 4:8; 1 John 3:11.
- E. God's love for mankind is also a reason for which especially Christians ought to love each other, 1 John 4:11.

Conclusion:

- 1. Love should characterize all Christian conduct, Col. 3:12-14.
- 2. Christians should encourage each other in love, Heb. 10:24.
- 3. Love is the *badge of discipleship* by which this church and we as individuals can be known by God, known by our brethren and known by the world. **Are you wearing your badge of**

discipleship?

4. True love does not discard obedience, but love is the basis for obedience.
5. Faithfully practicing love prevents many problems and sins from afflicting individual Christians and congregations.

Invitation:

1. Persons who are not deficient respecting the love about which we have been talking will obey and continue to obey the Gospel.
2. Erring Christians must put away every sin (including gossip, backbiting, jealousy, envy, unholy pride, unfaithfulness, etc.) and repent, Acts 8:22.
3. If unbaptized believers truly love Jesus Christ, they will humbly submit to the Lord and be baptized for the remission of their sins, Mark 16:16.

To Play or Not to Play

Ephesians 5:19

Thesis: To determine from the Bible what music is acceptable to God in New Testament worship.

Introduction:

1. Perhaps the most noticeable aspect of the worship among churches of Christ to visitors is the absence of instrumental music.
2. However, historians uniformly agree that the primitive, first century church did not use instrumental music in worship.
 - a. The Roman Catholic Church introduced instrumental music into worship amid protest about A.D. 666 (qtd in Kurfees 152).
 - b. The churches birthed by the Reformation Movement discarded instrumental music in worship as Catholic innovations (qtd in Kurfees 154).
 - c. As late as the early 1800's, Baptists, Presbyterians and Methodists did not use instrumental music in worship (qtd Kurfees 146).
 - d. The churches associated with the Second Reformation (the Restoration Movement) did not use instrumental music in worship until 1859, which eventually resulted in division to form the Christian Church or Disciples of Christ distinct from the churches of Christ.
3. The churches of Christ, though, are not the only contemporary churches that do not use instrumental music in their worship.
 - a. The Greek Orthodox Catholic church never introduced instrumental music into their churches.
 - b. Some Presbyterian churches do not use instrumental music in worship (Mead 176, 179; Clark 179).
 - c. The River Brethren churches do not use instrumental music in worship (Clark 212).
 - d. There may be other contemporary churches that also exclude instrumental music from their worship.
4. The purposeful exclusion of instrumental music in the worship

of the churches of Christ is an **authority issue**.

- a. Everything one does in worship, Christian service and Christian living must be authorized to be acceptable to God, Col. 3:17.
- b. Unauthorized worship is rejected by God, Matt. 15:9.

Body:

I. The decision of the churches of Christ not to use instrumental music is a matter of ‘walking by faith,’ 2 Cor. 5:7.

- A. One must have faith to please God, Heb. 11:6.
- B. Proper faith is derived from the Word of God (divine revelation), Rom. 10:17.
- C. Therefore, one’s personal faith, derived from the system of faith, is the basis of walking by faith.
- D. Failing to do what is authorized in religion, or going beyond what is authorized in religion, is unsatisfactory with God, Jam. 4:17; Lev. 10:1-2.

II. Things right of themselves can be wrong in Christian worship.

- A. It is right to bear and rear children, but for instance, no one would purpose to give birth to a child in Christian worship.
- B. It is right to wash one’s hands, but Jesus condemned washing hands as a religious activity, Mark 7:1-9.
- C. It is right to eat meat, but eating meat offered as worship to idols can adversely affect Christians with weak consciences, 1 Cor. 8:4-13.
- D. There is nothing wrong with instrumental music per se, but it simply is **not authorized** by Scripture for inclusion in Christian worship.

III. The Law of Exclusion does not authorize instrumental music in Christian worship.

- A. God instructed Noah to build the ark from “gopher wood” and using any other building material would not have been obeying the command of God, Gen. 6:14, 22.
- B. Whatever instruction God gave through Moses to the Jewish priests respecting fire for the sacrifices excluded fire sources, etc. not designated by God, Lev. 10:1-2.
- C. Our Lord’s implementation of the communion memorial

with unleavened bread and fruit of the vine (grape juice) includes what Jesus used and excludes every other substance, Matt. 26:26-29.

- D. Commands and approved examples in the New Testament respecting worshipful music only authorize singing, Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16; Rom. 15:9; 1 Cor. 14:15, 26; Heb. 2:12; Jam. 5:13; Matt. 26:30; Acts 16:25; Rev. 15:3.

IV. Instrumental music is not sealed in the blood of the covenant — the blood of Jesus Christ.

- A. The New Covenant or Testament is sealed in the blood of Jesus Christ, Matt. 26:27-28; Heb. 9:12-28.
- B. The church of the New Testament was bought with the blood of Jesus Christ, Acts 20:28.
- C. Hence, the type of music attributed to the church in the New Testament, part and parcel to the blood sealed New Covenant and the blood bought church is authorized — singing rather than playing.
- D. Instrumental music is not sealed in the blood of Christ, but vocal music is sealed in the blood of Christ for use in Christian worship.

V. The difference between generic and specific commands prohibits the use of instrumental music in Christian worship.

- A. The difference between generic and specific commands respecting the construction of Noah's ark is readily discernible.
 - 1. Had God simply told Noah to build an ark (generic command), Noah could have opted for any building material he desired without risking the disfavor of God.
 - 2. However, God told Noah to build the ark from gopher wood (specific command), whereby if Noah had opted for some other building material he would have violated the instructions of God.
- B. The Great Commission illustrates generic commands, where the details are **not specified** and mankind may use his discretion, Mark 16:15.
 - 1. Jesus said "Go" (generic command) whereby

- mankind may opt to go by foot, animal, automobile, bus, train, boat, plane, etc. without violating authority in religion.
2. Jesus said “preach” (generic command) whereby one may opt to do so with or without a PA system, in person, on the radio, on television, etc. without violating authority in religion.
- C. The difference between generic and specific commands respecting the music in Christian worship should be readily discernible.
1. Had the New Testament simply instructed Christians to make music (generic command), mankind would be justified in opting to sing, play or sing and play.
 2. However, the specific command to sing and make melody in one’s heart appears in Eph. 5:19 and Col. 3:16.
 3. Mankind does not have liberty respecting specific biblical commands; he either obeys or he disobeys.

VI. Instrumental music was not used in either the Tabernacle or the synagogue.

- A. The holy place of the Jewish Tabernacle (later the Temple) was a type of the church, Heb. 9:1-12, 23-24.
1. Whereas instrumental music was used under Judaism in the Court of the Gentiles (which represents the world) surrounding the Temple, instrumental music was not used in the Holy Place of the Tabernacle.
 2. It is fitting, therefore, that instrumental music has not been authorized in the New Testament for Christian worship in the church.
- B. The first century church was patterned after the Jewish synagogue.
1. Instrumental music was not used in the synagogues of the first century.
 2. Therefore, instrumental music was neither used in the first century church nor is it authorized for use in the Lord’s church today.

VII. References to the Old Testament and to heaven do not affect what is authorized in the New Testament for Christian worship.

- A. The entire Old Testament system of religion has been retired and replaced with the New Testament, Rom. 7:6-7; Eph. 2:15; Col. 2:14.
- B. Habitations in heaven remain to be experienced and do not reflect directly on or validate Christianity, including the type of music authorized in Christian worship.
- C. Consequently, appeals either to the Old Testament or to what habitation in heaven may be like have no bearing on what type of music is authorized in Christian worship.

VIII. None of the objections offered over the years against the exclusion of instrumental music in worship succeeds in garnering biblical permission to play and sing in Christian worship.

- A. "David did it" is hardly a safe rule for authorization of anything in the Christian religion.
 - 1. For instance, David committed adultery, too, but no one would justify adultery today because David did it.
 - 2. David lived under the Old Testament, which has been nailed to the cross of Christ, Col. 2:14.
- B. That instrumental music is suitable in the home has no bearing on what is authorized in Christian worship.
 - 1. Ordinarily, one sleeps in the home, but one is not supposed to sleep during Christian worship.
 - 2. There are numerous things that are suitable at home that any one of us could enumerate that are obviously not suitable for practice in Christian worship.
- C. Some suppose that since the Bible does not specifically say that instrumental music is not permissible in Christian worship that it may be used.
 - 1. God did not tell Noah not to use oak or poplar when he did instruct him to use gopher wood, but it is understood that because God did specify what to use that every other type of wood was excluded.
 - 2. There is no record of God instructing Nadab and

Abihu specifically not to use “strange fire,” but it became painfully obvious to Aaron, the father of Nadab and Abihu, that when God specified the fire to be used for sacrifice that every other fire was not authorized and forbidden.

- D. Some suppose that the use of instrumental music in worship is comparable to a pitch pipe, tuning fork, songbooks, pews, artificial lighting, etc. and therefore permissible.
 - 1. Pitch pipes and tuning forks stop before worship begins whereas instrumental music does not.
 - 2. Songbooks do not add an additional type of music to singing, whereas instruments produce an additional kind of music to singing.
 - 3. Pitch pipes, tuning forks, songbooks, pews, artificial lighting are expedients that help us accomplish what is authorized by command or direct statement, approved example or divine implication from which man is obligated to correctly infer (CEI).
- E. Some argue that instrumental music aids worship and is not part of the worship.
 - 1. Instrumental music was considered part of worship under Judaism, Psa. 43:4; 150:3-5.
 - 2. Instrumental music is an additional kind of worship and an additional kind of music to singing.
- F. Still others think they perceive the use of instrumental music in heaven, whereby they suppose instrumental music is authorized for Christian worship.
 - 1. There will be infant membership in heaven, too, but that fact does not justify practicing infant membership in Christianity.
 - 2. Rev. 14:2 does not say that there are waterfalls, thunder and harps in heaven, but that sounds “as” or like these things were heard, cf. ASV.
 - 3. If there will be literal harps in heaven, will there also be literal harp manufacturers, literal harp repairmen and literal replacement harp strings in heaven, too?

IX. The use of psallo for sing in the New Testament does not authorize instrumental music in Christian worship.

- A. Some claim psallo means “play.”
 - 1. The word did not mean “play” in the first century and as it appears in the New Testament.
 - 2. If psallo for “making melody” in Eph. 5:19 means “play,” then anyone not playing violates Scripture regarding Christian worship.
 - 3. **Any argument that proves too much proves nothing!**
- B. No church claims that **all** must play instrumental music in Christian worship, which is what defining psallo as “play” would require.
 - 1. Those who would attempt to justify instrumental music in Christian worship by defining psallo as “play” really cannot make up their minds what it means.
 - 2. They argue for the organist or other musician psallo means “play.”
 - 3. Contrariwise, they argue that for all non-musicians psallo means “sing.”

X. As long as the Bible is allowed to be the sole basis of authority in religion, the New Testament authorizes singing for Christian worship and does not authorize instrumental music in Christian worship.

- A. Adding instrumental music to Christian worship voids the authority of Jesus Christ, Matt. 28:18; Col. 3:16-17.
- B. It is not possible to worship God in spirit and in truth with instrumental music in Christian worship, John 4:24.

Conclusion:

- 1. Your or my personal preferences matter not all respecting the type of music used in Christian worship; what matters is what has God, through his Word, authorized.
- 2. Using instrumental music in Christian worship is not walking by faith, but makes worship vain and is condemned because it amounts to adding to the Word of God, 2 Cor. 5:7; Matt. 15:9; Gal. 1:6-8; Rev. 22:18-19.
- 3. Singing is sealed in the blood of the New Testament, while instrumental music is not sealed in the blood of the New

Testament.

4. Instrumental music is excluded from Christian worship by specific commands and approved examples.
5. There is no authority for using instrumental music in Christian worship.
6. There is not a single mention of instrumental music in the New Testament church or recorded use of instrumental music used by New Testament disciples toward God.
7. Instrumental music was not used in Christian worship until the seventh century, over 600 years after the establishment of the Lord's church.
8. The only safe course to pursue religiously is to sing without instrumental music in Christian worship.

Invitation:

1. Whereas the purposeful exclusion of instrumental music in the worship of the churches of Christ is an **authority issue**, those who want to please God and receive blessings from him must rest in the authority of God's Word for every religious topic.
2. That means when one seeks salvation, he must rely on the authority of God's Word respecting redemption, Mark 16:16; Acts 8:22.

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The Love of God

Romans 5:8

Thesis: To provide a balanced, biblically accurate depiction of the love of God.

Introduction:

1. The love of God is a popular subject often proclaimed throughout the religious community.
 - a. Frequently, the love of God is emphasized while other attributes of God are ignored or misrepresented.
 - b. However, the love of God, as great as it is, does not overshadow or negate God's other attributes.
2. Other attributes of God are less appreciated by mankind.
 - a. God is also the God of recompense, punishment and wrath.
 - b. Though Jesus Christ is characterized by love, he too possesses other characteristics for which humans have little appreciation, e.g., vengeance, wrath, recompense, judgment and fiery punishment.

Body:

- I. **Admittedly, the Godhead possesses several pleasant characteristics.**
 - A. God loved humanity before man loved God.
 1. God loved mankind while humans were engaged in sin and little aware or concerned respecting their spiritual dilemma, Rom. 5:8.
 2. Humanity learned to love God after he first loved mankind and sent his Son that responsive souls might be saved, 1 John 4:19; John 3:16.
 - B. Without doubt, God is a God of love.
 1. Love from God to man and from man to God is reciprocal for the children of God, 1 John 4:8-5:3.
 2. The love of God was responsive toward humanity and the reciprocal love of man toward God needs to be responsive as well, John 14:15 ASV.
 - C. Jesus Christ left us an example by which if we follow him in love, we can be discerned to be the disciples of

Christ.

1. Jesus commanded his disciples to demonstrate the love he exhibited and taught them, John 13:34-35.
 2. Jesus is man's perfect example, 1 Pet. 2:21.
- D. Additional divine qualities in which mankind delights include: peace, mercy, grace and kindness.

II. However, the Godhead also possesses more ominous characteristics.

- A. Jesus Christ will sit in judgment of humanity.
1. Every accountable soul will face Jesus as Judge, 2 Cor. 5:10.
 2. Coming judgment is certain, at which time each soul living in the Christian Age will be judged by the Word of Jesus Christ, John 12:48.
- B. Jesus Christ will punish disobedient souls.
1. The Second Coming of our Lord will be a fearsome sight for disobedient souls, 2 Thess. 1:7-9.
 2. No amount of attempted plea bargaining will dissuade our Lord from assigning ungodly souls to eternal torment, Matt. 7:21-23; Rev. 20:12-15; 21:8.
- C. In the last day, many souls will not face the love of God, but they will confront an angry God.
1. They will try to hide beneath rocks from the wrath of God, Rev. 6:15-17.
 2. The unprepared have reason to be afraid of Almighty God, Heb. 10:31.

Conclusion:

1. God is the God of love toward them that love and obey him.
 - a. God knows who loves him, 1 Cor. 8:3.
 - b. To love God is to obey him, John 14:15.
2. The Godhead is tempered with both gentle and course characteristics.
 - a. To those who love God, he is the God of love.
 - b. To those who disobey him, God will manifest his wrath in judgment.
3. Typically, mankind dwells upon and disproportionately focuses on the love of God.

- a. For instance, the love of God does not void Bible doctrines respecting Christian responsibility and the consequences for disobedience.
- b. How God approaches mankind and how mankind perceives God depends on one's relationship with God as obedient or disobedient souls, Rom. 11:22.

Invitation:

- 1. All souls need to respond with obedience and love in return for the love of God demonstrated toward humanity, Heb. 5:8-9.
- 2. The unimmersed believer needs to obey Jesus, Mark 16:16.
- 3. The erring child of God needs to repent and pray, Acts 8:22.

The Hand That Rocks the Cradle

Proverbs 22:6

Thesis: To emphasize and praise motherhood.

Introduction:

1. A MOTHER'S DAY SURPRISE: Two children ordered their mother to stay in bed one Mother's Day morning. As she lay there looking forward to being brought breakfast in bed, the smell of bacon floated up from the kitchen. Finally, the children called her to come downstairs. She found them both sitting at the table eating bacon and eggs. "As a surprise for Mother's Day," one explained, "we decided to cook our own breakfast" (email).
2. Motherhood has been honored from ancient civilizations thousands of years ago through the present.
3. The Bible also highly regards motherhood, and the English word "mother" appears 245 times (KJV), besides other words referring to motherhood.
4. It is socially and biblically responsible to honor mothers, not only on Mother's Day, but everyday.

Body:

- I. **Right thinking persons place a premium on motherhood.**
 - A. The first Mother's Day-like observances occurred among the Greeks and Romans.
 1. The first Mother's Day celebrations date back to ancient Greece in honor of Rhea, the mother of the gods and goddesses.
 2. The Romans observed similar celebrations in honor of Cybele, the mother of gods and goddesses, about 250 years before Jesus Christ.
 - B. Mother's Day-like celebrations were later observed in 1600's England.
 1. Catholics and Protestants in Europe appropriated Mother's Day to honor Mary the mother of Jesus

- and the “Mother (Catholic) Church.”
2. In England, “Mothering Sunday” was adopted on the fourth Sunday of Lent and was applied to all mothers.
- C. For much of the world, Mother’s Day today can be traced back to early efforts by a woman in West Virginia to honor her mother and motherhood.
1. In 1872, Julia Ward Howe who wrote the words to the *Battle Hymn of the Republic* is attributed with first suggesting a Mother’s Day in the United States; she “...organized Mother’s Day meetings in Boston, Mass every year” (holidays.net).
 2. However, the eventual establishment of Mother’s Day as a national holiday is attributed to efforts by Anna M. Jarvis (1864-1948), a graduate of the Female Seminary in Wheeling, WV, who for a while taught school like her mother in Grafton, WV (21stcenturyplaza.com).
 3. In 1907, Mother’s Day was observed at the Andrews Methodist Church in Grafton, WV on the second anniversary of the death of her mother, Anna Reese Jarvis (the second Sunday of May) (21stcenturyplaza.com).
 4. On May 10, 1908, Mother’s Day was also celebrated in Philadelphia, PA where Anna lived.
 5. By 1911, almost every state celebrated Mother’s Day, as well as Mexico, Canada, China, Japan, South American and African countries (21stcenturyplaza.com).
 6. The Mother’s Day International Association incorporated on December 12, 1912 to promote Mother’s Day around the world (21stcenturyplaza.com).
 7. In 1913, the House of Representatives drafted a resolution calling for Mother’s Day to be a national holiday.
 8. May 8, 1914, President Woodrow Wilson made Mother’s Day a national holiday. “Now, Therefore, I, Woodrow Wilson, President of the United States

of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the said Joint Resolution, do hereby direct the government officials to display the United States flag on all government buildings and do invite the people of the United States to display the flag at their homes or other suitable places on the second Sunday in May as a public expression of our love and reverence for the mothers of our country” (everythingmothersday.com).

II. **The Bible has a high regard for motherhood.**

- A. Motherhood began in the Garden of Eden by divine design.
1. The name that Adam gave to his wife, Eve, signifies that she as the first woman is the mother of humanity through procreation, Gen. 1:27-28; 3:20.
 2. The Hebrew word that is translated “Eve” means, “life-giver” (Strong’s).
 3. The Septuagint, Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible, likewise uses a word meaning “life”; the arbitrary name “Eve” does not convey the thought contained in Gen. 3:20 — Adam named his wife “Life” (Clarke).
 4. Keil & Delitzsch says of the name, “Eve,” “life-spring...the continuance and life of his race were guaranteed to the man through the woman.”
 5. The word translated there as “mother” means “a mother (as the bond of the family) (Strong’s).
 6. The Greek *meter* for “mother” means: (a) of the natural relationship, e.g., Matt. 1:18; 2 Tim. 1:5; (b) figuratively, (1) of one who takes the place of a mother, Matt. 12:49, 50; Mark 3:34, 35; John 19:27; Rom. 16:13; 1 Tim. 5:2; (2) of the Heavenly and spiritual Jerusalem...” (Vine).
- B. The term “mother” in the Bible occurs respecting other women after Eve to whom many descendants are attributed.
1. Abraham’s wife, Sarah, was to be the mother of nations and kings, Gen. 17:16.

2. It was said of Rebekah that she would be “the mother of thousands of millions,” Gen. 24:60.
- C. Both testaments of the Bible extol praise on motherhood.
1. The virtuous woman of Proverbs 31:10-31 is a wife and mother who has been immortalized in Scripture as a perfect specimen.
 2. Motherhood was highlighted through the birth of our Savior to Mary, Acts 1:14. “And what is true of the Old Testament is equally true of the New Testament. The same high type of womanhood, the same reverence for one’s mother is in evidence in both books. The birth of Christ lifted motherhood to the highest possible plane and idealized it for all time. The last thing Jesus did on the Cross was to bestow His mother on John ‘the beloved’ as his special inheritance. What woman is today, what she is in particular in her motherhood, she owes wholly to the position in which the Scriptures have placed her. Sometimes the stepmother is spoken of as the real mother (Gen 37:10). Sometimes the grandmother or other female relative is thus spoken of (Gen 3:20; 1 Kings 15:10)” (*International*).
 3. Scripture uses the concept of motherhood to convey the love of God and his servants toward humanity, 1 Cor. 3:1; 1 Thess. 2:7.
 4. Motherhood is charged with setting the holiness of the home, Titus 2:3.
 5. Motherhood is charged with guiding the home and its children, 1 Tim. 5:14.

III. We need to remember our mothers fondly, not only on Mother’s Day, but daily.

- A. The significance of motherhood is immortalized by famous quotes.
1. **Abraham Lincoln** said, “All that I am, or can be, I owe to my angel mother.”
 2. **Napoleon Bonaparte** said, “Let France have good mothers, and she will have good sons.”
 3. **John Quincy Adams** said, “All that I am, my mother made me.”

4. **Thomas Edison** said, “If it had not been for my mother’s appreciation and her faith in me at a critical time in my experience, I would never have become an inventor.”
 5. **Henry Ward Beecher** said, “The mother’s heart is the child’s schoolroom.”
 6. **English Proverb** says, “The hand that rocks the cradle rules the world.”
 7. **Spanish proverb** reads, “An ounce of mother is worth a pound of clergy.”
- B. The love for one’s mother is indelibly inscribed on her child’s heart, irrespective of whether she is an exemplary mother, Psa. 35:14.
1. We are to honor our mothers, Deut. 5:16; Prov. 1:8; 6:20.
 2. Samuel’s mother, Hannah, was desperate to have children, and she cared deeply for Samuel even after she dedicated him to the Lord’s service, 1 Sam. 1-2; she became the “joyful mother of children,” Psa. 113:9.
 3. We are to be mindful of our mothers even when they (and we) are old, Prov. 23:22.

Conclusion:

1. “While many countries of the world celebrate their own Mother’s Day at different times throughout the year, there are some countries such as Denmark, Finland, Italy, Turkey, Australia, and Belgium which also celebrate Mother’s Day on the second Sunday of May” (holidays.net).
2. “The second Sunday in May has become the most popular day of the year to dine out, and telephone lines record their highest traffic, as sons and daughters everywhere take advantage of this day to honor and to express appreciation of their mothers” (everythingmothersday.com).
3. Motherhood is so important to the human race that it has been honored by God and man from the beginning to the present.
4. Mothers, your place in the home and in society is so important that “the hand that rocks the world rules the world,” Prov. 22:6.
5. For the rest of us, remember, it is socially and biblically responsible to honor mothers, not only on Mother’s Day, but

everyday.

Invitation:

1. Each soul here today is no less dear to God than any mother's child is precious to his mother; God wants you to live with him eternally.
2. Become a child of God today by obeying the Truth, 1 Pet. 1:22; Gal. 3:26-27.
3. Children of God also need to behave like children of God, Eph. 5:8; 1 John 5:2.

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The Nature of the Bible Heart

Romans 6:17

Thesis: To distinguish between the human and Bible hearts by identifying the Bible heart.

Introduction:

1. Each person has two hearts, a literal, physical human heart and a figurative, spiritual heart.
2. Each of man's two hearts is discernible by what each does.
3. The physical heart is a pulsating muscle in each one's chest that pumps blood throughout the body.
4. The Bible heart, that spiritual heart, is not that beating organ within one's chest.
5. Perhaps symbolism will allow us to strike our breasts with reference to our Bible hearts, but let the mind know the difference.

Body:

I. One third of the Bible heart is characterized by *intellect*.

- A. Intellect includes man's thoughts, Gen. 6:5.
- B. Intellect includes the ability to reason, Mark 2:8.
- C. Intellect includes the process of understanding, Matt. 13:15.

II. One third of the Bible heart is characterized by *will power*.

- A. Will power includes belief or the determination to embrace facts, Acts 8:37; Rom. 10:9-10.
- B. Will power includes purposing or intending to do something, 2 Cor. 9:7; Heb. 4:12.
- C. Will power includes following through or obeying, Rom. 6:17.

III. One third of the Bible heart is characterized by *emotion*.

- A. Emotion includes prayers and desires, Rom. 10:1.
- B. Emotion includes love, Matt. 22:37.
- C. Emotion includes trust, Prov. 3:5.

IV. The nature of the Bible heart is conducive to Gospel preaching.

- A. The Bible heart as God has made man is able to obey Bible preaching or disobey it.
 - 1. Mankind can respond to the Great Commission, Matt. 28:18-20; Rom. 1:16.
 - 2. Mankind can reject the pure Word of God to his own spiritual demise, Gal. 1:6-9; 2 Thess. 1:7-9.
- B. The Gospel as God designed it can be discerned and appeals to the Bible heart.
 - 1. *Facts* appeal to the *intellect*, 1 Cor. 15:1-4.
 - 2. *Commands* appeal to the *will power*, Acts 10:48.
 - 3. *Hope* appeals to the *emotions*, Rom. 8:24; 1 Cor. 15:19.
- C. Denominational doctrines respecting the Bible heart are false.
 - 1. For instance, the doctrine of *predestination* is false because it supposes that mankind is incapable of responding to the preaching of the Gospel, though God put the Bible heart within humans whereby they could choose to obey or disobey.
 - 2. The doctrine of *universalism* is false because it supposes that mankind does not need to respond to the preaching of the Gospel, though God put the Bible heart within humans whereby they could choose to obey or disobey.

Conclusion:

- 1. Often, mankind thinks too little or too much of the Bible heart.
- 2. Proper understanding of the Bible heart is a key factor and prerequisite to understanding man's part in God's plan for the redemption of man.
- 3. **The Bible as God gave it is adaptable to man as God made him!**
- 4. Distortion of the nature of the Bible heart sets aside God's plan for the redemption of mankind — leaving mankind without salvation.
- 5. Likewise, distortion of God's plan of redemption fails to address the nature of the Bible heart — leaving mankind without salvation.

Invitation:

1. Since man is a free, moral agent, possessing a Bible heart, he can obey unto eternal life or he can disobey unto eternal punishment, Heb. 5:8-9; 2 Thess. 1:7-9.
2. The *first law of pardon* requires faith, repentance, professing Christ and immersion, Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 8:37; 22:16.
3. The *second law of pardon* requires repentance and prayer, Acts 8:22; 1 John 1:9.

Faithfulness

Biblically Defined

Psalm 31:23-24

Thesis: To biblically define “faithfulness.”

Song: *Faith Is the Victory*

Introduction:

1. “Faithfulness” obviously means different things to different people; to some faithfulness is:
 - a. Believing God exists
 - b. Being on a church role
 - c. Having been baptized
 - d. Attending on Easter and Christmas
 - e. Attending services every week or so, once weekly or every time the doors are open.
2. Faithfulness even may be variously defined by churches, their elders, deacons, teachers and preachers.
 - a. Doubtless, elders and preachers would not usually consider as faithful those who did not regularly attend **all** the services of the church that they could.
 - b. Too frequently, faithfulness is limited to regular attendance of church services; and yet, it is possible that someone attending every service of the church may not be considered faithful by God himself.
3. The only definition of faithfulness that really matters is **God’s definition of faithfulness!**
 - a. He has recorded his definition of faithfulness in the Bible.
 - b. Further, the Bible is filled with admirable examples of faithfulness.
 - c. However, the Bible also records instances of lapsed faithfulness.
 - d. The Bible frequently commands the practice of faithfulness to God.

Body:

I. What Faithfulness Is Not.

- A. That irregular attendance of Bible classes and worship does not constitute faithfulness can be illustrated from contemporary life.
 - 1. Is the paperboy faithful who brings your paper one out of every three or four times?
 - 2. Is the employer faithful who fails to pay his employees every other payday?
 - 3. Is the husband and father faithful who only comes home to *his house* every few days?
- B. Neither is faithfulness simply attending every Bible class and worship of the church.
 - 1. What is so intrinsically faithful about sitting on a pew?
 - 2. And yet, because there is so little true faithfulness exhibited by church members, elders and preachers are prone to equate faithfulness with regular attendance.
 - 3. The biblical definition of faithfulness certainly includes regular attendance of church services, but it is so much more, too.

II. What Is the Divine Definition of Faithfulness?

- A. Faithfulness is serving God foremost!
 - 1. One must seek God before wealth and material possessions, Matt. 6:24-33.
 - 2. God must ever be one's "first love," Rev. 2:4.
 - 3. Befriending the world makes one an enemy of God, Jam. 4:4.
- B. Faithfulness is serving God to the best of one's ability.
 - 1. The parable of the talents illustrates the necessity of serving well, Matt. 25:14-30.
 - 2. Faithfulness demands one assume the posture of a servant.
 - 3. God expects his servants to serve him commensurate with each's ability, and he will reward or punish each according to his effort or lack thereof, Matt. 25:21, 23, 30.
- C. Faithfulness is serving God unendingly.

1. Servants who continuously serve will be rewarded, Matt. 24:45-47.
 2. Servants who abandon service to God will be sentenced to hell, Matt. 24:48-51.
- D. Faithfulness is serving God despite the dangers of persecution or death.
1. Historically, sometimes faithful service resulted in the loss of one's life, Rev. 2:10.
 2. Nevertheless, Jesus taught his disciples that they would be saved if they endured unto the end of their lives, Matt. 10:22.
 3. Jesus promises his followers that they would persevere spiritually, even if they did not persevere physically, Matt. 10:28.
- E. Faithfulness is serving God with all our available resources.
1. We must give ourselves first, 2 Cor. 8:1-5.
 2. As stewards, we must apply our resources to the cause of Christ, 1 Cor. 4:2.
 3. The apostle Paul taught that Christians should give liberally, 2 Cor. 9:6-7.

III. The Bible Is Replete with Examples of Faithfulness.

- A. Scripture holds up Abraham as a perfect specimen of faithfulness, Neh. 9:7-8.
1. Abraham appears in the Bible's Hall of Fame of Faith, Heb. 11:8-12, 17-19.
 2. Abraham is the subject of several passages where he is held up as an admirable example to follow in faithfulness to God, Acts 7:2-5; Gen. 12:1ff.
- B. Abel, Enoch, Noah, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Rahab and allusions to others also appear in the Bible's Hall of Fame of Faith, Heb. 11.
1. Abel became the first faithful martyr.
 2. Noah was faithful when he lacked moral support, fellowship and spiritual direction from his fellow man.
 3. Enoch and Elijah were exemplary specimens of faithfulness and were not subjected to death, Gen. 5:24; 2 Kings 2:11.

4. Moses, though not sinless, faithfully served God as an old man, leading the nation of Israel for 40 years in the wilderness.
- C. Samuel is an unparalleled example of faithfulness from his youth throughout his life.
1. Hannah, Samuel's mother, purposed before he was conceived that her son would faithfully serve God all his life, 1 Sam. 1:11.
 2. At a young age, Samuel was lent for life to the service of the Lord, 1 Sam. 1:24-28.
 3. Samuel was called to the service of God while he was yet a child, 1 Sam. 3:2-10.
 4. Samuel lived all his life in faithful service, 1 Sam. 12:1-5; 25:1.
- D. The apostle Paul is a fine New Testament demonstration of faithfulness, 1 Tim. 1:12.
1. Paul (Saul of Tarsus) always faithfully practiced what he thought was right, Acts 23:1.
 2. From the time he obeyed the Gospel, he began to faithfully practice and preach the Gospel, Acts 9:21-22.
 3. Paul endured the forfeiture of personal honors and severe persecution as a faithful Christian servant, Phil. 3:4-11; 2 Cor. 11:23-28.
 4. Paul taught about an obedient, living and active faithfulness, Rom. 1:5; 16:26.

IV. The Bible Chronicles Instances of Lapsed Faithfulness.

- A. King Saul is an example of lapsed faithfulness.
1. He was a different character when chosen by God to be king than he became later in life, 1 Sam. 9-10.
 2. He faithfully delivered Israel from the oppression of surrounding nations, 1 Sam. 11ff.
 3. However, later, Saul began a life of rebellion against God, 1 Sam. 15ff.
 4. Finally, unfaithful Saul took his own life, 1 Sam. 31:4.
- B. Solomon also began his reign as a faithful servant and yet apparently died in unfaithfulness.

1. David prayed that Solomon might have a perfect heart to keep God's commandments, 1 Chron. 29:19.
 2. Solomon asked God for wisdom, 2 Chron. 1:7-12.
 3. Among the labors of Solomon was the construction of the temple, 2 Chron. 2ff.
 4. However, in his old age, Solomon practiced and promoted idolatry in Israel, 1 Kings 11.
- C. Ananias and Sapphira are New Testament examples of lapsed faithfulness, Acts 5.
1. Evidently, they had been faithful disciples.
 2. However, they ceased to be faithful when they lied to men and to God.
 3. They coveted the esteem due the faithful, but they did not live accordingly.
 4. They conspired together to defraud the church of what they proposed to give.
- D. Other first century Christians who became unfaithful are recorded eternally and indelibly in the New Testament.
1. Hymenaeus and Alexander made shipwreck of their faith and were disfellowshipped, 1 Tim. 1:19-20.
 2. Hymenaeus and Philetus erred doctrinally and became unfaithful, as well as contributed to the unfaithfulness of others, 2 Tim. 2:17-19.
 3. Demas forsook faithful Paul, preferring this material world, 2 Tim. 4:10.
 4. Diotrephes became unfaithful when he rejected the inspired apostles and teachers of his day, 3 John 9-10.
- V. **The Bible Explicitly Teaches the Practice of Faithfulness.**
- A. Faithfulness is synonymous with "saint," "Christian" and other terms descriptive of the children of God.
1. Paul used the word "saints" and "faithful" interchangeably, Eph. 1:1.
 2. Teaching and preaching servants of God are called "faithful men," 2 Tim. 2:2.
- B. Faithfulness is a common characteristic of the child of God.

1. Deacons' wives must be faithful, 1 Tim. 3:11.
2. Elders must have faithful children, Titus 1:6.

Conclusion:

1. Faithfulness is an essential ingredient to successful Christianity.
2. Every Christian must demonstrate or practice faithfulness, Jam. 2:14-26.
3. The unfaithful or unbelieving are grouped with a host of sinners that God has determined to remand to an eternal hell, Rev. 21:8.

Invitation:

1. Are you a faithful child of God, 2 Cor. 13:5?
2. Erring Christians need to renounce sin, announce their repentance of publicly knowable sins and pray, Acts 17:30; 8:22.
3. Unbaptized believers need to put Jesus on in baptism, Gal. 3:27.

The Bible as Counselor, Operator's Manual and Road Map

2 Timothy 3:16-17

Thesis: To embolden Christians to place their confidence in the Bible to help them make their pilgrimage despite sorrows they may face in this life. [Funeral Sermon]

Introduction:

1. The Bible provides a profound look into the otherwise unknown other world beyond this life.
2. Further, the Bible is an under used but able tool for personal development and happiness.
3. The Bible is also a reliable point of reference by which one can chart a path to the eternal shores of heaven.

Body:

- I. **The Bible as counselor can comfort mankind and bring him through any of his sorrows, e.g. bereavement, 1 Thess. 4:13-18.**
 - A. For instance, death is a natural, predictable and observable event that each person knows will visit him, Heb. 9:27.
 1. However, not even death is a dreadful thing for those who have made adequate preparation to meet God, 2 Cor. 5:1-11.
 2. Those ready for eternity can say with the apostle John, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus," Rev. 22:20.
 - B. The Bible tells us that family relationships dissolve at death, which means that one's relationship with God outlasts all other relationships, Mark 12:25; Rom. 7:1-3.
 1. When a person dies, though his body remains, the spirit is departed, Jam. 2:26; Ecc. 12:7.
 2. The living comfort themselves with pleasant memories of the deceased and look forward to a

renewed acquaintance in heaven, 2 Sam. 12:23.

- C. The Bible assures us that there are no sorrows in heaven, Rev. 21:4.
 - 1. If we miss heaven after this life is over, our personal sorrows will displace any other sorrows, Matt. 25:30.
 - 2. However, on the other hand, if we enter heaven, our joy will be so complete that we cannot have any sorrows, Matt. 25:21, 23.

II. The Bible is the ultimate operator's manual for the ultimate creation — man.

- A. The Bible tells of man's origin, Gen. 1:26-27.
- B. The Bible states our purpose for living, Ecc. 12:13-14.
- C. It reveals the approximate number of years we will inhabit this earth, Psa. 90:10.
- D. The Bible is full of details about successful human experience, e.g. redemption, Christian worship, Christian living, Christian service, happy marriages, child rearing, etc.

III. The Bible is our road map.

- A. The Bible tells us where we have been spiritually, where we are spiritually and where we are going spiritually.
- B. The Bible alone can direct us through the uncharted dark ways of death, eternity and the redemption of our souls, Prov. 3:5; Psa. 119:105.
- C. Bible faith outfits man for a journey we all must eventually make, Mark 16:16; Heb. 11:6.

Conclusion:

- 1. Life at best is brief, Jam. 4:14; Job 14:1-2.
- 2. The Bible alone is the supreme counselor, operator's manual and road map.

Invitation:

- 1. Without the Bible, one could not know God or his desire that all be saved and none perish, 2 Pet. 3:9; John 3:16.
- 2. Only through the Bible (for us the New Testament) can one know how to save himself from sin, Acts 2:38, 40; Phil. 2:12.
- 3. Only through the Bible (for us the New Testament) can one know that God also forgives penitent Christians of their sins, Acts 8:22; 1 John 1:9.

Heritage of the Lord

Psalms 127:3-5

Thesis: To prompt parents and grandparents to love their young children enough to groom them with godliness.

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

Introduction:

1. Psalm 127:3 says that “children are an heritage of the Lord” or as some translations say, ‘children are a gift from Jehovah — God.’
2. Sometimes children may grow like bad weeds, Psalm 127:3 says really they are “the fruit of the womb” and a “reward.”
3. Psalm 127:4-5 compares the children of young families as arrows that fill the archer’s quiver: “Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them.”

Body:

I. The Bible places a great responsibility on parents as to how they rear their children.

- A. Especially fathers have the responsibility to rear their children “in the nurture and admonition of the Lord,” Eph 6:4.
- B. Especially mothers are expected to demonstrate love toward their children, Titus 2:4.
- C. Despite weariness over a number of years that may be associated with motherhood, every right thinking mother is “a joyful mother of children,” Psalm 113:9.
- D. Some godly mothers about whom one can read in the Bible determined before their children were born that they would dedicate their children to the service of God, Judges 13; 1 Sam. 1.

II. The Bible also notes the valuable participation of grandparents in the successful upbringing of children.

- A. Regarding grandparents, Proverbs 17:6 says, “Children’s children are the crown of old men; and the glory of children are their fathers.”
- B. The young, first century evangelist, Timothy, was in part

the godly man that he was due to the influence of his grandmother, Lois, 2 Tim. 1:5.

Conclusion:

1. The Bible teaches that babies are born into this world pure, Ezek. 18:20.
2. Jesus Christ used small children as examples worthy of imitation for those who would be citizens in the kingdom of heaven, Matt. 18:3-4.
3. Little children are sponges that absorb everything put before them.
4. These are the years when parents, grandparents and the church need to begin molding their pliable minds to become faithful children of God someday.

Invitation:

1. Before we can be all that we can be as parents toward our children, we need to become the children of God, 2 Cor. 6:14-18.
2. Erring Christians need to repent and unbaptized believers need to be immersed into Jesus Christ, Rom. 12:1-2; Col. 2:12.

The Challenge of the Commandment

Acts 1:1-5

Thesis: God's people must be moved by the Great Commission.

Song: *The Gospel Is for All*

Introduction:

1. The Book of Acts is the second volume of a two-volume set.
 - a. Luke, the physician and missionary companion of Paul, penned both the Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts to a man named Theophilus, Luke 1:1-4; Acts 1:1
 - b. The Book of Acts overlaps enough of the ending of the Gospel of Luke to ensure continuity and continues with new information.
2. The key to understanding the Book of Acts is its relationship to the Great Commission.
 - a. The Gospel of Luke concludes and the Book of Acts begins with the Great Commission, Luke 24:46-49; Acts 1:8.
 - b. The Book of Acts is not simply the biography of either the apostles Peter or Paul, or even merely a history of the early church.
 - c. The Book of Acts tells how the Great Commission was executed or put into action, Matt. 28:18-20.
3. Before the birthday of the Lord's church in Acts 2, no one was authorized to announce Jesus Christ is the Messiah.
 - a. The apostles needed the baptism of the Holy Spirit to override their misconceptions before they could preach about the Messiah, John 14:16; Acts 2:1-4.
 - b. After the apostles received the baptism of the Holy Spirit and after the birthday of the church, the apostles and other Christians were compelled and required to preach about the Messiah, Acts 4:19-20; 5:29.
4. The challenge of the commandment to preach Jesus rests on every child of God.

- a. God's people in every generation everywhere on the earth must proclaim the Gospel, Mark 16:15-16.
- b. Early Christians fled from their homes because of persecution that arose when they preached Jesus, and they continued to preach Jesus everywhere to which they fled, Acts 8:1, 4.
- c. God's people today must be moved to fulfill the Great Commission for the Lord's church to survive, grow in this generation and grow from generation to generation.

Body:

I. The verbal phrase “had given commandment” (ASV) in Acts 1:2 obviously refers to what we call the Great Commission.

- A. The Greek means that Jesus Christ charged his apostles to do something.
- B. The Great Commission is what Jesus charged his apostles to do or perform.
- C. By extension, God's people in every generation bear the responsibility of executing the Great Commission, 2 Tim. 2:2.
- D. The Great Commission requires those who are obedient to it to respond in specific ways.
 1. Teachers of it must “teach” (KJV) or “make disciples of” (ASV) “all nations” by baptizing them and further teaching them, Matt. 28:19-20; Acts 5:42.
 2. Respondents must believe and be baptized to be saved, Mark 16:16; Acts 8:36-38.

II. The Great Commission was Christ centered.

- A. The Great Commission was validated by the authority of Jesus Christ when he gave it, Matt. 28:18.
- B. The central theme to the Gospel of the Great Commission is the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ, 1 Cor. 15:1-3.
- C. The Gospel of Jesus Christ saves through an enactment of the death, burial and resurrection of Christ, Rom. 1:16; Rom. 6:3-5.

III. Analysis of the Great Commission reveals certain distinctive characteristics.

- A. Matthew's emphasis is on **teaching**, Matt. 28:19.
 - 1. Christianity is a taught religion, John 6:45; 1 Thess. 1:8.
 - 2. Since we are the products of what we are taught, it is crucial that we teach and be taught the Gospel without admixture of anything else, Gal. 1:6-9.
- B. Mark's emphasis is on the **preacher** and the **hearer**, Mark 16:15-16.
 - 1. The **preacher** must proclaim the **Gospel facts** without adornment, 1 Cor. 15:1-3; 2:1; Rom. 16:17; 1 Thess. 2:5.
 - 2. The **hearer** must believe and be immersed for the remission of sins, Col. 2:12; Acts 2:38; 22:16.
- C. Luke's emphasis is on a **divine plan** ("it is written"), Luke 24:46-47.
 - 1. The plan of salvation is neither accidental nor evolutionary.
 - 2. The Great Commission and its Gospel did not begin in the wilderness with John the Baptist, with Abraham, any of the Old Testament prophets or anyone hundreds or thousands of years after the first century; the Great Commission and its Gospel began with Jesus Christ.

IV. Contemporary denominational doctrines contradict our Lord's Great Commission.

- A. Tenets of Calvinism, predestination and foreordination, contradict the universal appeal of the Great Commission and its Gospel ("every creature"), Mark 16:16.
- B. Original sin and subsequent infant baptism contradict the Great Commission and its Gospel ("teach"), Matt. 28:19.
- C. Faith only contradicts the Great Commission and its Gospel ("believeth and is baptized shall be saved"), Mark 16:16.
- D. The supposed need for the direct operation of the Holy Spirit and irresistible grace before one can possibly respond to the Great Commission and its Gospel contradict taking the Gospel to everyone, Matt. 28:19-20;

Mark 16:15-16.

- E. The idea that being a good moral person or that one religion is just as good as another contradicts the Great Commission and its Gospel (“all nations,” “every creature”), Matt. 28:19; Mark 16:15; Matt. 15:13.

Conclusion:

1. The Great Commission and its Gospel are still relevant because sin still condemns, Rom. 3:23; 6:23; 1 John 1:8.
2. There is no substitute for preaching the Gospel of Christ, Rom. 10:13-17; Gal. 1:6-9; Rev 22:18-19!
3. Proclaiming the Great Commission and its Gospel is an identifying characteristic of New Testament Christianity.
4. Preaching the Gospel of the Great Commission continues the work that Jesus began, Luke 19:10.

Invitation:

1. Those who are taught the Gospel of Christ have the responsibility to respond appropriately to it.
2. Unbaptized believers need to repent, profess Jesus Christ, be baptized and live faithful lives, Luke 13:3; Rom. 10:9-10; Acts 22:16; Rev. 2:10.
3. Erring Christians need renew the Gospel in their lives, 1 John 1:9.

A Message from Hell

Luke 16:19-31

Thesis: To pass along a sober message from beyond the grave, courtesy of someone who knows first hand about hell.

Song: *There's a Great Day Coming*

Introduction:

1. Sometimes brethren question whether Luke 16:19-31 is a parable.
 - a. It doesn't matter whether Luke 16:19-31 is a parable.
 - b. Luke 16:19-31 is true irrespective of whether it is a parable; Jesus didn't tell any lies!
2. Luke 16:19-31 presents an unusual opportunity to learn a valuable lesson from a dead man.
 - a. The rich man spoke from Hades, Luke 19:23 ASV.
 - b. Hebrews 11:4 refers to Abel, in a sense, speaking from the dead.
3. Interestingly, if the rich man were resurrected from the dead, he would have preached a *fire and brimstone* sermon!
 - a. He was unconcerned about living or preaching for God while he was alive.
 - b. After death, though, he desperately desired to preach the Word of God to his family.
 - c. There are a number of things he could have preached were he resurrected and given an opportunity.

Body:

I. Death is a certainty.

- A. Death is an appointment that each person must keep and for which no one can be late, Heb. 9:27.
- B. The only exceptions in the past were Enoch and Elijah, Gen. 5:24; 2 Kings 2:11.
- C. The only exception in the future pertains to those who may be alive at the Second Coming of Jesus, 1 Thess. 4:13-18.

II. During one's life is the time to prepare for death.

- A. Time is limited and opportunities will cease, John 9:4.

- B. Time passes swiftly, even if we are permitted to live long lives, Jam. 4:13-14; Psa. 90:10; Job 14:1-2.
- C. There is no second chance, Heb. 9:7; Luke 16:19-31.
- D. The true purpose of life on earth is to prepare for the next life, Ecc. 12:13-14.

III. Riches will not save.

- A. The soul is more important than wealth, Matt. 16:26.
- B. Riches often hinder one's salvation, 1 Tim. 6:10; Luke 12:16-21; Matt. 19:16-22.

IV. There will be a separation of the righteous and the unrighteous after death.

- A. **Physical death** is the separation of the soul of man from his body, Jam. 2:26.
- B. **Spiritual death** is the separation of one's soul from the God for eternity, Rom. 6:23; 2 Thess. 1:7-9; Matt. 25:31-46.

V. There is consciousness after death.

- A. The rich man of Luke 16 knew that he was in eternal torment, Matt. 25:46.
 - 1. The rich man was in a place of torment for which there was no relief.
 - 2. He was in a fixed place from which he could not escape.
- B. The rich man knew that he could have avoided his pitiful eternity.
 - 1. He knew it was too late to alter his destiny.
 - 2. He wished, however, to dissuade his brothers from making the same fatal errors he made.

Conclusion:

- 1. No one has to be lost.
 - a. God desires everyone to be saved, 2 Pet. 3:9.
 - b. God gave his Son as a sacrifice so mankind could be saved, 2 Cor. 5:21; John 3:16.
 - c. Abiding in the Gospel (grace and truth) of Jesus Christ will save one's soul, Rom. 1:16; John 1:17.
- 2. Those who cross the threshold of death and find themselves in torment with the rich man do not want their family members to follow them to their doom, too.

- a. Family religion (i.e., “Good enough for ma & pa, good enough for me”) is woefully inadequate if it is not pure and faithful Christianity.
- b. From the grave, departed loved ones painfully desire to plead with their families not to follow them to a devil’s hell.

Invitation:

1. Only obeying the Gospel will save one’s soul and prepare him for eternity, Rom. 6:17; Heb. 5:8-9; Rom. 12:1-2.
2. **Jesus said** that he who believes and is baptized shall be saved, Mark 16:16.
3. **Jesus said** that he who is faithful when he dies will receive a crown of everlasting life, Rev. 2:10; John 6:27.

Seven Great Things

Matthew 18:1-4

Thesis: To ponder truly great things.

Introduction:

1. Men are interested in *great* things.
 - a. Even the disciples of our Lord were concerned about who among them was the greatest, Matt. 18:1-4; 20:20-28.
 - b. Formerly, men cataloged the seven wonders of the ancient world, i.e. the *greatest wonders* (the Colossus on the island of Rhodes, Temple of Artemis or Diana at Ephesus, Nebuchadnezzar's Hanging Gardens of Babylon, Pharos or Lighthouse of Alexander, Pyramids at Giza, Statue of Zeus, Mausoleum of Halicarnassus in Asia Minor).
2. Man's concept of *great* and *greatest* hardly compares with God's concept of *great* and *greatest*.
 - a. Man usually thinks exclusively of things that directly affect his personal life or excite awe within him.
 - b. God thinks on a higher and spiritual plane.

Body:

I. The soul is man's greatest possession.

- A. The soul never dies.
 1. Though one's body dies, his soul yet lives, Matt. 22:32.
 2. After death, a soul simply changes its habitation from the human body to the custody of God, Ecc. 12:7.
- B. Nothing by itself and not the combination of the world and everything in it can equal the value of a single soul.
 1. Jesus posed a rhetorical question to emphasize the incomparable worth of a single soul, Matt. 16:26.
 2. Our Lord also gave an example of pursuing earthly riches instead of spiritual wealth, Luke 12:16-21.
 3. The apostle Paul warned of the love of money, 1 Tim. 6:10.
- C. The greatest tragedy is the loss of any soul.

1. The ungodly will be consigned to eternal punishment following the Judgment, Matt. 25:46.
2. Compounding the loss of some souls, they will sincerely believe they were followers of Jesus when they were not, Matt. 7:21-23.

II. Sin is the greatest injustice.

- A. Physical death is the consequence of Adam and Eve's sins that has been passed to every living thing, Rom. 5:12.
- B. Sin, unresolved, will lead souls to spiritual death or eternal separation from God, Rom. 6:23; 2 Thess. 1:7-9.

III. The Gospel is the greatest power.

- A. The Gospel is the power of God that saves souls, Rom. 1:16; 1 Cor. 1:18, 24; Jam. 1:21.
- B. The Gospel or Word of God is described as a two-edged sword (a defensive and an offensive weapon), Heb. 4:12.

IV. The blood of Jesus Christ is the greatest remedy.

- A. There is no remission of sins without blood, Heb. 9:22.
- B. Only the blood of Jesus Christ can take away sins, Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:14; Rev. 1:5; Acts 20:28; Heb. 9:11-12.
- C. That blood is applied to penitent souls by being baptized into the death of Christ, where he shed his blood, John 19:34; Rom. 6:3-5.

V. Love is the greatest principle.

- A. Whereas faith and hope one day will be replaced with eternal reality in heaven for the righteous, love is the greatest and eternal, 1 Cor. 13:13.
- B. Love is now the Christian's badge of discipleship, John 13:34-35; Heb. 13:1; 1 Pet. 2:17.

VI. The Lord's church is the greatest institution.

- A. The Lord's church is the greatest institution on the planet because it was purchased with the most precious commodity — the blood of the Son of God, Acts 20:28.
- B. The Lord's church is the greatest institution because Jesus Christ is the founder and head of it, Matt. 16:18; Eph. 1:22-23; 5:23; Col. 1:18.
- C. Consequently, the Lord's church as the greatest mission — the Great Commission, Matt. 28:18-20.

VII. Final Judgment will be the greatest event.

- A. Final Judgment will come to pass for every soul who ever lived.
 - 1. The Judgment is certain, Heb. 9:27; Acts 17:30-31.
 - 2. The Judgment cannot be avoided, Rev. 6:15-16.
 - 3. The Judgment will be universal and the deeds of each person's life will be reviewed by God, 2 Cor. 5:10; Ecc. 12:13-14.
- B. God will render a decision and select an eternity for each soul.
 - 1. The Judgment will be personal and each person's conduct will be compared to what Jesus authorized, John 12:48.
 - 2. The Judgment will be permanent; there will be no appeal, Rev. 20:11-15; Matt. 7:21-23.

Conclusion:

- 1. The greatest pursuit in this life is to be a baptized believer and member of the church for which Jesus died and for which he will return someday, John 14:1-3.
- 2. The greatest pursuit eternally is preparation made on earth so that one may spend his or her eternity in heaven, Heb. 11:10.

Invitation:

- 1. Are the great things as God counts greatness the great things of your life, or have you allowed comparatively unimportant matters to obscure what really matters in life and eternity?
- 2. Unbaptized believers need to be immersed in water for the forgiveness of their sins, Acts 22:16.
- 3. Erring Christians need to acknowledge their sins, repent and pray for the forgiveness of their sins, Acts 8:22; 1 John 1:9.

The Goodness and Severity of God

Romans 11:22

Thesis: To emphasize the dual attributes of God versus the tendency to declare only the love of God.

Song: *There's a Great Day Coming*

Introduction:

1. Our God is not only a God of terror, punishment and judgment.
2. Our God is not only a God of love, grace and mercy.
3. Our God is a God of terror, punishment and judgment as well as a God of love, grace and mercy.

Body:

I. The Bible uniformly represents God as a God of goodness and severity.

- A. The goodness and severity of God in the context of Rom. 11:22 pertains to the expulsion of Jews from recognition as the people of God and the opportunity of Gentiles to be recognized by God as the people of God.
 1. The severity of God is represented by the expulsion of disobedient Jews from the kingdom of God.
 2. The goodness of God is represented by the inclusion of Gentiles in the kingdom of God.
 3. Albert Barnes remarks regarding the goodness of God toward the Gentiles, “The **benevolence** or mercy of God toward you in admitting you to his favor” (emphasis added, *ler*).
 4. Even the goodness or benevolence of God toward the Gentiles is conditional and may be replaced with the severity of God in response to human disobedience.
- B. God has always been a jealous and vengeful God toward the disobedient.
 1. The famed Ten Commandments denote this attribute of God, Exod. 20:5.

2. God still punishes desertion, Heb. 10:22-31.
 3. God still punishes disobedience, 2 Thess. 1:7-9.
- C. However, God has always exhibited an unsurpassed love for mankind.
1. Our God was interested in the spiritual and eternal welfare of humanity even when mankind was unaware or cared little about his own sinful and lost condition, Rom. 5:8; John 3:16; 1 John 4:9-10.
 2. God loved mankind first, 1 John 4:19.
 3. God still rewards obedience, Heb. 5:8-9.

II. God's servants must preach God's message, in which both the goodness and severity of God is represented.

- A. God's preachers and teachers have an obligation to God to present all of God's Word.
1. Proclaimers of the Gospel must keep back nothing, but present "the whole counsel of God" ASV, Acts 20:20, 27.
 2. Preachers and teachers must present God's Word in all seasons and when its auditors want to hear it and when they do not want to hear it, 2 Tim. 4:1-4.
- B. Sometimes, the Word of God is cutting.
1. It is described as a sword with two edges, which cuts coming and going, Heb. 4:12.
 2. The Word of God cuts or pricks the very depths of the human heart, Acts 2:37; 7:51-54.
- C. Yet, the Word of God can be comforting.
1. The Word of God boosts hope for the faithful regarding the return of our Lord and the commencement of eternity, 1 Thess. 4:13-18.
 2. The Word of God provides the ultimate hope respecting the salvation of souls, Matt. 28:18-20.
 3. Both testaments afford the faithful child of God comfort and hope, Rom. 15:4.

III. The goodness and severity of God is illustrated by parental treatment of children.

- A. Sometimes a parent's treatment of his children is representative of the severity of God.
1. Parental discipline of children as well as God's discipline of humanity are both calculated to be in

- one's best interest, Heb. 12:5-11.
2. Discipline must be offense appropriate and not harsher than what is warranted, Eph. 6:4.
 3. Yet, sometimes punishment, especially under Old Testament Judaism was severe, Deut. 21:18-20.
- B. Sometimes a parent's treatment of his children is representative of the goodness or benevolence of God.
1. The apostle Paul compared his love for Christians in Thessalonica to the love of a nursing mother toward her baby, 1 Thess. 2:7.
 2. The apostle further exhorted or encouraged those Christians as a father exhorts or encourages his own children, 1 Thess. 2:11.
- C. In the family, the child's conduct determines how a child in a given instance will be treated.
1. Likewise, the goodness or benevolence of God blesses obedient souls, Rom. 6:17.
 2. The severity of God is reserved for disobedient souls, 2 Thess. 1:7-9.
 3. Faithful preachers and teachers of God's Word, then, must proclaim both the goodness and severity of God — "all the counsel of God."

Conclusion:

1. For instance, faithful preachers make no apology for preaching about the wrathful, vengeful God of Judgment.
2. Faithful preachers make no apology for preaching about a God of love, grace and mercy.
3. Faithful preachers make no apology for preaching about a Gospel that sometimes offends its hearers, Gal. 4:16.
4. Faithful preachers make no apology for preaching about a comforting Gospel.
5. Faithful preachers make no apology for preaching the whole counsel of God, whether or not its auditors appreciate it!

Invitation:

1. Faithful preachers of God make no apology for teaching the Bible's plan of salvation, found exclusively in the New Testament.
2. Hearing God's Word only, faith, repentance, professing Christ, immersion for the forgiveness of sins and Christian obedience

work together to save souls, Rom. 10:17; John 8:24; Acts 17:30; Rom. 10:9-10; Acts 22:16; Rev. 2:10.

3. Erring Christians need to repent and pray, Acts 8:22; 1 John 1:9.

The Body without the Spirit

James 2:26

Thesis: To biblically document the certainty of death as an ordinary piece of the puzzle in the ongoing human saga.

Introduction:

1. Human existence is bigger than merely one's habitation on planet earth for up to several decades.
2. Likewise, human existence is bigger than merely the spirit's dwelling in a mortal body for those decades.
3. The event that we call death is simply one ordinary piece of the puzzle in the ongoing human saga.
4. However, the time one's spirit inhabits his body on planet earth is of supreme importance.

Body:

- I. **Time spent on earth is a very small portion of one's existence.**
 - A. Through powers of observation, one can discern that a person may live minutes or hours after birth, or one may live an exceedingly long time compared to the typical lifespan of humans.
 1. All of us have read about babies who died shortly after birth or of young children who due to illness or injury did not survive to adulthood.
 2. Occasionally, news reports cite someone living, for instance, to the ripe old age of 114, etc.
 - B. Through the insight of God's Word (Bible), one can know what is the typical lifespan for humans.
 1. Anciently, according to the Bible (especially before the universal flood), mankind lived for hundreds of years in many instances, Gen. 5:27 (Methuselah 969 years).
 2. Ordinarily, though, mankind lives 70 or 80 years, Psa. 90:10.

- C. God's Word also teaches that one's life on earth is exceedingly little time compared to the timelessness of eternity during which mankind continues to exist.
 - 1. It is not knowable how long a soul may exist before it inhabits a mortal body, but God gives each body a soul, Ecc. 12:7.
 - 2. However, a soul departs the physical body at death, Jam. 2:26; Gen. 25:8; 35:18-19, 29.
 - 3. Crossing the threshold of death into eternity, each soul continues to exist forever in either of two eternities, Matt. 25:46.

II. There is more to the ongoing human saga than the comparatively little time one's spirit is in his mortal body.

- A. Human souls have not existed co-eternally with God, but they were created by God.
 - 1. The first chapter of the Bible refers to the Godhead collaborating to bring the human soul and the human body the soul inhabits into existence, Gen. 1:26-27.
 - 2. Humans, in either spirit or bodies with spirits, simply were not around when God created the universe, Job 38:4.
- B. Following one's earthly sojourn, his soul abides in the Hadean world of departed spirits.
 - 1. There, righteous souls abide in a compartment called "paradise" or "Abraham's bosom," Luke 16:22; 23:43.
 - 2. Unrighteous souls are conscious and inhabit a place of torment, Luke 16:23-25.
- C. Final judgment will occur at a time of God's own choosing, Matt. 24:36.
 - 1. Jesus will return — the Second Coming, John 14:1-3.
 - 2. The general resurrection of both the righteous and unrighteous will occur, John 5:28-29.
 - 3. The bodies of the living and the dead will be altered for eternal habitations, 1 Cor. 15:51-53.
 - 4. Final Judgment and the eternal disposition of souls will transpire, Rev. 20:11-15.

5. There can be no appeal of the final Judgment, Matt. 7:21-23.

III. What we call death is merely one steppingstone among many to eternity.

- A. Death is a certainty.
 1. Only two souls have escaped death — Enoch and Elijah, Gen. 5:24; 2 Kings 2:11.
 2. Our powers of observation and the daily obituary are an ever-present reminder of the certainty of death.
 3. The Bible also affirms the certainty of death, Heb. 9:27.
 4. Only those alive when Jesus returns will also escape the pain of death, 1 Thess. 4:13-18.
- B. Death is the threshold to eternity.
 1. Remember, death thrust both the beggar named Lazarus and the rich man into eternity, Luke 16:19-31.
 2. The apostle Paul welcomed death because he realized that death is the vehicle whereby he could go to be with Jesus, Phil. 1:21-24; 2 Cor. 5:1-6.
 3. Outside of biblical references to resurrections from the dead and medical resuscitations, death is a door that swings only one way.

IV. One's life on earth preceding death is an important steppingstone in the ongoing human saga.

- A. Throughout life, a soul learns about God.
 1. Mankind is afforded an opportunity in life to learn that God is our Creator and Lawgiver, 1 John 3:4.
 2. Throughout life, man learns how God wants to be worshipped and served.
 3. Further, man can learn how to be the beneficiary of God's spiritual blessings.
- B. Human existence on earth is probationary.
 1. The whole purpose of one's earthly existence is preparatory for final Judgment, Ecc. 12:13-14.
 2. Final Judgment will evaluate and prove to each soul whether he conformed to God's code for behavior, 2 Cor. 5:10.

- C. We all want to hear God say, “Well done thou good and faithful servant...enter thou into the joy of thy Lord,” Matt. 25:21.
1. However, all have sinned, Rom. 3:23.
 2. No one is sinless, but Jesus saves the obedient, Heb. 5:8-9.
 3. Jesus, though, will punish the disobedient, 2 Thess. 1:7-9.

Conclusion:

1. This life is not all there is.
2. Death is as certain as life itself.
3. Our souls return to the custody of God after death.
4. However, death is an ordinary event for which mankind can and desperately needs to prepare himself.

Invitation:

1. It is important to the Christian’s eternal welfare to acknowledge his own frailty and dependence on God for the eternal welfare of his soul, 1 John 1:8-9.
2. It is equally important for unimmersed believers to come to God on his terms to adequately prepare for the dawn of forever, Acts 2:38.

Noah Who Built to Save

Hebrews 11:7

Thesis: Noah was a builder who got the job done.

Introduction:

1. There are many Bible characters about which one can read in the Scriptures upon whom God could rely to do his bidding.
 - a. The Hebrews 11 “Hall of Fame of Faith” immortalizes several exemplary servants of God (e.g., Abel, Enoch, Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Rahab, Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthae, David, Samuel, etc.).
 - b. Noah is one valiant servant of God who by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit was inducted into the Bible’s Hall of Fame of Faith, Heb. 11:7.
2. Many exemplary Bible characters were builders for God who got the Job done.
 - a. One such builder for God that comes to mind is Nehemiah who rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem in record time under trying circumstances from within and without the Jewish city.
 - b. Noah, of course, also was a builder for God who got the job done under no less difficult state of affairs than what Nehemiah faced.

Body:

I. Noah built his life to save.

- A. A hideous and sinful contrast existed between the world that God had created and what it had become by the time of Noah.
 1. God concluded each creative action during Creation Week with the words, “It is good,” Gen. 1.
 2. Concluding Creation Week, God said, “It is very good,” Gen. 1:31.
 3. However, about 2,200 years later, God decided to destroy the world population of humans and animals due to widespread and great wickedness

- and violence, Gen. 6:5-7, 11-13.
- B. Noah, though, lived his life in such a way that God was pleased with him, Gen. 6:8-9.
1. Noah lived 600 years before the Universal Flood, Gen. 7:7.
 2. For 120 of those years, Noah was building the ark and as a preacher of righteousness was warning his fellowmen of the impending judgment of God (the flood), Gen. 6:3; 2 Pet. 2:5.
- C. Doing the math, for 480 years before God instructed Noah to build the ark, Noah lived righteously.
1. This means that for 480 years while the world around Noah was becoming increasingly wicked to the nth degree, Noah distinguished himself before God with his righteousness, so that God chose Noah to save a remnant of humanity and animal kind.
 2. This means that Noah broadened his responsibilities as a preacher of righteousness for the 120 years during the ark's construction.
 3. Flawed sometimes as every human's conduct is short of sinlessness (Gen. 9:20-21), yet Noah lived another 350 years after the flood for a total of 950 years in such a way as to have his name indelibly inscribed in the Scriptures' Hall of Faith, Gen. 9:28-29; Heb. 11:7.
- D. Nothing in Noah's long life distracted him from building his life to save himself and his family.
1. Certainly Noah experienced the same temptations that his peers experienced, yet Noah prevailed in righteousness.
 2. Certainly Noah had trials in his life as every human does.
 3. Certainly Noah was the special object of ridicule and jest for the different way in which he spoke, acted and worshipped, which ridicule and jest must have been intensified over the 120 years Noah built an ocean liner in his backyard.
 4. Certainly Noah's peers mocked and derided him

for proclaiming a divine judgment in the form of a flood when it may have never rained yet on the earth, Gen. 2:5-6.

5. Certainly all the world gathered around the ark for an outrageous, boisterous party for the seven days during which Noah, his family and representatives of the animal world huddled inside the belly of that huge ship while waiting for the rain to begin and the deep fountains to be broken, Gen. 7:4, 10-11.
- E. Noah saved himself and his family, Heb. 11:7.
1. One might not think that Noah was very effective either in his godly living or his righteous preaching since only eight souls were saved, 1 Pet. 3:20; 2 Pet. 2:5.
 2. However, how vibrant would the Lord's church be if every head of the family saved himself and his wife plus saved his children and their spouses?
 3. Noah built his life to save himself, his family and his peers, had they been willing to regard his righteous life and preaching.

II. Noah built the ark to save.

- A. Exactly what did Noah build?
1. Noah built a floating zoo, 300 X 50 X 30 cubits (a cubit was about 18 inches, 450'L X 75'W X 45'H).
 2. The volume of the ark was 1,500,000 cubic feet, and it could carry 24,000 tons or the equivalent of 600 railroad boxcars.
 3. The ark was not built for travel or even navigation, but for bobbing and could resist 200-foot high waves.
 4. All it had to do was survive a Universal Flood!
- B. Noah was about 480 years old when God instructed him to begin building the ark.
1. That was about 20 years before the first of his three sons was born, when Noah was 500-years-old, Gen. 5:32.
 2. Therefore, for about 35 years of the 120 years Noah worked on the ark he did not have the benefit of his children helping him on that awesome

- undertaking.
- 3. When each of Noah and Mrs. Noah's three children were born to their family, Noah and his wife (a reasonable presumption) had already invested decades of their lives into the construction of the ark.
- 4. Noah and his wife successfully incorporated their three children, and eventually their three children's wives, into both the righteousness characteristic of the Noah family as well into their divinely appointed epic building project.
- 5. Noah built the ark to save his soul, his wife's soul and the souls of his children and their wives.
- C. Noah built the ark to save a remnant both of humanity and animal life.
 - 1. Noah and his family is all that stood between the extinction of the whole human race (and the entire animal world), for God had determined to erase all wickedness and violence from his physical universe.
 - 2. Only the righteousness of one man and his influence over his family saved the human experiment.
- D. Noah built the ark to save the righteous.
 - 1. That Noah followed the explicit instructions of God for the building of the ark amounted to a 120 year test of his faith and the righteousness of Noah.
 - 2. Noah did everything exactly like God told him to do, Gen. 6:14-16, 22; 7:5.

III. Indirectly, Noah condemned the world when he built his life and when he built the ark, Heb. 11:7.

- A. Noah built a life on divinely instilled principles.
 - 1. He rigidly conformed his life to the will of God.
 - 2. By the way in which Noah lived his life, he implicitly condemned the contrary way that everyone else lived their lives — out of harmony with the will of God.
- B. Noah built the ark according to the divine pattern given him by God.

1. He hearkened to the authority of Almighty God respecting God's determination to destroy the world and God's charge to Noah build the ark the way God specified.
2. When Noah and his family boarded the ark, they implicitly condemned everyone on the planet who did not get on the ark with them.
3. The indirect, implicit condemnation by Noah of the rest of the world was validated when God brought the universal deluge on the ungodly world.

IV. Application.

- A. Each of us needs to ask himself, "Am I building my life to save my soul and the souls of those who are around me?"
 1. Is there a vivid contrast between the way in which we Christians live our lives and the way sinners all around us live their lives?
 2. Remember, Noah's righteousness was reminiscent of the world after Creation Week when God said, "It is very good"; whereas the people of Noah's day were very wicked.
 3. Under ideal conditions, the human lifespan is 70 to 80 years, Psa. 90:10; Noah lived 950 years, most of which were lived righteously — how are we doing?
 4. Nothing distracted Noah from the path of righteousness; what is distracting you or me from the path of righteousness?
 5. Noah saved himself and his family; how are we doing in that department?
- B. Each of us needs to ask himself, "Am I building the spiritual ark — the church — today, or am I diminishing the greatest institution this earth has ever known?"
 1. The mission God gave Noah was huge, but do-able with the help of God, Phil. 4:13.
 2. Are we part of the problem or part of the solution for the success of the Lord's church today?
 3. Are we helping people enter the contemporary ark

- the church — or are we hindering our fellows finding the salvation of God?
4. Are we part of the remnant of righteous souls in our generation; are we righteous by God’s standard of righteousness?
- C. Each of us needs to ask himself, “Does my life of righteousness indirectly condemn sinfulness around me, or does my life more nearly harmonize with the ungodly world in which I live?”
1. Do we build our lives on divinely instilled principles like Noah did; do we rigidly conform to the will of God like Noah did?
 2. If so, like Noah, we implicitly condemn the contrary way that everyone else lives their lives — out of harmony with the will of God.
 3. Is the divine pattern as important to us as it was to Noah when he built the ark like God instructed him; what we do with God’s patterns in religion reveals our attitudes toward the authority of God.
 4. When you and I do things religiously and in the home like God through the Bible tells us, we implicitly condemn everyone else on the planet who does not abide in the Word of God.
 5. Our indirect, implicit condemnation of the ungodly world will be validated one day when God’s judgment of fire comes, 2 Pet. 3:9-10; 2 Thess. 1:7-9.

Conclusion:

1. The way in which Noah lived his life was unique compared to almost the entire world population.
2. Christians are supposed to be unique also when contrasted with the wickedness of the world in which we live, Titus 2:14; 1 Pet. 2:9.
3. Are we, like the names inscribed in the Bible’s Hall of Fame of Faith those upon whom God can rely to do his bidding?
4. Are we, like Noah, builders for God who can get the job done?

Invitation:

1. Noah built to save; whom are you saving?
2. One saves himself by building a Christian life, which begins by

being “baptized into Christ,” Gal. 3:27.

3. One contributes to the salvation of others by recovering erring Christians and evangelizing the lost, Jam. 5:19-20; Mark 16:15-16.

Little Wise Things: The Ant

Proverbs 30:24-28

Thesis: To learn to emulate true wisdom wherever it may be found, in this case, from the ant.

Song: *Work, for the Night Is Coming*

Introduction:

1. Scripture only refers to the ant twice, but in each instance, it is held forth as a creature worthy of imitation by the children of God, Prov. 6:6; 30:25.
 - a. Each context portrays the ant as “wise” and a creature that makes appropriate preparation for the future.
 - b. Through divine inspiration, the apostle Paul condemned worldly wisdom to which mankind often appeals, 1 Cor. 1:18-31; 3:18-20.
 - c. The apostle also taught that God appointed base and weak things to refute worldly wisdom and impart true wisdom, 1 Cor. 1:27-28.
2. Lessons, however, that the Bible ascribes to the lowly ant occur in numerous passages throughout the Bible.
 - a. The words “wise” and “wisdom” appear 499 times.
 - b. “Humility” and “faithful service” also occur often throughout the Bible.

Body:

I. “Are a people not strong,” Prov. 30:25.

- A. The word “people” suggests that ants are united, whereas the two contexts that name ants note that they are united in *purpose*.
 1. Christians are also a “people” or special group of persons united in purpose, 1 Pet. 2:9.
 2. The purpose by which Christians are united is the “like precious faith,” 2 Pet. 1:1.
 3. Faithful Christians walk by this faith and trust in it, which is the Gospel of Christ, for their salvation, 2 Cor. 5:7; Rom. 1:16.
 4. Man’s primary purpose in this life is acquisition of

salvation for himself, non-Christians and erring Christians, Phil. 2:12; Mark 16:15-16; Jam. 5:19-20.

5. The correct and overriding purpose of anyone's life is preparation for eternity, and in this age that requires seeking Jesus and his kingdom first, Ecc. 12:13-14; Matt. 6:33.

B. Christians have the only legitimate rallying point for unity — the Bible alone!

1. Christians must content themselves to “speak as the oracles of God,” 1 Pet. 4:11.
2. We as God's people need to be “Bible quot'n, Bible tot'n” to ensure we enjoy a continued biblical unity.
3. We need to search “book, chapter and verse” for “thus saith the Lord” answers to all religious matters, and we must be “silent where the Bible is silent.”
4. Abandonment of Bible authority and rallying around the current fad or unscriptural innovation has always disrupted biblical unity and been ruinous to God's people.

C. “Not strong” does not equate to “weakness.”

1. Old Testament Israel was not strong enough to displace the nations of Canaan, but God enabled Israel to prevail, Deut. 4:38; 7:1; 9:1-3.
2. Likewise, we can prevail despite human weakness, if we rely on Jesus Christ, Phil. 4:13.
3. Real weakness, especially for a child of God, is relying on oneself instead of relying on Jesus Christ for strength.
4. Remember, one plus God equals a majority!

II. “Yet they prepare their meat in the summer,” Prov. 30:25.

A. “Prepare.”

1. Like the ants of Proverbs 6:6-8 and 30:25, the children of God must also make preparation for the future.
2. The primary preparation anyone needs to make concerns the salvation of his own soul.

3. Jesus is in heaven preparing a place for the prepared, John 14:1-3; Heb. 11:16.
 4. Therefore, it behooves mankind to prepare itself for the return of the Lord, 2 Tim. 2:21; Amos 4:12.
 5. Heaven is a prepared place for a prepared people!
- B. "Prepare their meat."
1. Ants demonstrate industry, ambition and responsibility.
 2. Without overseers or foremen, ants diligently work to provide for their future, Prov. 6:6-8.
 3. They take responsibility for their own well being.
 4. Likewise, Christians need to accept similar responsibility for their physical and spiritual well being, 2 Thess. 3:10; 1 Tim. 5:8; Matt. 6:33; John 6:27.
- C. "Yet they prepare their meat in the summer."
1. There is an air of urgency respecting the summertime harvest in preparation for the upcoming stark winter.
 2. There comes a time beyond which neither ants nor men can labor.
 3. Jesus viewed his personal ministry with urgency respecting limited opportunity, John 9:4.
 4. Every Christian must also work diligently with a sense of urgency and limited opportunity during which he may labor for the Lord, Rom. 13:10-11; Eph. 5:16.

Conclusion:

1. Where can man turn to learn about true wisdom?
 - a. Though man is prone to appeal to his own intellect and the thoughts of fellow men, worldly wisdom is sadly deficient; it is foolishness to God, 1 Cor. 1:20.
 - b. Rather, God prefers that his children turn to the baser or humbler sources of wisdom, 1 Cor. 1:27-28.
 - c. The lowly ant, for instance, is humble creature from which one can learn true wisdom.
2. The ant, without a supervisor, does its duty and the ant does it with a sense of urgency!

- a. Christians ought to do everything as though they were doing it for the Lord personally, Col. 3:22-24.
- b. Christians are to feverishly labor as though they were making up for lost time and wasted moments, Col. 4:5; Eph. 5:16.

Invitation:

1. Though weakly creatures, all men can become strong through Jesus Christ and the Word of God, Phil. 4:13; Acts 20:32.
2. Non-Christians who would enjoy forgiveness of sins must rely on divine wisdom over worldly wisdom, Acts 22:16.
3. Erring Christians know better than to rely on themselves, Jer. 10:23.

Temptation to Sin

James 1:12-15

Thesis: Examination of temptation to sin.

Song: *Tempted and Tried*

Introduction:

1. The definitions for the words “tempt” (peirazo) and “temptation” (peirasmos) depend on their uses in the contexts in which they appear.
2. The word “tempt” means to try, attempt or test, and it may be used in a good sense or referring to enticement to sin.
 - a. Life is a test, which if we successfully negotiate, we are made stronger, Heb. 2:18.
 - b. Enticement to sin can be withstood, Heb. 4:15; Matt. 4:1; 16:1; 19:3; 22:18, 35; John 8:6; Gal. 6:1.
3. The word “temptation” means trials and may be used in a good sense or referring to enticement to sin.
 - a. Trials of life help one develop patience and prove one’s faith, Jam. 1:2-3; 1 Pet. 1:6-7; 4:12.
 - b. Enticement to sin are trials that especially against which the Christian must persevere, Matt. 6:13; Luke 11:4; Matt. 26:41; 1 Cor. 10:13; Luke 4:13; 8:13; 1 Tim. 6:9.
4. There are three ways through which temptation to sin occurs, 1 John 2:15-17.

Body:

- I. Several passages attest to the problem of temptation to sin.**
 - A. Satan tempts people to sin.**
 1. Satan tempted the first pair in the Garden of Eden, Gen. 3.
 2. Satan made a special effort to tempt Jesus Christ at the beginning of our Lord’s ministry, Matt. 4:1.
 3. Satan tempted Judas to betray Jesus, Luke 22:3-4.
 4. Satan stalks his victims, 1 Pet. 5:8.
 5. Satan looks for a way to take advantage of us, 2 Cor. 2:11.
 6. Satan disguises himself to look like a servant of

God or uses someone who is a servant of God, 2 Cor. 11:14-15.

- B. Human weakness allows temptation to result in sin.
 - 1. A war between what we ought to do and sin war within each of us, Matt. 26:41; Rom. 7:19-20, 23; Gal. 5:17; Jam. 4:1
 - 2. James 1:12-15 explains the relationship between enticement to sin and sin.
 - 3. We must be careful not to allow Satan a foothold in our lives, Eph. 4:27.
 - 4. Even the so-called little sins in which we may indulge are as spiritually lethal as any other sin, Rom. 6:23; Rev. 21:8.

II. Several passages also reveal how temptations to sin can be resisted.

- A. God is willing and able to deliver us from temptation to sin.
 - 1. God delivers the godly from sin and will punish the ungodly, 2 Pet. 2:9.
 - 2. God promises a way of escape from temptation to sin, 1 Cor. 10:13.
 - 3. God promises to keep those who keep his Word, Rev. 3:10.
- B. Familiarity, with God's Word can preserve us from temptation to sin.
 - 1. Jesus quoted Scripture when resisting the devil, Matt. 4:1ff.
 - 2. Knowledge and understanding of God's Word enables one to make the right choices in life, Prov. 2:11-12.
 - 3. Mature Christians are more able to discern between good and evil, Heb. 6:14.
 - 4. Putting on the whole armor of God is the best defense against Satan, Eph. 6:11-17.
- C. One must be **determined** to resist temptation to succeed.
 - 1. One must have personal resolve or will power to resist temptation, Matt. 26:41.
 - 2. Steadfastness in the faith enables one to resist the devil, 1 Pet. 5:8-9; Psa. 119:101.

3. Submission to God helps one resist the devil, Jam. 4:7.

Conclusion:

1. The devil is out to get us!

2. However, it is not a sin to be tempted.
 - a. Jesus was tempted, yet he did not succumb to temptation, 1 Pet. 2:21-22.
 - b. Sin does not occur until temptation through lust is allowed to be fulfilled, Jam. 1:12-15.
3. Human weaknesses can be shielded from temptation.
 - a. If we resist, the devil will flee, Jam. 4:7.
 - b. The Gospel armor can protect us, Eph. 6:11-17.
 - c. God will provide a way of escape from temptation, 1 Cor. 10:13.

Invitation:

1. In addition to protection from temptation, amazingly, God will forgive penitent souls who have succumbed to temptation anyway.
2. Erring Christians can be restored, Acts 8:22.
3. Those outside Christ can be forgiven of their sins as well, Mark 16:16.

The Nature of Truth

John 12:48

Thesis: To emphasize that the Bible alone is the only infallible Truth by which humanity either will be exonerated or condemned ultimately.

Introduction:

1. In a conversation with Jesus, Pilate scoffed at the idea of absolute truth, John 18:37-38.
 - a. However, truth is absolute!
 - b. Truth is not relative or subjective!
 - c. Truth does not change with changing times or with the rise of a new generation.
2. Contemporary religions and people in general often depend on the notion that there is no absolute truth and that everything is subjective.
 - a. Religious people suppose that one church is just as good as another and that one doctrine is just as good as another.
 - b. Worldly people live by the motto, “If it feels good, do it!”
 - c. Sometimes, even God’s people act like truth is not absolute, Judges 17:6; 21:25.
3. The Bible defines itself as absolute truth.
 - a. God’s Truth outlives generations of men, Psa. 100:5.
 - b. The Word of God — Truth — is immortal, Isa. 40:8; Matt. 24:35; 1 Pet. 1:23, 25.

Body:

- I. **The New Testament portrays eternal Truth as possessing the power of salvation.**
 - A. The Great Commission is the vehicle by which God’s Truth can save a lost world, Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16; Luke 24:46-47.
 - B. God’s Truth alone when applied to lost a soul can make one free from sin, John 8:31-32.
 - C. The apostles were equipped with God’s Truth whereby souls could be saved, John 16:13; Acts 1:8.
 - D. God’s Truth is complete and the final word on whatever

it addresses, i.e. salvation, worship, Christian living, Christian service, etc., 2 Tim. 3:16-17; Jude 3; 2 Pet. 1:3.

II. It was necessary for people in the first century to obey divine Truth to be saved by it.

- A. One obeys Jesus Christ when he obeys the Truth or Word of God, Heb. 5:8-9; Matt. 7:21-23; Luke 6:46.
- B. Obedience is inclusive in the following instructions relative to salvation; one must:
 - 1. Hearken to God's Word alone, Rom. 10:17.
 - 2. Develop a Bible faith, Heb. 11:6.
 - 3. Repent or turn from one's sins, Acts 17:30; Luke 13:3.
 - 4. Publicly acknowledge one's confidence that Jesus is the Christ or Messiah, Matt. 10:32-33; Rom. 10:9-10.
 - 5. Submit to immersion in water for the forgiveness of sins, Acts 2:41; 22:16; 1 Pet. 3:21.
 - 6. Remain faithful, Rev. 2:10.
- C. In order for Truth to save anyone in the first century, people had to **do something!**
 - 1. About 3,000 on the birthday of the church gladly received the Word of Truth and were baptized and added to the church by the Lord, Acts 2:37-41, 47.
 - 2. The message of the second recorded Gospel sermon was the same as the message of the first recorded Gospel sermon — repent and be converted, Acts 3:19.
 - 3. A great company of Jewish priests was "obedient to the faith" once they realized that Judaism was no longer authorized by God, Acts 6:7.
 - 4. The Samaritans believed the Word of Truth preached to them and "were baptized, both men and women," Acts 8:5-13.
 - 5. The Ethiopian treasurer was baptized after he was taught the Gospel Truth, Acts 8:26-39.
 - 6. Saul of Tarsus (later the apostle Paul) washed away his sins in baptism, Acts 22:16.
 - 7. Crispus, chief ruler of a synagogue, believed the Truth about Jesus and was baptized, Acts 18:8.

8. Citizens of Rome became obedient to the faith and became citizens of the church of Christ, Rom. 1:5; 16:16, 26.
9. Gentiles “obeyed from the heart” the doctrine or Truth of God, Rom. 6:17.
10. First century people were required to practice or do the Word of God or Truth, Jam. 1:22-25.
11. First century people were exhorted to keep the Word of God and not make any changes to it, Rev. 1:3; 22:18-19.

D. Truth does not save by faith only, Jam. 2:24.

III. There was a worldwide departure from eternal, saving Truth.

- A. The apostle Paul repeatedly warned of a great departure from Truth, Acts 20:28-30; 1 Tim. 4:1-3; 2 Thess. 2:1-12; Gal. 1:6-9.
- B. Secular history chronicles the gradual departure from primitive Christianity.
- C. Today, thousands of so-called Christian churches evidence a great departure from the Truth by doctrines that are contradictory with each other and contradictory to the simple Truth on the pages of the New Testament.

IV. Each generation that has access to the Bible has the power to be saved by Truth.

- A. The Parable of the Sower illustrates the possibility of the Truth springing forth in any heart in any generation.
 1. When the seed, which is the Word of God or Gospel Truth, is planted in good soil, hearts of men, Christians and the Lord’s church will be the sole result, Luke 8:11.
 2. God preserved the Word of God — the Bible — for us, whereby we can plant the “seed” and grow Christians and congregations of the Lord’s church.
- B. Therefore, we can:
 1. Preach the same Gospel Truth preached in the first century.
 2. Believe the same Gospel Truth believed in the first century.
 3. Obey the same Gospel Truth.

4. Forasmuch as we live in the same religious time period — Christian Age — and God is no respecter of persons, we can do what first century people did and be saved by Bible Truth, Rom. 2:11; Acts 10:34.

V. We ought to pursue divine Truth today.

- A. We have access to the Truth whereby we can glorify God, prepare to go to heaven and save lost souls.
- B. If we refuse or neglect to pursue divine Truth today, we might as well say with others that “God is dead,” “Jesus Christ is not risen,” “The Bible is a dead letter” and have no hope in this life or in eternity.

Conclusion:

1. There is a body of saving Truth — the Bible.
2. Mankind has departed from that Truth.
3. Obedience to the Truth (or disobedience to the Truth) determines where one will spend his eternity.

Invitation:

1. Jesus said, “And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free,” John 8:32.
2. Have you been obedient to the Truth, culminating in baptism for the remission of your sins, Acts 2:38; Rom. 6:17?
3. If so, are you still obedient to the Truth that is able to save your soul, Heb. 5:8-9?

Unity

Ephesians 4:3-6, 11-14

Thesis: To examine the means by which God's people may attain true unity.

Song: *The Church's One Foundation*

Introduction:

1. Unity **is not** a commodity that can be purchased at some local retail store, and its not available wholesale, either.
2. Further, unity **is not** as much a **goal** as it is the **result** of something.
3. Biblical unity is the result of establishing and maintaining a fellowship with God and a fellowship with those who are in fellowship with God.
4. This fellowship, and hence unity, is dependent upon completely molding our lives by the Word of God only.

Body:

I. Biblical Definition of the Word "Unity."

- A. The English word "unity" appears only three times in the KJV, Psa. 133:1; Eph. 4:3, 13.
 1. The Greek word for unity (henotas) appears only in Ephesians and means "oneness, unity, unanimity, agreement, a unit."
 2. The root word from which "unity" comes is used by Jesus in Matt. 19:5-6 regarding marriage to the teach oneness of a couple united by matrimony.
- B. "Unity of the Spirit" appears in Eph. 4:3.
 1. This unity attributable to and originating with the Holy Spirit directly relates to and includes the seven "ones" following in Eph. 4:4-6.
 2. Unity in the first century was first accomplished by means of miraculously endowed workers and partial revelations, Eph. 4:11; 1 Cor. 13:8-13,
 3. The "unity of the Spirit" (v. 3) and "unity of the faith" (v. 13) provided for the perfecting of the saints, the work of the ministry, the edification of

the church and the protection of the church from doctrinal error, Eph. 4:12, 14.

- C. Today, this unity is now accomplished through the written, revealed, preserved Word of God, Eph. 4:13; 1 Cor. 13:8-13; Jam. 1:25; 2 Tim. 3:16-17.
 - 1. In our day, the “unity of the Spirit” is accomplished solely through the “unity of the faith,” the Word of God.
 - 2. The Bible is central to and the exclusive ingredient to biblical unity and fellowship.
 - 3. In other words, biblical unity does not occur in spite of the Word of God, but biblical unity occurs as a consequence of conforming to the Word of God, Rom. 6:17; 12:1-2;

II. Other Passages That Teach About Unity.

- A. Unity among brethren was desirable in Old Testament times as well.
 - 1. Unity among brethren is pleasant, Psa. 133:1.
 - 2. God hates discord between brethren, Prov. 6:16-19.
- B. God desires and expects unity among brethren in the Lord’s church.
 - 1. Unity was prophesied of the church long before it was founded, Isa. 52:8.
 - 2. Jesus prayed for a spiritual oneness or unity among his followers, John 17:20-21.
- C. The early church was repeatedly exhorted to be of one mind.
 - 1. First century brethren were to have the same mind toward each other, Rom. 12:16; 15:5.
 - 2. Being of like mind toward each other enabled first century brethren to glorify God as though they had but one mouth, Rom. 15:6.
 - 3. Being of the same mind enables brethren to speak the same thing, 1 Cor. 1:10.
 - 4. Being of the same mind permits brethren to dwell together in peace, 2 Cor. 13:11.
 - 5. One-mindedness enables brethren to successfully promote the Gospel of Christ, Phil. 1:27.
 - 6. Being of the same mind demonstrates that brethren

love each other, Phil. 2:2; 1 Pet. 3:8, whereas non-doctrinal disagreements among brethren indicates a lack of same-mindedness and a lack of love for each other, Phil. 4:2.

- D. All of God's children are made one in Christ, in the body of Christ.
 - 1. Many members are one body in Christ, Rom. 12:5; 1 Cor. 12:12
 - 2. As the one body, Christians partake the one bread, 1 Cor. 10:17.
 - 3. Jesus Christ is the key by which many members can be one, Gal. 3:28, irrespective of our differences, Eph. 2:14.
- E. The first century church practiced a singleness of heart and practiced Christianity with one accord.
 - 1. Disciples of our Lord resorted to a unanimous mind while awaiting the birthday of the church, which occurred in Acts Two, Acts 1:14; 2:1.
 - 2. Single mindedness by early church resulted in unbounded benevolence toward each other, Acts 4:32.
 - 3. The early church prospered as long as they continued in one accord, Acts 5:12.
- F. Both Old and New Testament passages refer to unity as being "knit together."
 - 1. On a particular occasion, all of Israel was "knit together" against a certain wickedness, Judges 20:11.
 - 2. Paul desired that the brethren among whom he labored with the Gospel to be "knit together in love," Col. 2:2.

III. The first century church sometimes experienced problems practicing unity.

- A. Sometimes the early church was cautioned to practice unity, 1 Cor. 1:10-13.
- B. Other times the first century church was warned **not** to practice unity.
 - 1. Unity must be denied to impenitent false teachers, Rom. 16:17-18; 1 John 4:1; 2 John 9-11.

2. Christians are forbidden to maintain fellowship with immoral brethren, 1 Cor. 5:9.
 3. Christians are cautioned about attempting to attain unity with non-Christians, 2 Cor. 6:14-17.
- C. Disrupting unity among God's people in the first century was a grave offence, 3 John 9-10; Titus 1:9-11.
1. Unity in the early church was threatened by false Gospels, Gal. 1:6-9; Jude 3; Phil. 1:17.
 2. Unity was further threatened by the lack of knowledge of God's Word, Hos. 4:6; Heb. 5:12-14; 2 Tim. 2:15; 1 Pet. 2:2.

IV. Sometimes in modern history, the Lord's church has experienced difficulty practicing unity.

- A. The churches of Christ and the Christian Church split into separate fellowships over Bible authority.
1. The crisis over hermeneutics or biblical interpretation (Bible authority) manifested in the introduction of mechanical instrumental music into worship and missionary societies.
 2. The U.S. Census of 1906 recognized the division between the churches of Christ and the Christian Church, though the division occurred on a congregation-by-congregation basis from the latter 1800's through the early 1900's.
- B. *Where The Saints Meet* (1987-88) demonstrates that 25% of the over 13,000 congregations in this country practice a variant doctrine.
1. Nearly 2,000 congregations are listed as anti or non-institutional churches.
 2. Over 1,000 congregations are listed as anti or non-class churches.
 3. There are 101 pre-millennial churches of Christ.
 4. There are 45 "progressive spirit" or ecumenical churches of Christ.
 5. There are 6 AD 70 congregations.
 6. Two congregations baptize only in the name of Jesus.
 7. One congregation professes to baptize in the Holy Spirit.

8. One congregation observes the communion on Saturday night.
- C. Several additional serious departures have ruptured or threaten to rupture unity among God's people over the past several decades.
1. The discipling ministries (originally called Crossroadism & later called the Boston Church movement and now the International Churches of Christ) have divided hundreds of congregations and siphoned off tens of thousands of our church members.
 2. Many churches of Christ embrace theological liberalism to some degree (e.g., grace only, women praying, teaching, and preaching before men, women waiting on the Lord's Table, divorce and remarriage, authority of elders, perverted translations of the Bible, proposed merger with the Christian church, etc.).
- D. The vast majority of the churches of Christ today appear not to be enthusiastically practicing the Christianity to which they give lip service.
1. Apathy and indifference are widespread among the churches of Christ in western nations.
 2. Since the church is reluctant to police itself, in many congregations immoral members and delinquent members continue to bring reproach upon the Lord's church.
 3. Evangelism is only meagerly practiced in most of the communities in which the Lord's church meets.
 4. An increasing number of preachers and elders also guilty of adultery and fornication.

Conclusion:

1. There is no **quick fix** for the lack of unity among God's people.
2. "Biblical unity" is the result of establishing and maintaining a fellowship with God and a fellowship with those who are in fellowship with God.
3. This fellowship, hence unity, revolves around the Word of God in our lives.

4. Only the Word of God can give us the knowledge whereby we can exercise ourselves as a unit, one people, many members of the one body, possessing the same mind.
5. We are told in Scripture that a divided kingdom cannot stand, and further, that we cannot walk together unless we be agreed, Mark 3:24-25; Amos 3:3.
6. Brethren, may we speedily acquire and always maintain a “like precious faith,” 2 Pet. 1:1.

Invitation:

1. We acquire personal faith from practicing the faith, 2 Cor. 5:7, Rom. 10:17.
2. Accountable souls were called upon on the birthday of the church to repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, Acts 2:38.
3. The Gospel urges erring children of God to acknowledge their sins to receive forgiveness, 1 John 1:9.

It's About Time

Ephesians 5:15-17

Thesis: To encourage one another to make an investment of themselves and their time in the work of the local church.

Songs: *Why Stand Ye Idle?, Take My Life and Let It Be, Must I Go Empty Handed?, Time Enough Yet*

Introduction:

1. "Time" is a biblically valuable commodity that each of us has as long as we continue to draw breath.
 - a. Each of us has 24 hours in a day.
 - b. However, we do not all have the same number of days during which to live, and we do not all have the same number of days remaining in our lives.
 - c. Therefore, it is extremely important that we use life's available moments in the most expedient way possible, i.e. "redeem the time," Eph. 5:15-17.
2. "How much of our time should we invest in the local church?"
 - a. When we fully comprehend and acknowledge the significance of the local congregation of the **Lord's church**, we will know how much of our time ought to be invested in the local church.
 - b. When we fully appreciate what it means to be a Christian or a disciple of Christ, we will know how much of our time ought to be invested in the local church.
 - c. When we fully embrace the concept of conversion and our subsequent consecration to the Lord, we will know how much of our time ought to be invested in the local church.

Body:

- I. **"What is the local church that I should invest my time in it?"**
 - A. The local church is a component part of the churches of Christ, Rom. 16:16.
 1. Jesus Christ personally built his church, Matt. 16:18.
 2. Further, our Lord purchased his church with his

- blood, Acts 20:28.
3. Jesus saves people with his blood and then adds these saved to his church, Rev. 1:5; Acts 2:47.
 4. The church of Christ, then, is blood-bought and blood-washed.
 5. That means that each local congregation of the Lord's church likewise is blood-bought and blood-washed!
 6. How much time should the child of God be willing to invest in the Son of God blood-bought and blood-washed local church?
- B. The Lord's church is referred to as the bride of Christ, Rev. 22:17.
1. Likewise, individual congregations of the Lord's church share this figurative relationship with Jesus Christ, 2 Cor. 11:2.
 2. That means that each local congregation of the Lord's church needs to be as devoted to the Lord as a bride is to her husband.
 3. Every local congregation is composed of its members — Christians, Rom. 12:5; 1 Cor. 12:12.
 4. Therefore, individual Christians who comprise the local church need to be as devoted to the Lord through the local church as a bride is devoted to her husband.
 5. How much time should the child of God be willing to invest in the local church since it is the bride of Christ?

II. "What is a Christian that I should invest my time in the local church?"

- A. First, a Christian is Christ-like.
1. Jesus Christ is the child of God's perfect example that he imitates to the best of his or her ability, 1 Pet. 2:21.
 2. Jesus blazed the spiritual trail, and Christians are obligated to walk in his footsteps, 1 John 2:6.
 3. Jesus devoted himself to the redemption of humanity and sacrificed himself on the cross of Calvary for us.

4. How much time, then, should the child of God be willing to invest in the church for which he died?
- B. Second, a Christian is a disciple of Christ.
1. The word “disciple” means to be a learner and a follower.
 2. The disciple considers it his duty to accept the doctrine of his leader and proclaim it everywhere he can, Mark 16:15-16; Acts 8:1, 4.
 3. How much time should the disciple of Christ be willing to invest in the local church by which Christ’s message is spread to the local community?
- C. A Christian is also a steward of those things entrusted to his care for the kingdom’s sake.
1. The Parable of the Talents illustrates individual responsibility to be a good steward for our Mater, Jesus, Matt. 25:14-30.
 2. The qualifications of elders teach that elders are stewards of the congregation over which they have been appointed, Titus 1:7.
 3. Every thing that a child of God has in his possession rightfully belongs to God, and we are only stewards, Psa. 50:10-12.
 4. Besides material things, even our time belongs to our Lord, and Christians are called upon to “redeem” that time, Eph. 5:16; Col. 4:5.
 5. Christians are forbidden to invest their time in the sinful ways of the world of which we previously repented, 1 Pet. 4:1-4.
 6. How much time, then, should a Christian be willing to invest in godly endeavors, such as the local church?

III. “What about conversion and consecration of my life to the Lord should lead me to invest my time in the local church?”

- A. Conversion means that the child of God no longer conforms to the wicked world in which he lives, but he now molds himself with the Word of God.
1. The world is no longer the standard by which the converted order their lives, Rom. 12:1-2.

2. James warned that an unduly high appreciation of the world in which we live makes one an enemy of God, Jam. 4:4.
 3. Christians have been converted by a “form of doctrine” and continue to heartily embrace it, Rom. 6:17.
 4. Nothing is more important to the converted soul than Jesus and his church, 2 Cor. 8:1-5.
 5. How much time, then, should the convert to Christianity be willing to invest in the Lord’s church?
- B. Consecration of our lives to our Lord means that he is first in our lives — nothing withstanding!
1. Our devotion must be to God first, above even our natural love for parents, spouses and children, Matt. 10:37-38.
 2. Jesus demands that his followers seek spiritual matters first above all else in life, Matt. 6:33.
 3. Along those lines, New Testament writers exhort Christians to prefer brethren rather than non-Christians, Rom. 12:10; 1 Pet. 2:17.
 4. How much time, then, should the child of God be willing to invest in the church of God, including the local church that is comprised of Christians, 1 Cor. 1:2?

Conclusion:

1. Even club memberships require time and money from their members; should the Lord’s church expect less of its members?
2. Isn’t it about time that the children of God commit to investing their time in the success of the local congregation of which they are members?
3. How much time should the child of God be willing to invest in the local church?

Invitation:

1. There is no better way to invest one’s time than to invest it in spiritual pursuits.
2. For erring Christians or unbaptized believers, it is time to be saved, Rom. 13:11; 2 Cor. 6:2.

Living Soberly, Righteously, and Godly in This Present World

Titus 2:12

Thesis: To encourage enthusiastic and committed Christian living.

Song: *I Surrender All*

Introduction:

1. Titus 2:12 and the rest of Titus is addressed to Christians — the church, the saved.
 - a. Titus 2:12 does not concern how to become a child of God.
 - b. It exhorts the child of God to be moved by the Word of God in Christian living.
2. Titus 2:12 is the summary definition of the manifestation of true Christianity in the lives of Christians and churches of Christ.
 - a. It is possible for individuals and churches to appear to manifest Titus 2:12 when really they are tainted with sin.
 - b. Christians and congregations cannot be acceptable to God without demonstrating Titus 2:12.
3. The implementation of Titus 2:12 involves both the eradication of some things from one's life and the replacement of such with godly virtues.

Body:

I. Titus One

- A. The instruction of 2:12 rests in the authority of an apostle, **1:1**.
- B. Heeding truth and practicing godliness are the bases of hope, **1:2**.
- C. The Word of God is the sole medium by which this truth is revealed to men, **1:3**.
- D. The appointment of elders is a contributor to individual Christian and congregational 'soberness, righteousness

and godliness,' **1:4-9**.

- E. Manifestation of the lack of 'soberness, righteousness and godliness' is evident among unruly, vain talkers and deceivers, **1:10**.
- F. The Jewish error and abuse of the Gospel oppose 'soberness, righteousness and godliness,' **1:11-14**.
- G. A defiled conscience prohibits 'soberness, righteousness and godliness,' **1:15**.
- H. Evil works negate professions of godliness, **1:16**.

II. Titus Two

- A. Sound doctrine (Truth) underlies 'soberness, righteousness and godliness,' **2:1**.
- B. Elderly men are exhorted to be models (patterns) of 'soberness, righteousness and godliness,' **2:2**.
- C. Elderly women are exhorted to be models (patterns) of 'soberness, righteousness and godliness,' **2:3**.
- D. Young women are exhorted to be models (patterns) of 'soberness, righteousness and godliness,' **2:4-5**.
- E. Young men are exhorted to be models (patterns) of 'soberness, righteousness and godliness,' **2:6-8**.
- F. Servants are exhorted to be models (patterns) of 'soberness, righteousness and godliness,' **2:9-10**.
- G. All men are availed of salvation — the path of which is 'soberness, righteousness and godliness,' **2:11**.
- H. Putting off and putting on **now** is the key to eternal hope, **2:12-14**.
- I. The apostolic authority with which these instructions were initially given are equally forceful and authoritative today, **2:15**; 2 Tim. 2:2.
 - 1. There is no cause to despise the messenger.
 - 2. It is not his message nor is it given by his authority.

III. Titus Three

- A. Submission to government is necessary to fulfill 2:12, **3:1**.
- B. Meekness is necessary to fulfill 2:12, **3:2**.
- C. Christians have put off and must abandon old ways in order to fulfill 2:12, **3:3**.
- D. Old, evil ways must be replaced with better ways.
 - 1. A void must not be left after casting away old

ways, **3:4**.

2. This was illustrated in principle by Jesus regarding an evil spirit re-entering a man with additional wicked spirits, Matt. 12:43-45.
- E. One cannot earn a favored position with God, but if one does his little part, God will do his big part, **3:5-8**.
 - F. Apostasy is an ever-present threat, **3:9-11**.

IV. Lessons

- A. The pursuit of ‘soberness, righteousness and godliness’ is predicated upon **divine authority, 1:1; 2:15**.
- B. **Divine instruction** by which 2:12 is facilitated is the Word of God (Truth) or sound doctrine, **1:1, 3, 9; 2:1**.
- C. Valid Christian **hope** is tied diametrically to implementation of 2:12, **1:2; 2:11-13; 3:7**.
- D. Titus 2:12 is accomplished through **divine commandment keeping** of the “common faith,” **1:3-4**, versus **keeping commandments of men, 1:14**.
- E. Practicing 2:12 equates to being “sound in the faith,” **1:13; 2:2**.
- F. Without “living soberly, righteously and godly” the Christian’s conscience is defiled and his profession of Christianity is vain, **1:15-16**.
- G. Elders, elderly men, elderly women, young women, young men, servants (slaves, employees — in principle, anyone who is subject to someone else) are given specific instructions in Titus by which they can practice 2:12, **1:6-2:10**.
- H. Living “soberly, righteously and godly in this present world” involves being: blameless, not self-willed, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre (not covetous), hospitable, sober, just, holy, temperate, one who holds fast the faithful word, of good conscience, of sound doctrine, sound in the faith, charitable, patient, not a false accuser, teachers of good things, compassionate, discreet, chaste, a pattern of good works, uncorrupted, sincere, sound in speech, under subjection, not a brawler, gentle, meek, not foolish, not disobedient, not deceived, not lustful, not lovers of pleasure, not living in malice, not envious, not hateful,

workers of good, and not factious, **1:6-3:10**.

- I. When Christians do what they can and still fall short of righteousness whereby they can come into the presence of God, through mercy and grace God makes up the difference (conditionally), **2:11, 3:5-7**.
- J. Mercy and grace are conditional on good works, **1:7; 2:5, 8, 14**.
- K. There is an emphasis in Titus on “sound doctrine,” **1:9; 2:1**, and “sound in the faith,” **1:13; 2:2**.

Conclusion:

- 1. It is not enough to obey the Gospel by which one’s past sins are remitted.
- 2. Hope of eternal life is conditional upon implementation of the Word of God in one’s life to produce truly Christian living.
- 3. Sadly, many Christians and churches fall far short in this area, and it simply cannot be so without adversely affecting their prospect of spending eternity in heaven with God.

Invitation:

- 1. Neither Christians nor non-Christians dare assume that they are basking in the grace and mercy of God, Matt. 7:21-23; 2 Pet. 2:20-22; Acts 10-11.
- 2. Christians must examine themselves routinely with the Word of God and repent and pray when found to be spiritually deficient, 2 Cor. 13:5; Acts 8:22.
- 3. Non-Christians need to follow the apostolic instructions recorded in the first Gospel sermon, Acts 2:38.

Behold I Thought Religion

2 Kings 5:1-14

Thesis: To muse about the churches men would have built instead of the church of Acts Two had God given them such liberty; men have built those churches without the permission of God!

Song: *The Church's One Foundation*

Introduction:

1. Whenever man has practiced his own ideas in religion, he has become his own master or god, Judges 21:25.
2. Scripture cautions mortals not to lean on human wisdom, Prov. 3:5.
3. Often man comes to ruin while following his own counsel, Prov. 16:25.
4. Mankind frequently rejects the instruction of God, Jer. 6:16.

Body:

I. The church that men would build would differ from the church Jesus built.

- A. A church built by men would substitute the preferences of humans for the instruction of God.
 1. Cain offered a substitute worship to God with which God was not pleased, Gen. 4:1-8; Heb. 11:4; Rom. 10:17.
 2. Sabbatarians today substitute Saturday instead of the first day of the week for worship, Acts 20:7.
 3. Most contemporary denominations override the biblical instruction regarding congregational autonomy by establishing earthly headquarters by which all member congregations are governed, Acts 20:28; Titus 1:5.
 4. The human substitutions that mankind has made in place of divine instruction for the church are innumerable and have resulted in the formation of thousands of different religious faiths — different from each other and different from the church that Jesus built.

- B. A church built by men would select only the Scriptures that they could use for their purposes.
1. Satan misused Scriptures in his temptation of Jesus Christ, Matt. 4:5-7.
 2. Contemporary men promote faith or grace only to the exclusion of the “whole counsel of God,” Acts 20:27 ASV.
 3. Some contemporaries propose that the righteous will spend eternity on earth, despite that the Bible teaches otherwise, 2 Pet. 3:10; Rev. 7:4-10.
 4. Thousands of religious faiths pick and choose Scripture to suit their respective tastes.
- C. A church built by men would ignore unpleasant Scripture.
1. Some religions and even some members of the Lord’s church deny the reality of an eternal hell, Matt. 25:41.
 2. Even some congregations of the churches of Christ neglect to teach on moral issues that may negatively affect popular opinion within or without of the church, Gal. 5:19-21.
 3. Other churches simply refuse to police themselves, 1 Cor. 5.
- D. A church built by men would overhaul God’s personality profile to make God more marketable.
1. The Israelites, only recently freed by God from Egyptian slavery, refashioned God into a golden calf, Exod. 32:1-8.
 2. Modern man refashions God in his own vain imagination instead with stone, wood and molten metals, e.g. denominational and other world religion gods.
 3. Consequently, some view God as all-loving instead of a God of love and wrath, Rom. 11:22.
 4. Denominational predestination views God as a respecter of persons, whereas God is not a respecter of persons, Rom. 2:11; Acts 10:34.
 5. Generally, mankind often has changed the glory of God into an image of some created being, Rom.

1:23.

II. The church that Jesus Christ built alone is the body of the saved, Acts 2:47.

- A. The names or descriptive terms for the church that Jesus built glorify the Godhead.
 - 1. For instance, as congregations the Lord's church is known as the church of God or the churches of Christ, 1 Cor. 1:2; Rom. 16:16.
 - 2. Individually, members of the Lord's church are simply Christians, Acts 11:26.
- B. The church that Jesus built worships God in the divinely appointed way.
 - 1. Lord's Day worship includes singing, prayer, teaching or preaching, communion and giving, Eph. 5:19; Acts 2:42; 1 Cor. 16:1-2.
 - 2. The Lord's church worships in spirit and in truth, John 4:24.
- C. Only the church that Jesus built has a divine mission.
 - 1. The Lord's church alone can and must evangelize the lost world, 2 Tim. 2:2.
 - 2. The Lord's church is obligated to edify itself, 1 Cor. 14:12.
 - 3. The Lord's church has an obligation to practice benevolence toward its members and toward non-members as well, Gal. 6:10.
- D. Only the church that Jesus built is of divine origin.
 - 1. The Lord's church was in the mind of God eternally, Eph. 3:10-11.
 - 2. The Lord's church was the subject of divine prophecy, Isa. 2:2; Dan. 2:31-45; Joel 2:28-32.
 - 3. The Lord's church was divine in fulfillment, Acts 2.
- E. The Lord's church is unique and differs widely from the efforts of men to build churches.

Conclusion:

- 1. Our God has always rejected human deviations from prescribed worship and service, Lev. 10:1-2; 1 Sam. 15:22.
- 2. Our God has always rejected false teachers, Matt. 15:9; 2 Pet. 2:1-3.

3. It is imperative that we seek God and eternity with him on his terms, Isa. 55:6-9; Heb. 5:8-9.

Invitation:

1. Leave the “better ideas” to Ford, and when it comes to religion, follow God and his Word alone.
2. Unbaptized believers need to repent and be immersed in water for the remission of their sins, Acts 2:38; Rom. 6:3-5.
3. Erring Christians need to repent and pray as publicly or as privately as they have sinned, Acts 8:22.

God's Ways Versus Man's Ways

Isaiah 55:6-9

Thesis: To encourage dependence upon God and his Word for instruction and direction.

Songs: *Have Thine Own Way, Lord or His Way with Thee*

Introduction:

1. That God's ways and man's ways are not the same is self-evident.
 - a. When at his best, man is referred to as "godly"; otherwise, men are alienated from God, Gen. 6:2, 5; Eph. 2:12-13.
 - b. Transgressing God's ways makes one a sinner and separates him from God, 1 John 3:4; Isa. 59:1-3.
 - c. Separating himself from the ways of God, mankind relies on his ways and becomes guilty of sin, Rom. 1:21-32.
2. God demands conformity to his divine ways rather than simply permitting mankind to do as he pleases.
 - a. God declares his ways superior to the ways of humanity, Isa. 55:8-9.
 - b. Man is incapable of directing himself satisfactorily by his own devices and without God, Jer. 10:23.
 - c. Historically, often even the people of God have **refused** to walk in the ways of God, Jer. 6:16.
3. However, men can only be saved if and as long as they walk in the ways of God.
 - a. One cannot successfully claim to be a follower of Jesus and refuse to walk in our Lord's divine ways, 1 John 2:6.
 - b. Jesus Christ is "the way" through which God has designed that men should be saved, which unfortunately, too few people opt to follow, John 14:6; Matt. 7:13-14.
 - c. God's ways are variously represented in the New Testament: "that way," Acts 19:23; "this way," Acts 22:4; "the way of salvation," Acts 16:17; "the way of the Lord," Acts 18:25; "way of truth," 2 Pet. 2:2; "the right way," 2

Pet. 2:15; “the way of righteousness,” 2 Pet. 2:21” and “a new and living way,” Heb. 10:20.

Body:

I. Isaiah 55:8 reads, “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord.”

- A. It is precisely because the **thoughts** of God and man differ that the **ways** of God and man also differ.
 - 1. The thoughts of one’s heart precede his actions, Matt. 5:28; 15:18-19.
 - 2. The sinful condition of humanity preceding the universal flood of Noah’s day illustrates how sinful thoughts precede sinful deeds, Gen. 6:5.
- B. Often, men establish their own standards of righteousness, which they prefer instead of God’s standard of righteousness.
 - 1. Jesus Christ noted that Jewish religious leaders in his day worshipped God according to human preferences instead of the way God desired to be worshipped, Matt. 15:9.
 - 2. The apostle Paul lamented that his fellow Jews had established a standard of righteousness that for them had displaced God’s standard of righteousness, Rom. 10:3.
- C. The Bible is full of examples where mankind has introduced his own innovations or where God has condemned human innovations in religion.
 - 1. Nadab and Abihu, priests and sons of Aaron, substituted an unauthorized fire in place of the fire source God authorized for worship, Lev. 10:1-2.
 - 2. Some first century Christians altered the Gospel of Christ and interjected their own will into the worship of God, Gal. 1:6-9; Col. 2:23.
 - 3. Warnings appear throughout the Bible against any alteration, subtraction from or addition to the Word of God, Deut. 4:2; Prov. 30:6; Rev. 22:18-19.

II. Isaiah 55:9 reads, “For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.”

- A. Pseudo-knowledge and intellectualism once pervaded the

church at Corinth.

1. The apostle Paul condemned worldly wisdom in the church at Corinth that stood in opposition to the wisdom of God, 1 Cor. 1:18-27; 3:18-22.
 2. The man Job was compelled to acknowledge the superiority of God's knowledge and wisdom, Job 38-40:9.
- B. Since God's thoughts are admittedly higher than man's thoughts, man ought to conform to God's thoughts and ways.
1. Joshua's speech stands out as one of God's servants who called upon the people of God to remain faithful to God, Josh. 24:15.
 2. Prophecy concerning the establishment of the church anticipated God's ways being taught to the first century children of God, Isa. 2:2-3.

III. Isaiah 55:7 reads, "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon."

- A. God is willing to pardon those who turn to him on his terms (his higher thoughts and his higher ways).
1. For instance, God provided a way of escape from the universal flood: a preacher of righteousness, 120 years and an ark, 2 Pet. 2:5; Gen. 6:3, 14; 7:1.
 2. Likewise, God does not want anyone to perish and will save those who turn to him on his terms (his higher ways), 2 Pet. 3:9; Heb. 5:8-9.
- B. Mercy is an outstanding characteristic of God.
1. Regarding quantity, God is a God of abundant mercy, Eph. 2:4; 1 Pet. 1:3.
 2. God's mercy contributes to human salvation, Titus 3:5.
- C. God does pardon those who turn to him on his terms.
1. As a part of that pardon, God refuses to remember one's former transgressions once they are forgiven, Heb. 8:12; 10:17.
 2. Since there is an actual forgiveness of sins under Christianity, there is no remembrance by God of

sins for which forgiveness has been obtained, Eph. 1:7; Heb. 10:3.

IV. Isaiah 55:6 reads, “Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near.”

- A. This verse implies that there will come a time when God cannot be sought.
 - 1. It will be too late to seek God when time comes to an end, Matt. 24:42-51; John 9:4.
 - 2. It will be too late to seek God after one dies, Luke 16:19-31; Jam. 4:13-14.
- B. Calling upon the name of the Lord is something that men are urged by Scripture to do today as well.
 - 1. Calling upon the name of the Lord is seeking salvation from God, Rom. 10:13.
 - 2. However, calling upon the name of the Lord is not merely a mental thought or verbal profession, but active obedience to the thoughts and ways of God, Acts 22:16.

V. Men still often reject the thoughts and ways of God.

- A. Judaism, Catholicism, Protestantism and every other world religion represent a rejection of God’s thoughts and ways.
 - 1. Every religious institution that is not the product of God’s thoughts and ways will be destroyed in the last day, Matt. 15:13.
 - 2. Jesus died for and built one church, and every church, therefore, that is not identical to the church about which one can read in the Bible will be destroyed, Matt. 16:18; Eph. 1:22-23; 4:4.
- B. Even Christians are still adding innovations to God’s thoughts and ways.
 - 1. The U.S. Census of 1906 recognized a split between the churches of Christ and the Christian Church, which division occurred when instrumental music was added to worship and missionary societies were adopted.
 - 2. More recently, numerous doctrinal deviations from New Testament Christianity have plagued the churches of Christ, i.e., marriage, divorce &

remarriage; women's roles, liberalism, antism, etc.

Conclusion:

1. The Lord's thoughts and ways really are higher than man's thoughts and ways.
2. It is not possible for feeble men to direct themselves apart from divine revelation and someday arrive in heaven.
3. As long as time remains and death does not occur, souls may continue to turn from the ways of men to the ways of God.
4. There will come a time beyond which it will not be possible to change one's ways so heaven will be his eternal home.

Invitation:

1. There are still many souls within and without of the church who need to obey the Gospel before it is everlastingly too late!
2. Erring Christians can hide a multitude of sins by being restored to the faith, Jam. 5:19-20.
3. Unbaptized believers who follow God's thoughts and ways will follow the instruction for salvation of our Lord and his apostles, Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38.

The Offense of the Cross

Galatians 5:11

Thesis: To note areas in which people are sometimes offended at the cross of Christ and encourage especially brethren to rise above offenses of the cross.

Introduction:

1. The Book of Galatians reveals that Judaizing teachers were offended by the apostle Paul's proclamation of the Gospel.
 - a. Galatians 5:11 calls the Gospel "the offence of the cross."
 - b. The most offensive part of the Gospel to Judaizing Christians was that the Gospel of Christ did not mandate the continuation of circumcision as a law of God for males.
 - c. Generally, Judaizing teachers contended that to be the beneficiary of Gospel blessings, one had to first practice or, if a Gentile, proselyte to Judaism.
 - d. Therefore, Judaizing teachers had modified the Gospel of Christ to include aspects of Judaism, including restoring the Jewish practice of circumcision, Gal. 1:6-12.
 - e. The apostle Paul wrote the Epistle of Galatians to churches of Christ throughout the Roman sub-province of Galatia to correct the Jewish perversion of the Gospel of Christ.
2. The cross of Christ and our Lord's blood shed thereon are sufficiently important to our salvation that no one today ought to be offended at the cross of Christ.
 - a. The shed blood of Christ saves sinners from their sins, Col. 1:14, 20.
 - b. The shed blood of Christ purchased the Lord's church, Acts 20:28.
 - c. The Gospel of the cross of Christ truly is good news for an otherwise world lost in sin!
3. However, some today, like the Judaizing teachers of the first century, are offended at the cross of Christ.
 - a. The Gospel is offensive to those who it would chasten and correct, Heb. 12:5-11.

- b. Often, any negative or corrective preaching is viewed as offensive, Gal. 4:16.
- c. Jesus Christ himself is “a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence” to those who “stumble at the word,” 1 Pet. 2:8.

Body:

I. Some today are offended at the cross and its Gospel because it removed the Old Law.

- A. Who today is offended because the New Testament displaces the Old Testament?
 - 1. Millions still practice a form of Judaism today and are offended at the cross of Christ and our Lord’s Gospel because it has replaced biblical Judaism.
 - 2. Adventists are offended by the cross of Christ because of their observance of the Sabbath or Saturday worship.
 - 3. Also, most religious people today are offended at the cross of Christ and its Gospel due to their attachment to the 10 Commandments, which are no longer applicable since they were part of the Old Testament that the New Testament replaced.
- B. God did not intend for the Old Testament to be a permanent or his last covenant with mankind.
 - 1. The apostle Paul explained to Galatian Christians that the Old Testament served the purpose of preparing humanity for the Gospel, which after the Old Testament served its purpose it was no longer applicable, Gal. 3:19, 24-25.
 - 2. The writer of Hebrews quoted from Jeremiah where in the Old Testament God caused the prophet to note that the Old Testament would be replaced with a new covenant, Heb. 8:6-13; Jer. 31:31-34.
- C. The Old Testament was fulfilled and taken out of the way.
 - 1. The Old Testament was not destroyed or annihilated, but fulfilled and replaced, Matt. 5:17-18.
 - 2. The Old Testament was blotted out, Col. 2:14; “Often MSS. were rubbed or scraped and written

over again” (*Robertson’s Word Pictures in the New Testament* CD-ROM).

3. The Old Testament was abolished, Eph. 2:15.
 4. The removal of the Old Testament included deliverance from the 10 Commandments, Rom. 7:6-7.
- D. God disapproves of anyone who tries to live according to the Old Testament today.
1. Modern man is encouraged to choose liberty with Christ rather than the Law, which was a “yoke of bondage,” Gal. 5:1.
 2. Anyone attempting to practice a portion of the Old Testament is obligated to practice all of it, but it has been removed, Gal. 5:3.
 3. The Old Testament was not intended to justify anyone and could only justify someone who was sinlessly perfect (Jesus Christ), Gal. 3:11; Rom. 3:20.
 4. Anyone attempting to keep the Old Law today is fallen from grace, Gal. 5:4.

II. Some today are offended at the cross and its Gospel because it exalts divine or biblical wisdom over human wisdom.

- A. The Gospel is written simply so that all accountable souls may grasp its message.
1. The Gospel is called the “simplicity of Christ,” 2 Cor. 11:3.
 2. The words of Jesus himself were such that “the common people heard him gladly,” Mark 12:37.
- B. The wisdom of the world is ineffectual respecting salvation.
1. The apostle Paul rebuffed the Corinthian church for trusting in worldly wisdom above divine wisdom, 1 Cor. 1:17-29.
 2. Paul’s preaching relied on divine wisdom and not on worldly wisdom, 1 Cor. 2:1-8.
 3. Worldly wisdom is foolishness with God, 1 Cor. 3:18-20.
- C. Denominationalism exists today because of human

reliance on worldly wisdom over divine wisdom (revealed exclusively in the Bible).

1. For instance, Jesus Christ condemned worship that is based on human doctrine instead of divine doctrine, Matt. 15:9.
2. Evidently, denominationalism is offended at the cross of Christ as it opts for its own doctrines instead of biblical doctrine.

III. Some today are offended at the cross and its Gospel because it requires penitence.

- A. Self-righteous souls are offended by the cross and its Gospel because it requires them to repent of their sins.
 1. Human achievement or works are incapable of saving anyone, Eph. 2:8-9; Titus 3:5.
 2. The cross of Christ or its Gospel requires that one who would be saved come to Jesus on his terms, John 14:6; Mark 16:16.
- B. Self-righteousness may be manifested in a number of ways, and one may not realize that his conduct is erroneous and self-righteous.
 1. When one 'attends the church of his choice,' he chooses a system of human righteousness over God's standard of righteous, Rom. 10:1-3.
 2. Additional ways in which people often pursue self-righteousness over God's righteous are manifested by sayings such as these: "As long as a person is sincere..." "All that matters is that a person believe in God." "There are many ways that all lead to heaven." "A good moral life is all that matters." Etc.
- C. Self-righteousness mocks the cross of Jesus Christ on which our Lord's atoning blood was shed.
 1. Jew and Gentile is reconciled to God by the cross of Christ, Eph. 2:16.
 2. It was the death of Christ on the cross and Jesus' blood that reconciled man to God, Rom. 5:8-10.
 3. Only obedience affords one continual access to the cleansing blood of Jesus Christ, 1 John 1:7.

IV. Some today are offended at the cross and its Gospel because it demands a separation between the Christian and the ungodly world.

- A. Christians are required to put away worldly lusts.
 - 1. Instead of seeking worldly lusts, the children of God are supposed to be “zealous of good works,” Titus 2:12, 14.
 - 2. The apostles Paul and Peter wrote that Christians are a “peculiar people,” Titus 2:14; 1 Pet. 2:9.
 - 3. Christians are obligated to separate themselves from ungodly people who will influence them to commit sin, 2 Cor. 6:14-17.
 - 4. Christians are called upon by the apostle Paul to abstain from every category of evil, 1 Thess. 5:22.
- B. Many people and some Christians pursue worldly lusts and sinful pleasures.
 - 1. Lust and pride are the avenues through which all temptation to commit sin approaches humanity, 1 John 2:15-17.
 - 2. The world thinks Christians are strange because they do not run to the same excesses as worldly people, 1 Pet. 4:4.
 - 3. The world hates those who do not love worldliness like it does, John 17:14; 1 John 3:12-13.
 - 4. Most of this world’s population seeks “the pleasures of sin for a season” rather than conformity to the Gospel of the cross, Heb. 11:25; Rom. 12:1-2.

Conclusion:

- 1. The cross of Christ is offensive to anyone who is determined to do what he wants to do, despite what the Gospel of the cross teaches.
 - a. The apostle Paul wrote that people of this persuasion are self-willed, Col. 2:23.
 - b. Many people outside and some inside the Lord’s church are of the mind that, “You can’t tell me how to live my life!”
 - c. The writer of Hebrews, though, warns that there is a severe penalty for willful sin, Heb. 10:26-31.
- 2. With very little reflection, we can easily note others around us

who by their actions evidence that they are offended by the cross its Gospel.

- a. Modern society everywhere and largely conducts itself in an ungodly manner, and when the Gospel of the cross is brought to its attention, society despises the cross of Christ.
 - b. Denominationalism has gone beyond the cross and its Gospel, so that when the Gospel of the cross is brought to its attention, denominationalism despises the cross of Christ.
3. However, an inward focus and application of the cross and its Gospel to the Lord's church and its members is urgently needed, too.
- a. The New Testament with its warnings was written to Christians; it applies to us first!
 - b. In what ways do the cross and its Gospel offend us?
 - c. Do we have problems with Christian living, regular attendance, baptism, repentance, giving, evangelism, benevolence, etc.?
 - d. Whatever it is wherein there is a conflict between our lives and the Bible, it is to that extent in our lives that **we are offended at the cross of Jesus Christ.**

Invitation:

1. Anyone offended by the cross of Christ and the Gospel of the cross needs to bring his life in line with the cross and its Gospel, 2 Cor. 13:5.
2. Erring Christians need to hide a multitude of sins, Jam. 5:19-20.
3. Unbaptized believers need to be immersed in water for the remission of sins, Col. 2:12; Acts 22:16.