

The Greatest Sermon of the 20th Century

Paris Reidhead

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Paris Reidhead

LLG Ministries
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We highly recommend that you download and listen to the audio version of these messages. Hear the thunderous, awe-inspiring and convicting voice of Brother Paris Reidhead as he delivered these messages live to the congregation. Tears, conviction, trembling and inspiration will follow.

Available at www.llgmin.com.

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Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Mrs. Marjorie Reidhead, beloved wife of Paris Reidhead for allowing me permission to transcribe Brother Reidhead's sermons and publish this book. I thank her for her prayers and blessings as we continue the work of the Reidhead's family ministry, Paris Reidhead Bible Teaching Ministries, in sharing Brother Reidheads' messages with the world.

Foreword

It was August 23, 2007 at 2:30 a.m. when I encountered the living God. Humbled to the floor of my tub, weeping, and limp, I was only able to utter the words “Yes Lord, I understand.” Something strange and inexplicable happened to me that early morning. I would later realize I was truly born anew, I had changed, my thoughts and everything changed, my whole world was tossed upside down as the Lord himself began to consume me.

But I was a babe in Christ, a newborn child. It would be about two years later that the Lord brought me a God Parent; someone who would nurture, teach and guide me to truth. A man who would help me to see and learn and grow into the things that were promised to every child of the Lord. That man, that God Parent was Paris Reidhead.

“God is Spirit and those that worship him must worship in spirit and truth.” Brother Reidhead had already physically passed on however it was his spirit that was alive through his recorded sermons and writings that spoke directly to my heart.

I discerned truth from Brother Reidhead in a world filled with religion, apostasy, ritual, ceremony, politics and professing Christians that could claim every verse in the Bible, but had not the Son. Brother Reidhead was a man well acquainted with the struggles, failures, fears, and heresy of the world of religion.

However, it was he that the Lord brought through the miry clay, humbled and broken, to the feet of the Lord Jesus. And then in that place, emptied of himself, the Lord touched his lips and with no fanfare Brother Reidhead became a prophet, watchman, teacher, pastor, missionary and vessel for the Lord Jesus.

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“Thus saith the Lord...” Only a prophet can utter these sacred words. And so with authority and wisdom from the Lord himself, Brother Reidhead proceeded without fail to be that reed in the wilderness, preaching the undeniable truth.

Is this the “Greatest Sermon of the 20th Century?” In my humble opinion, the answer is undeniably yes. This book, a compilation of ten of Brother Reidhead’s messages from the late 1950s up until 1961 all point to a singular truth of such importance, that it could mean life or death, joy or pain for the reader.

It is a message focused on two groups of people. First to those who profess Christ, whether they name themselves Christian, Catholic or any of over 30,000 denominations. You may be a member of the clergy or a layperson, this message is for you, especially for you. Judge yourselves is the warning from the Apostle Paul. See if you indeed are in the faith and have reason for hope.

And the second group for whom this message is aimed, are those who have heard of this one called the Christ, Jesus of Nazareth. They have heard of his claim to be Immanuel, God come in the flesh. This message is for you. Come and hear truth. A message you probably will never hear in most churches today.

I’d like to thank Mrs. Marjorie Reidhead, beloved wife of Brother Reidhead for allowing me to publish this book. Paris Reidhead Bible Teaching Ministries Inc., a group formed by Mrs. Reidhead and family, continue to share Brother Reidhead’s teachings, selflessly, to the world.

I invite you to continue this reading by hearing the riveting, inspiring and commanding live voice of Brother Reidhead deliver this message on www.llgmin.com

May the Lord have mercy and keep you.

Michael McPherson, LLG Ministries

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Every Knee Shall Bow

“Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus. Who being in the form of God thought it not robbery to be equal with God. But made Himself of no reputation and took upon Him the form of a servant and was made in the likeness of men. And being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, given Him a name which is above every name. That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth. And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God, the Father.”

Christ is glorified in the salvation of the lost. But God has ordained that His son should be glorified in the damnation of the lost as well. God has ordained that every knee shall bow to Jesus Christ. Our Lord bore the great love wherewith from eternity past He had loved a world that He had seen in rebellion and sin.

In the fullness of time He was made flesh. He took upon Himself our form and our likeness, found in our fashion, and accepted the limitations of our humanity that He might redeem a world at enmity against Him and in warfare with Him.

He consented to be made sin for us, He who knew no sin, that by this means we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. The Father ordained that should the Son thus leave heaven's glory and come into the world and subject Himself to the humiliation of human flesh, and to temptation, and to.

death, that every knee should bow and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ would be Lord.

We noticed in this that He has given option. During this period that we call grace, men are invited to bow and live. But should they, in the impenitence and rebellion of their hearts persist in rejecting Christ and spurning God's grace and the overtures of His love, He has also ordained that they shall bow. This time not by invitation but by commandment. I want you to realize today that God's purpose that every knee should bow will be realized. It will be realized.

Where the book of Revelation makes it clear that there shall come an hour when the dead, the wicked dead, shall rise with bodies not described but so clearly taught, bodies by which they shall be able to appear before Him. It is described as a throne, a great white throne, and the one that's seated upon it is seated there in splendor, and in glory, and in power. When these that have been in torment and suffering are thus brought into His presence, it is said that they would cry to the rocks and to the mountains to fall upon them and to hide them from the face of the wrath of the Lamb.

Of course, God has ordained that they should thus stand before Him, and they should give an account of their lives. What they have done with that truth that they had heard and that God had invested in them. For He not only gave truth to the ear, but He also engraved it upon the fleshly tables of the heart.

Therefore, God is without excuse in just judgment for it is said that when the heathen which do not have the written record, the oracles and testimonies that came by revelation through Moses and others, but do by nature the things contained in this written record, they give evidence that the law has been written upon their hearts. Thus they testify to the justice of God's

judgment upon them for their rebellion and their treason against Him.

They shall stand before Him in that day, and there shall be account given to them of all that they've had and done and their use of that which God gave. Then we hear that having consented to their judgment and the justice of their doom, they shall bow the knee, acknowledge Him to be Lord, worthy sovereign whom they ought have rendered obedience and love because of His worth. But now, they render it coerced and forced by His inescapable majesty. Having acknowledged that Jesus Christ is Lord, they then shall go off on the left hand; the image that God used to convey to us their doom, into the lake of fire, which burneth forever and forever.

Now my friends, I want you to understand that God's commitment to His Son shall be kept. It shall be kept. There will come that hour when men shall be forced to render by the revelation of His majesty that which they refused to render in the revelation of His grace. But bow before Him they must. Having said that, we thus recognize that God only allows one option in regard to His Son, when we will bow. That we must bow He has established. When we must bow, we choose.

We are I think have said sufficiently, regarding the fact that we must bow. Now what I'd like to have you see is that you may bow. You may bow now, today, while it is called now, the day of salvation. First, if Jesus Christ is to be glorified in the salvation of the lost, we must discover that He was robbed of His glory, deprived of that which was His due by man's sin.

I would have you see that essentially sin is not a series of antisocial acts, which bring upon man indictment from God because of the fact that he [man] has in some way interfered with the on-working of God's plan for humanity.

Sin is far worse than most of us as preachers have ever dared to relate or perhaps ever discovered, and only the Lord Himself will one day be able, if He chooses, to reveal to us the total malignancy of this horrendous thing called sin. I'm afraid that most people that call themselves Christians in our churches today have had little or no revelation of sin. What they have done is had a recollection of sins. There's a difference.

Sin is something that is resident in the heart. It is deep in the motivational area of human personality, and it is the root upon which the fruit of sins grow. I'm afraid too many people have never traced the fruit back to its proper root. I'm afraid that too many people have had the kind of dealing with them, regarding their relationship to Christ that I would have given for most of my life and ministry.

I would have asked the candidate for salvation to recall whether or not he'd ever done anything that he could call sin. If I could elicit an affirmative from him that, yes, he had sometime, somewhere done something that he might call sin then I would say all right, now you see you're lost. But this stops far short of the purpose of God in grace in revealing to us the nature of our crime against His Son, Jesus Christ.

It isn't enough just to recognize that at some time, somewhere you may have done something that in all fairness you could call sin. This is true. It's true of everyone. I've never met anyone yet that in serious conversation would deny the fact that he had sinned. But I have met scores of people that would admit that they have sinned that had absolutely no conviction of sin. They've never discovered it. They've never seen it. They've never actually realized what it is that made God take this attitude of such intense anger against sin as the Scripture reveals that He has.

I think you have to go back to the fact that sin at its genesis is in the mind of the most intelligent, beautiful, and powerful creature that God ever created. Isaiah the 14th chapter gives you the record of this in which it describes this one, Lucifer, who using the intelligence with which he'd been equipped imagined what it would be to be God. Then he decided that he would become what he had imagined, that he would be like the Most High. In this, you see the essential nature of sin, that it is putting one's self in the place of God.

This is so fundamental to a proper understanding of the grace of God that I should try to approach it from several directions. We find in Isaiah the 53rd chapter that God speaks of the crime of men by saying, "They have turned everyone unto their own way." This sounds like a rather simple thing and hardly worth the condemnation that it receives until you realize that turning to one's own way is essentially setting one's self up upon the throne and establishing himself as God in his own eyes.

Turning to his own way simply means that he would have himself to be the object of his worship and live for himself; live to please and to gratify himself and to satisfy himself. His own pleasure now became the end of his being as well as the rule of his conduct. This we find with Lucifer. This we find with Eve when the proposition was presented to her to be as God. This we find to be God's great indictment against the human race down across the centuries. They have set themselves in the place of God, and worshiped themselves, and served themselves, and pleased themselves rather than God who alone was worthy.

Now because of this, because of this act which has in it all of the essential attributes of treason; refusal to recognize proper government to which one is committed, a gross betrayal of that government into the hands of committed enemies, and a

determined course of warfare against the rightful government, because of this, God has said, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." And He has spoken, saying that He is angry with the wicked every day, that He has bent His bow, and He has whet His sword, and if he turn not, He will slay him.

Now God has pronounced this judgment upon sin and evidenced His attitude toward it throughout the entire Old Testament. For you see the cherubim stand in front of the garden after Adam and Eve sinned, and with flaming sword forbid the first pair to return to the place that had been prepared for them. You'll get a picture of how God feels about it. You come a little farther and see the ark floating on the wave, and the last hand slip from the topmost branch of the tallest tree, and the last life thus extinguished in God's judgment upon men for their sin.

You understand how He feels about it, this crime against Him. You see the city of Sodom and Gomorrah buried beneath the flood of fire from heaven. You understand how God feels about licenses is the rule in moral conduct. Across the ages, God has evidenced His attitude toward almost every kind of sin. Even in the case of Uzziah, that faithful king of Israel that dared to refuse to recognize the order of worship and the responsibility of the priest at the house of God. Thus he comes forth from the holy place white as snow with leprosy.

We find that with Ananias and Sapphira in the church and apparently respectable accepted members of the church, that when they lied against the Holy Ghost, they both were stricken dead. I say to you that in every instance in the past when God has in any ways dealt with sinners for their crime, He has illustrated for all the succeeding years and generations that should come His continuing attitude towards sin. It is thus that we would view it not simply as antisocial conduct, but we

should recognize that sin is in its essence an enthronement of self, a deification of man, a putting of himself in the place of God.

Against this, God has set His hand in ceaseless warfare. Now sins are but the fruit that grow out of this monstrous major crime. The person sets himself upon the throne and prepares to live a life of self-pleasing. And when the truth stands in the way of his goal, he bends or breaks the truth. The lie simply becomes a tool to the end of pleasing himself. When sobriety stands in the way of his commitment to make himself the end of his being and his pleasure the reason for his existence, he readily accepts insobriety and drunkenness and thus pleases himself at the expense of others.

When he discovers that morality and the standards that God established for the protection of the home interfere with his personal pleasure, he has no hesitation at all about bursting over the sins that God not only put into social standards and mores but also wrote with such heavy pen on the human heart. He breaks those bounds and pleases himself at the expense of virtue and happiness of another.

We find then that all the things we call sins are but the tools in the kit of the one that has decided to be God in his own right and in his own name. They're simply the tools of the trade, if you please. God isn't fighting the tools. God is fighting the one that went into business. God is not concerned about the tools that are there as much as He is the fact that someone sat down and said I am going to live to please me. I'm going to make my own pleasure the end of my being. I will be as God. I'll do what I want to do.

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Now sin actually strikes at the very status of God Himself, comes right at the throne of God. It is direct warfare against the person of God.

Though it seems to be such a little thing, here is the person that just tells a white lie, and just steals a little bit, and just loves himself in a restrictive degree, and just commits immorality on the mental level, lasciviousness, or murder in the heart in anger. You say, well, why should God become so distressed by it? Because of the fact that it is basically the evidence that the individual has said, I will have no other gods to rule over me. I will be god in my own life. This, I say, constitutes the criminal aspect of sin.

This is that against which God has lifted His hand in fierce anger in centuries past. But unquestionably the place where you find this display of righteous wrath and anger most dramatically and most effectively presented is at Calvary. There the Lord Jesus Christ, God Himself, the very God who in His words spoke, saying "Let us make man in our image." The one who in the cool of the day walked in the garden calling "Adam, where art thou?" The one who instructed Noah to make the Ark, and Abraham to leave his father's house, and Moses to lead his people forth from bondage. This one, the Jehovah of the Old Testament, now became the Jesus of the New Testament.

Out of the love for a world of rebels that were justly sentenced to death, and may I make one point clear? My friend, if you've ever been told by anyone as thoughtless as myself or others equally thoughtless that the rejection of Jesus Christ is the sin that sends a soul to hell, may I this moment disabuse your mind of that mild heresy. The reason people go to hell is not because they have rejected Christ but because they have become gods in their own right in rebellion against Him. For if

God had never sent His Son into the world, the world would have perished. The weight of its guilt was sufficient to plunge it forever from His presence in suffering.

No, God did not send His Son in the world to condemn the world. Why? Because the world was condemned already. Nor did God send His Son into the world to pay a debt to humanity. He owed the race nothing. Man didn't hold a mortgage on God. Man had no claims against Him. God had written his law on the conscience, and man had in open defiance disregarded all that God had put in nature and in conscience to testify for Him. He refused to have God in his knowledge, and was justly sentenced.

God didn't pay a debt when He gave His Son or pay a mortgage, not at all. Moved by nothing but His own heart of measureless, unfathomable love, God Himself became flesh and dwelt among us. Oh, the mystery of it. Oh, the wonder of it. Incomprehensible grace that God out of love for a race so justly doomed and sentenced as ours should Himself take upon Himself our form and our likeness. Be made in our image and given the limitations of our humanity that by means of His human body and personality He might have a vehicle first to get into temptation.

He was tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin. When He had succeeded in coming through the valley of temptation that He might use that same body as the vehicle by which He, God, could get into death. Then the Lord Jesus Christ looked down across the centuries, and He saw you, justly damned, righteously condemned.

My dear sinner friend, you do not need to lie once more to be forever in hell. You need not reject Christ once again. You need not break one more commandment. All that needs to happen to

you, my impenitent unbelieving friend, is for God to let go of you for so much as a moment.

Do you not know that there are forged around your spirits chains, which go right down into the pit and which the enemy has fastened upon and is doing all that he can to drag you to your place? Do you not know that the weight of your guilt is so immense that were God to so much as relax in His loving protection for a moment that angels in fiery indignation would sweep upon you and that the very pressure of your own conscience would make you unfit to live upon God's earth, breathe His air, and be warmed by His sunshine?

Do you not realize that the only thing that keeps you from the pit for so much as a moment is the hand of God that holds you in life? You reckon to fail so often to recognize this and blaspheme the name of the very one that holds you from your doom. Where all God would have to do to damn anyone here that's not in Christ would be just to relax His mercy for a moment, and the pressure and weight of guilt would press them to their place. The law of moral gravitation would slow seize upon your spirit. Just as it drew Judas to his doom it would draw you to your own. But God breaks that law of moral gravitation for the purpose of grace and sustains you.

No, think not that Christ came to destroy. Not so. Your destruction was complete. Your doom was certain. He didn't come to bring death but to bring life. The only way that He could possibly bring life for you was to look down across the ages and take the full inventory of your crimes as well as the indescribable iniquity of your sin and consent to be made what you were. Oh, I'm afraid too many people have failed to understand the passion of Christ.

They have seen Him as a spectacle performing a function that the race witnessed. Never. He was there for you in your place, laden with your guilt, saddled with your crimes, and reckoned to be saturated with your uncleanness. He was there as you, in your place, in your stead. You ought to have been there. The Lord Jesus died for you, in your stead, in your place. He died for you.

You see, Psalm 7:11 says that "God hath bent His bow, and He has whet His sword." That bow and that sword had been aimed at every human heart. You, you I say, deserved it. You ought to have received it, but He stood there in your place and had laid to Him all your crimes. Had laid upon Him and counted to Him all your corruption. And because the arrows were just and the sword was righteous, the Lord Jesus Christ bared His breast in your name and said, Lord, try me on all of your wrath, for your wrath is right.

Let fall the sword of your justice, for your justice is perfect. He bore on Himself the arrows of God's wrath and the sword of His justice for you, in your place, and in your stead. Died for you, was buried for you, and was raised again for your justification. That the law thus by His resurrection body could be declared kept, its righteousness intact, God's holiness vindicated, for you.

Now I submit to you in the salvation of the lost, Jesus Christ is glorified. Oh when a man discovers the enormity of his crime. When God's truth has done its work in dividing between soul and spirit. When God's law as His ten-tooth saw has cut through the callus of sophistication and egotism over the corrupt human heart. When God has peeled back the human soul and shown you what you are, and you have been prepared to say, yes, God's judgment and justice was right. I deserved all His wrath sentenced upon me, I deserved it all.

When you come and stand before Him as a self-condemned, self-confessed rebel and traitor, an anarchist, an enemy in perpetual lifetime warfare against Him. I submit to you that when you thus see yourself to be what God has seen you the while to be, when you thus deal with yourself as God dealt with you at Calvary, when you come and throw down the arms of your rebellion and admit to the guilt of the crimes that have been laid to your charge, and take sides with God against yourself, and cast yourself down at the nail pierced feet of the rightful sovereign, that He's glorified.

Or He's glorified in this, in that first the sentence that He pronounced upon you is a true sentence. The crimes that He charged to you were fair and justly charged. Thus His justice and His holiness are vindicated. When you come and throw yourself down at His feet, you are doing farther than that. You are now revealing to Him the magnitude of His grace, His mercy, and His love. When you stand before Him a self-condemned criminal, recognize that you deserve the worst of His wrath. And you stand there before Him broken by the revelation of your guilt and yet pleading for part of His mercy, you do glorify Him as the gracious, loving, all gracious God. You glorify Him. You glorify Him.

My friends, I don't ask sinners any longer to come to Jesus Christ for what they'll get, for my friend, you deserve to get nothing but justice for your crimes. I would not rob the Lord Jesus of the glory that's His due in your repentance and in your faith by saying, "Now, you come and accept Him to get from Him forgiveness of your sins and the certainty of a home in heaven." I believe that such an appeal directed to your heart could only be to confirm you, confirm you in your selfishness.

This is the appeal that I make to you. By your crimes, you have slandered the worthy sovereign. By your iniquity, you have

been in ceaseless warfare with one that deserves better at your hand. By your rebellion, you have brought upon yourself the crimes that He so justly fastened to your account. He has sentenced you for them. Now, you come, you come to Christ because of what He will get by your coming. He will get the worship that He's deserved awhile and what you've criminally robbed Him of.

He will receive the adoration that He alone is worthy to obtain. You've adored yourself. You've worshiped yourself. You live to please yourself, and in so doing you've been idolatrous the while. Now come, worship the righteous sovereign. Sue for peace, plead for mercy because by your coming, you render to Jesus Christ that which is His due. He deserves your worship. He deserved your love. He deserved adoration to arise ceaselessly from your heart. He deserved obedience rendered from a glad heart.

You've robbed Him, deprived Him. Come to Jesus Christ and render to Him His due. Oh, what has been done by sinners not only committing all these crimes against the sovereignty of God's Son, but adding to them that most indescribably vicious crime of treading under His feet the blood of the everlasting covenant and counting that blood an unworthy thing. That when God died for you, after all of your crimes, you add further to it by trampling beneath unbelieving feet and an impenitent heart, the blood of the everlasting covenant.

You need not do it to die, but when you do it, I say to you, my dear friend today, when you do it, when you go one day having heard of the grace of God and the death of Jesus Christ without bowing at His feet, rendering to Him the homage, and the love, and the adoration, and the obedience that He deserves, by treading beneath your feet His blood, you do

testify to wondering angels at the enormity of your hatred of God.

You come to Christ. Even if you should have after having come spend eternity in hell, you come to Christ and begin today to recognize that you have no right to rule your life.

Confess with your mouth Jesus Christ to be Lord, and gladly consent to the extension of His sovereignty in the days or years that remain before you. Come to Jesus Christ so you see His hand that which He gives to criminals that deserve nothing. Come I say and render to Him that which is His due. Come to Christ not for what you'll get out of it but for that which He will get out of it. He deserves it. He's worthy of it. You come. You come to Him because He will be glorified in your coming.

When you stand before Him, accept your doom, accept your condemnation, accept the justice of His sentence upon you. Cast yourself before Him at His feet, broken in spirit, bankrupt in morals, nothing to bring, nothing to present, nothing to offer. When you come thus, He is glorified. When you bow the knee, receive Him and live. But hear me, you must come. You must come. Did you hear me? You must come.

You will either come now in response to such an invitation, as this message brings, or go out in ultimate impenitence and stand before Him and come because you cannot escape even to the holes in mountains to cover you. Then render to Him what the Father promised. All sin is insanity, moral insanity, moral insanity.

Dear friend, the sane, the wise thing to do is to come gladly to the feet of Jesus Christ, not to get but to bring to Him that which you so long deprived Him of; worship, adoration, obedience, praise. Come. Come. Come while it's called day.

Come while you can. Come. Come to the Savior. Make no delay, not for what you'll get but for what He will get by your coming. Let us pray.

Look well into your heart. Look well into your spirit. Have you come? Have you come in name only? Are you one of those that have a name to live but are dead and are in the synagogue of Satan? Or are you one that's never even pretended to bow the knee and still live in open obstinacy against Him? Or have you come, come gladly to bow at His feet? Where are you? Look well.

Father of our Lord Jesus, look thou down upon us. How long we've used the Lord Jesus as a means to something for ourselves. We've appealed to our own humanistic interests, and desires, and appetites, trying to persuade people to accept Christ for what they'll get out of Him. Today Lord we want people to come because of what Jesus Christ will get out of rebellious sinners ceasing their warfare, and throwing down their arms of rebellion, and standing there before thy justice, self-condemned.

Accepting all the sentence thou has pronounced upon them is true. Then Lord, to see thy mercy in thy Son, thy grace in the Lord Jesus, thy wondrous love in His poured out life. Oh God, breathe upon us. Let there be those today who say, I'm through with the crimes against the Holy God, through with a lifetime of rebellion against the worthy sovereign. Today, today I come, today I come. Let us remain in prayer for just a moment.

I want you to listen, I want you to think, and in these next few moments, if God has found your heart and you're prepared to come and say, I'm through, I'm through. I'll not go any longer in warfare against Him. While the strains of this closing song are sung, you just quietly get up from where you are and come

and take your place here at the front, and we'll pray with you and open the Word to you. You mind God.

Will you stand please, still in the attitude of prayer. In just a moment, you'll hear the words and strains of that song, that stanza, "Just as I am, poor wretched, blind." Before we go and while we wait before Him, I wonder if there are those, while every head is bowed and eyes closed, as will say, "Pray for me. I know I'm lost. I know I've never come and sued for peace. I've never met Him, but I see something of my crime and something of my need, and I want prayer. I'm not ready to come today, but I do want prayer. Pray for me. "

Would you put your hand up, anywhere in this house, anyone? Would you? Anyone, anywhere? Bless you. God bless you. Anyone? While we sing "Just as I am, poor, wretched, blind, sight, riches, healing of the mind, yea all I need in thee I find. Oh Lamb of God, I come," won't you come? You come now. After this, we'll have prayer and benediction. You come now and mind God.

Reveal again to our hearts, our Father, that Christ is glorified in the salvation of the lost. And for the glory of Jesus Christ, the Lamb that was slain, may we live Him, and preach Him, and exalt Him that He may receive of the reward of His suffering and of the spoils of His victory. And be glorified as blasphemous rebels cast themselves before Him and sue for peace and glorify Him by their coming.

Seal now we pray thee this service, and thy truth, let it burn, burn, burn deeply to our hearts until there shall come upon us as a people a passionate desire to see people coming to Christ. Not so much for what they'll get out of it as for what He'll get out of it, the glory, the praise, the honor that is His due. Now Lord, we pray thee thou would go with us as we part.

Send us away a sober people, and those who ought to have come and made known their need, lovingly deal with them. Bring them to the nail pierced feet of thy dear Son, the Lamb of God while it is called day, while there is still life and salvation. Go thou with us. Part thou with us as we leave one another. We go in thy presence. Speak to needy hearts. Bring us back this evening. May thy grace and thy mercy, and thy peace be and abide with us. Amen.

Do You Know These Men

It was this glorious confidence that sent the martyrs singing to their death. I wonder if the assurance that you were going to see Him face to face kept a song in your heart this week, set a guard about your lips, and monitored your mind. Because the first thing that's going to happen when we see Him face to face is that we shall give an account of the deeds we've done in the body, whether they be good or bad and every thought that we've had in our minds is going to be unveiled. Every word we've spoken is going to be sounded in the presence of angels and every deed we've done is going to be portrayed again that we can see it.

With this we come to two men. Do you know these two men? You say, which two do you refer to? You've told us last week about two. Are these the ones you have in mind; Hanani? This man who cared enough about Jerusalem to go back and see it. Honest of heart to report what he saw, burdened to share that report with those who could do something about it. Sufficiently gripped by truth and governed by reality and controlled by God that he could be God's instrument. Is this the man that you refer to?

I think perhaps I could find someone that applies to it. From history, scattering my eyes about seeing here and there those that might measure up. Is that the one you refer to?

What about Nehemiah? Is this the one that you have reference to? Are these the two? There's something in each of us that would like to be a Hanani, that would like to be a Nehemiah. I'm sure that every man would like to have his place and record with these two. But then we read of two other men, Sanballat and Tobiah. Are these the two to whom you refer?

Now, let's think for just a moment about Hanani. I've made just two or three brief remarks about him. First, he was the messenger of God. Have you been the messenger of God to someone? Has someone been God's messenger to you concerning your state? You know the reason why witnessing is hard work and most of us are very reluctant to do it, is because the message we have to bring isn't too pleasant. You'll have to say to someone who thinks and sees himself quite content as he is and where he is that in God's eyes, he's all wrong, nothing very happy about that.

You see we are so anxious to take the delightful parts out of the message. We would like to just take the good news. So many times personal workers would be content just to say that Christ died for your sins according to the Scripture and tell the good news of the Gospel.

But there's another message that's also part of that testimony and the witness has to tell about destruction. He has to tell about desolation. He has to tell about death if he's to be a faithful witness. Therefore, to be a Hanani to someone is to come and say that God has examined all the things in which you are to take pride. And found that they were just wounds and bruises and putrefying sores that from the top of the head to the sole of the feet there's no soundness in it.

All our righteousness is as filthy rags. The message that we bring as witnesses for Christ, the message that was brought originally to us was not a happy message. This is the reason why people are reluctant to bring it and why those that hear it aren't too pleased about it. Strange, isn't it? You go into a village in Africa for instance and find the chief, find the headman of the village and say, "I brought you good news." He'll say, "What is that?"

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Well, the good news that I brought you is that God is angry with you because of your sins. You read Romans 1 and He said He's been watching us at night. This is what we are. How did he find out that we've done these things? And that he said the soul that sins, it shall die.

Then we describe that place to which those that have sinned must go as we continue this message. A hand is raised, he says, "Wait a minute. You said when you came you have good news for us. This isn't good news. This is a message of death. This is a message that tells us where we are and we've known that. This is a message that tells us how bad we are and we know that. What do you mean good news? Why did you leave your country and come clear out here to tell us something we already know?"

Then we have to proceed to tell them that God loves them. That Christ came into the world and identified Himself with them and was made to be what they were. The innocent, spotless, infinitely holy Son of God became sin for them. Made to be the sin that they were, that they might be made the righteousness of God that He is.

That He was crucified by wicked men and was buried. And God testified that He accepted the death of His Son by raising him from the dead. And that if they would have part in the salvation that He died to make theirs; it requires that they renounce themselves and their heart of their crime. This was to choose how they please themselves, to live for their own pleasure. And now come through Jesus Christ and receive Him as God and prince and savior. And then they begin to say now its good news.

Before the Gospel has any meaning, there has to be preparation. That's what we've done in America dear friends.

We told people how to be saved before we properly used the law to prepare them to want salvation. We outlawed, the proper preaching of the truth of God around 75 years ago when it was consigned to Israel and to the law and to the Old Testament.

Since that time, we haven't had the proper proclamation of the holiness of God and the grandeur of God and the majesty of God that prepared men for grace. The first witness that we bring is witness that the walls are down, that bondage and slavery and debt has taken over. Is this what you've been? Is this what someone has been to you?

The other side of that is the response that we find on Nehemiah's part. Not all men that hear the witness respond to it. Probably not all to whom Hanani came were moved. But there was a man to whom God in His sweet and sovereign grace could effectually penetrate. This man, though he was occupied with many things and had great responsibility and great privilege, had the sword of God's revealing light driven deep within him and he saw his own heart.

He saw his sin. He saw his selfishness. He saw that he'd been content to live in Shushan and live with Artaxerxes, to live in the king's palace. He was content to take part in all the luxury that surrounded him and probably, some of the sin with which he was all too familiar. He wasn't a devout man in any particular sense of the word until there came a revelation. That revelation showed him his sin so he could say "We have sinned against thee, both I and my father's house have sinned." And it wasn't some little thing. This was a brokenness of his heart, the revelation of his guilt, the confession of his utter hopelessness in and of by himself.

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Oh dear friend today, has this happened to you, are you this man to whom the revelation of God's truth has wrought the revelation of your heart? Do you know that man? Are you that one? Have you ever been lost? Have you ever been driven into wits end corner? Have you ever seen yourself utterly unable to repent and yet God says, "Except you repent, you'll perish."

Have you ever seen yourself unable to feel the weight of your enormous guilt and yet God said forsake it or perish. We've made this too light I'm afraid. We've made this thing a matter of assenting to the plan instead of breaking before God. Has this happened to you? Have you broken? This man couldn't eat. This man fasted. This man prayed for days and weeks. There's something happened to him.

I spent a few days two weeks ago in the home of a man down in Frazer, Pennsylvania, a man to whom faithful witness had come. For months, the Spirit of God pierced and his friends would say repent and he'd say, "I can't repent." And they say, "Believe," and he'd say, "I can't believe." What do you mean you can't believe? Oh he said I know everything in the Bible is true but agreeing that it's true and knowing it's true and holding it's true hasn't made any difference in my heart. The Word says if I believe with my heart, it will be unto righteousness, that assurance of sins forgiven and the certainty of life eternal. He said I don't have that.

Then someone gave him that book that I've recommended to you "All of Grace" by Spurgeon, the reason why Mr. Moody started the Colportage Association. Number one, it was the discovery of Mr. Moody that when he began to preach in 1857, all he had to do was to exhort people to act on the truth they knew and it was good solid sound truth. When they responded, there was something real.

But at the close of his ministry in the 1890s, he told 200 preachers up at Northfield, "When I began to preach, all I had to do was exhort people to act on the truth they knew." But he said, "You are in another day." "There has risen up a generation of people that don't know the truth, ignorant. And if you exhort them, they will respond but when there's no truth, the response is ephemeral and passing, a will of the wisp."

He said, "You've got to teach them the truth upon which their action can be based." And so he started the Colportage Association to make possible the free distribution, the wide distribution, of great teaching such as you find in "All of Grace." This came to Ellis Speakman and Ellis began to read it and in there, he said "Spurgeon tells how you find your heart is cold and you can't squeeze tears from dry eyes." He said, "Of course you can't. And yet Jesus Christ said except you repent, you'll perish. Whence comes this repentance?" And then Spurgeon brings them to that verse which says, "Jesus Christ has been exalted to give repentance and remission of sins."

And the word came. Go to Jesus Christ who's been exalted to give repentance as well as remission and tell him the coldness of your heart. Tell him the hardness of your mind. Tell him the dryness of your eyes. Tell him the rebellion of your spirit. And He'll give repentance and He'll give faith and remission of sins. That's why it's called "All of Grace" because the only thing that you can bring is your need. The only thing you can bring is your desperate condition. That you sinned and know you've sinned and yet feel neither remorse nor grief, nor concern for your sin. But you go to Jesus Christ and He by his Spirit will work in your heart repentance.

Are you that man? Are you that man Nehemiah that's been broken? Are you that man that's seen yourself utterly helpless

and hopelessly undone? Commanded to repent and unwilling to do it. Commanded to believe and incapable of doing it without repenting? Held between God's wrath and hell, have you been there? Have you been lost? God only saves lost people. Christ only came to seek and to save that which is lost. The reason more people aren't being genuinely saved is because they're not being lost.

Are you that lost man, that hopeless man, that helpless man? Are you the man that saw yourself undone, worthless, without anything to commend or recommend you to go on? Were you? Then you know something of what happened to Nehemiah. Here's a man who broke and in the breaking had a revelation of God. Have you had a revelation?

Salvation is revelation. We thought salvation is theology. It isn't theology. Salvation is revelation. It's a revelation when it pleased God to reveal His Son in me, not to reveal His Son to me but reveal His Son in me. This is what salvation is.

Revelation of Jesus Christ in the heart by the Spirit. Christ is our life. Now, are you that man? Are you the man that was witness or was witnessed to? Are you the man that broke and bowed in hopeless, helplessness and found God merciful and gracious to forgive and to pardon? Are you that person? Well, I trust you are.

You know the tendency is for us to think that when I put such a title as 'Do You Know These Two Men,' I'm going to contrast two individuals, Nehemiah and Sanballat or introduce Sanballat and Tobiah. I must confess that this is a temptation but it isn't the purpose. It's a possibility, but it isn't the purpose. For I think we're seeing here one man represented by two.

First, we're seeing Nehemiah. He was a selfish, complacent, indulgent, rebellious son of the covenant that had no participation in the life of God. Then he meets the Lord by the supernatural grace of God. And he becomes immediately concerned about the testimony of God, about the witness of God, about that which was to the glory of God, namely His city Jerusalem.

I believe this happens to everyone that's born of God. I believe that when you press through this mountain of midnight that separates you from God and you burst into the light of forgiveness, immediately you want to go and build the walls. And bring back the glory that God has a right to expect from His people. I believe this characterizes us. It ought to characterize us.

It wasn't but just a little while until Nehemiah discovered that everyone wasn't as enthusiastic about this as he was. And so when Sanballat, the Horonite - this was a town in Samaria - and Tobiah, the slave, the Ammonite that had absolutely no part in the covenant of grace that God made with Israel, heard of it, it grieved them.

Last week, we talked about the grief of the godly. I suppose we might have well-spoken today about the grief of the ungodly for it's certainly there. It grieved them exceedingly that there was come a man to seek the welfare of the children of Israel. And it didn't only grieve them but you'll find if you'll read the balance of this book that Sanballat and Tobiah were constantly at war with Nehemiah.

First, they were here by scorn, laughing, scornful, despising and lying saying, "Are you going to rebel against the king?" Even though they [Nehemiah] had letters from the king for everything that they were doing. I suppose I could look around

and say, "Well, now look. Here's Sanballat and here's Tobiah." But you know if we did that, we'd be begging the question. Do you know where you need to look to find Sanballat and Tobiah? You just need to look in your own heart.

Let's turn please to the seventh chapter of the book of Romans. I think if we do that, we'll discover that this is but a picture of a conflict that is even deeper than we perhaps realize. Here in the seventh chapter of the book of Romans, we find that there's something that is tremendously important. Verse 14,

"For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin. For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good. Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me."

"For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me."

"I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

There it is. There is the conflict. There is Sanballat and Tobiah and if you go over here, you'll find that they were joined by a third, the Arabian. They heard it - Geshem, the Arabian. You remember that the Arabians were the descendants of Ishmael

and Ishmael is from Hagar and Hagar is a picture of the flesh. What have you then, here in the book of Nehemiah?

You have the testimony of every Christian. What do you mean every Christian? I thought you believe in the victorious life? I do but I believe we've got to face the enemy before you can secure a victory. You've got to see who the enemy is before you'll know whether or not you're victorious.

Some people would like to say the enemy is something other than you. It's sort of a little excrescence that's attached itself under your will. It's called the carnal nature which isn't any part of you and you can blame it on Adam. But I believe if you'll carefully read Romans 6 and 7, you'll discover that the old man is you, is me. It's what we are by nature. It's our old attitude. It's our old habits of thought, our old disposition, our old will. It's us. And what were we by nature?

Are we the children of God, the same father that had the spark of divinity? Oh we were the children of our father well enough, but he was identified now, his paternity established.

We were of our father, the devil whose children we were. Whose attitudes we expressed, whose nature we revealed, whose disposition we exhibited, whose pattern we followed and whose paths we obeyed and whose precepts we accepted. That's such were we, such were we.

This is all what the flesh is. My dear, when God saw me in his own infinite wisdom and love, saw me as I came from my mother and was given nature by father and mother, a nature that goes back to Adam. When God saw that nature come to the age of accountability and express itself, God in His sweet grace said of me - "Utterly, totally, horribly ruined by sin."

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God in His wisdom couldn't do anything with me but to set a stick up outside the city, Jerusalem, and hang me on that stick. And say to angels and say to men and say to devils, "This is what he is." And He did the same to you.

What do you have? In Romans chapter five, you have this, Christ dying for us. "In due time, Christ died for the ungodly." For when we were yet without strength Christ died for us. That's the message of chapter five. And what do you find in chapter six? Christ died as us. He died as me, not only for me but He died as me.

Thus He said to the universe, "This man for whom I am dying is so totally ruined by sin that there isn't one thing in this world that even God can find to do with him but dispose of him." And the place He disposed of me and of you was at the cross. That's where Sanballat was taken. That's where Tobiah was taken. That's where Geshem, the Arabian was taken - to a cross.

It was the law that condemned us. The law is just and holy and good. And the law searched through you and measured you. Searched through me, measured me. We found that we'd sinned and come short of the glory of God. Our mouths were stopped. And in us there wasn't any good thing. God took me out there and He took you out there and in the person of Jesus Christ, He put you on a gibbet and hung you on a stick and said to the universe, "There isn't a thing in the world I can find to do with him. There he is."

And I'll tell you something. You didn't know that when you came to Christ. All you saw when you first came was that Christ died for you. You were so glad that He died for you, so glad that He paid the penalty of your sin, so glad that He was

in your place. You were so happy to have the burden removed and the guilt taken away.

And immediately you said when the burden was lifted and the guilt was taken away, now I'm going to build the walls of Jerusalem. Now, I'm going to serve God and so you answered the invitation and the dedication service and you came down and dedicated Sanballat and dedicated Tobiah and dedicated Geshem, the Arabian. You said now they're going to serve the best interest of Jerusalem for that's where they were and that's what they were doing.

That's where you were. That's what you were doing. But I tell you Sanballat doesn't know any means of serving God other than when he served the devil. He served the devil with fighting so he served God with fighting. He served the devil with vanity so he tries to serve God with vanity. He served the devil with self-seeking so he tries to serve God with self-seeking. He served the devil with his own fleshly energy waiting to be applauded so he served God with his fleshly energy waiting to be applauded.

And you'll never see the walls of Jerusalem built with the energy of Sanballat, Tobiah and Geshem, the Arabian. They'll remain burned and the walls will be down and there's only one way they'll ever be built. When someone comes with a message from the king that would seek to do good for Jerusalem.

But I'll tell you when that happens, you're going to find that Sanballat and Tobiah and Geshem will put up a fight because the flesh says, "I'll do anything but die, anything but die." "Oh, I'll wear sackcloth. I'll sleep on a bed of spikes. I'll walk on nails. I'll sleep in flaming fire but I won't die. I don't have to die." Oh but whenever the message comes with those that

would seek the good of Israel, it always means death to Sanballat and Tobiah and Geshem, the Arabian.

There can't be any quarter. There can't be any peace, no compromise. And all you'll find later that Sanballat and Tobiah say to Nehemiah, "Now, look. Can't you use us? We can help you. You must have our assistance. We have influence, ability and the resources for the task." Nehemiah said, "Look, the walls of Jerusalem cannot have any of Sanballat and Tobiah and Geshem, the Arabian. It won't be there, can't do it, no compromise, no place."

God says in His glory of which He is so jealous, "I am not going to let any man get glory serving me. No flesh is going to glory in my sight." You read in First Corinthians the third chapter about a day when men's works are going to be tried by fire. You'll find wood and hay and stubble and over against it gold and silver and precious stones. You know what wooden hay and stubble are? It is the works of Sanballat, Tobiah and Geshem, the Arabian. That's all they can do. When God tests it, there's nothing but ashes. Everything that I do for God in the energy of my personality, everything you do for God in the energy of your personality is going to be nothing but the burned gates, just ashes that soot and blow away. That's all.

God can make no peace with the flesh. There's no place for them so before the walls can be built, there has to be a clear cut line drawn. And so Paul said God can't be glorified by the energy of the flesh. "The things I counted gain to me, I have to count loss for Christ." The things upon which I would have depended, I have to recognize are nothing but awful, nothing but refuse, nothing but that which is to be cast out and scattered away. There's nothing there for God. So there has to come in to your place, your life that experience.

That experience where like Nehemiah, you discovered that the moment you begin to serve God, there rises up an enemy. You know that enemy. You say, "I wish it was Geshem, the Arabian. That sounds so nice. He seems so foreign." But do you know who Geshem, the Arabian is? It's you without Jesus Christ. It's me without him. It's what I was by nature, what you were. That's what Sanballat is. That's the old man. That's what Tobiah is, the old man. That's what you were.

You know quite well who it is. You know the part of you that plots and plans and says I'm going to hurt, I'm going to get even, I'm going to vindicate, I'm going to do this, I'm going to do that. You know who's doing it - Sanballat and Tobiah for that's what they were doing. You know who it is that insists on his own ways, his own rights in getting every ounce of credit and praise. You know who it is - Sanballat and Tobiah.

You know who it is that hurts and injures and bruises - Sanballat and Tobiah. Do you know who it is that lies and lusts? Sanballat and Tobiah. But who's Sanballat and Tobiah? It's me by nature. It's you by nature. It's what we were when God found us. There's no compromise, no peace, no place where we can strike an agreement.

Only one thing, we've got to come to the place that Paul did. He said knowing this, that our old man is crucified with Christ. That's where God dealt with Sanballat. That's where He dealt with Tobiah. That's where He dealt with me. That's where He dealt with you.

The only way we'll ever have victory from this tyrannous insurrection that would undermine everything of God's holy purpose, is to bring Sanballat and bring Tobiah and Geshem, the Arabian to the place God's provided which is the cross. And there to stay. Not just to come in theory but stay every

day, stay constantly, never leave it. For the moment that you allow them the least liberty, they go back unchanged. They've not been disciplined.

The cross is not a place of discipline. The cross is a place of destruction. Do you see? We think somehow the cross can educate Sanballat, pierce him through enough and he won't be Sanballat anymore, drive the nails deep enough and he won't be Tobiah anymore. Press the thorns down hard enough then he'll cease to be Geshem, the Arabian. But he won't. That's why the Bible says, reckon yourself to be dead, indeed unto sin. You'll never outgrow it, nor will I. And the last day you breathe, you're going to find a subtle appeal that comes in from the Dung gate to the heart and it's going to say something like this, "Now, you just say that cutting word."

"You say that. Do that selfish thing. You do that. You've got a right." Sanballat though he's been on the cross for 40 years, he's going to quiver with excitement, "Going to get even now." The last day you breathe, you'll find that Sanballat and Tobiah and Geshem, the Arabian have to stay where God put them, crucified with Christ.

But oh, my dear, what did Paul say? Must I go on constantly in battle? Yes. He said I must go on but must I go on constantly in defeat? No. It didn't say there wouldn't be battle but he said there didn't have to be defeat. There's a difference, you know.

He said there's no temptation overtaken you. He didn't say that you'd be immune to temptation but he said there's no temptation overtaken you except that which is common to man. And he will with the temptation make a way of escape that you may be able to bear it. So some would say Paul said the normal Christian life was to live in constant defeat, wanting to do something and doing another. No, Paul didn't say that.

Paul said this is the conflict between the old man and the new man but he didn't say that the old man was going to go on in ascendancy. No, no. He said, "Thanks be to God which giveth us this victory. I thank God through Jesus Christ, our Lord." "Then with a mind, I myself serve the law of God but the flesh unchanged remains always the servant of sin and therefore I shall go on reckoning myself to be dead indeed unto sin."

Now, we have three laws here. First, you have the law of God. That revelation of God which is just and holy and good by which when Hanani came to you, you were slain and prepared for grace. Then there's the second law, the law of sin, the law of Sanballat and Tobiah and Geshem. There's always going to be that law. But there's the third law. You find that in Romans 8, the law of the spirit of life which has made me free from the law of sin and death. Back in Romans 5, we had Christ for us, in Roman 6, Christ as us and in Romans 8, Christ in us.

This is how the walls are going to be built in the church and in your life when it's Christ in us. But it can't be Christ in us until it is first seen that it's Christ as us. Listen to Paul, "I am crucified with Christ." That's how he dealt with Saul of Tarsus who was Sanballat and Tobiah and Geshem. "Nevertheless, I live yet not I but Christ liveth in me."

You leave today, you choose whether you're going to serve the law of sin and death or you're going to allow the law of the spirit of life to make you free from the law of sin and death. But if you serve the law, the spirit of life, it's going to be that you brought yourself, that old Sanballat and Tobiah and Geshem the Arabian to the cross. And have remembered that in you, in your flesh, there dwelleth no good thing.

When tomorrow, you find Sanballat speaking and Tobiah is thinking and Geshem is working, bring them right back to the

cross. Don't make peace with them. Don't argue with them. You come back and reckon yourself dead, indeed unto sin. Let the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus make you free from the law of sin and death.

Shall we bow in prayer. Truth always brings responsibility. It always brings a crisis. These two men are not hard to find - the old man, the Sanballat and Tobiah - that's me, that's you. The new man, Christ Jesus. Who's going to reign this week? Who's going to rule? Who's going to govern? Sanballat is going to fight for itself, its rights. He has no part in the covenant of God, no inheritance in Jerusalem, condemned to death. But fight it will unless you bring it to the place where the fight has been won - the cross and let the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus make you free from the law of sin and death. What will it be? What will it be? Is it going to be Nehemiah or Sanballat today, tomorrow?

Our Father, we pray that now by thy Spirit, we'll drive the truth of the word deep into our hearts this morning. Should there be some that have a name to live but are dead or some who have not even professed the name of Christ, might they stop at Calvary and stay there until thou hast revealed thy Son in them.

But for those Lord that have had this work done, draw them on. Draw us on to the cross and beyond the cross into the resurrection life of Christ revealed in us. Bless we pray thee now, this people. Draw them on to reality, to victory, to deliverance in Jesus' name for His sake we pray. Amen. Please stand. Shall we bow for the benediction.

Our Father, we thank thee now for the wonderful deliverance thou has granted us in the Lord Jesus Christ. Oh, God of grace, come thou upon us today. Let the Spirit of God drive the truth

home until we've been brought into the glorious liberty of the children of God. Now, unto Him who is able to keep us from falling and to present us faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, the only wise, God our savior be glory and honor, dominion and power now and forever. Amen.

Repentance

Turn to Exodus Chapter 33. We have just read the 32nd chapter. I choose to read, beginning with the first verse of the 33rd chapter. "And the Lord said unto Moses, Depart, and go up hence, thou and the people which thou hast brought up out of the land of Egypt, unto the land which I swear unto Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, saying, Unto thy seed will I give it: And I will send an angel before thee; and I will drive out the Canaanite, the Amorite, and the Hittite, and the Perizzite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite: Unto a land flowing with milk and honey: for I will not go up in the midst of thee; for thou art a stiff-necked people: lest I consume thee in the way."

"And when the people heard these evil tidings, they mourned: and no man did put on him his ornaments. For the Lord had said unto Moses, Say unto the children of Israel, Ye are a stiff-necked people: I will come up into the midst of thee in a moment, and consume thee: therefore now put off thy ornaments from thee, that I may know what to do unto thee. And the children of Israel stripped themselves of their ornaments by the Mount Horeb. And Moses took the tabernacle, and pitched it without the camp, afar off from the camp, and called it the Tabernacle of the congregation."

"And it came to pass, that everyone which sought the Lord went out unto the tabernacle of the congregation, which was without the camp. And it came to pass, when Moses went out unto the tabernacle, that all the people rose up, and stood every man at his tent door, and looked after Moses, until he was gone into the tabernacle. And it came to pass, as Moses entered into the tabernacle, the cloudy pillar descended, and stood at the door of the tabernacle, and the Lord talked with Moses."

"And all the people saw the cloudy pillar stand at the tabernacle door: and all the people rose up and worshiped, every man in his tent. And the Lord spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend. And he turned again into the camp: but his servant Joshua, the son of Nun, a young man, departed not out of the tabernacle."

You have heard the reading of the scripture and it equates you with the fact that God had brought out of Egypt a people for his praise. We entered this year as being taught that Egypt speaks of the world and the drawing of Israel out of Egypt across the Red Sea into the wilderness was a picture of redemption. God's redeeming love and purpose and might was displayed in this work in behalf of this enslaved people.

We associate ourselves with it by saying we were the slaves of sin. Even as Israel made bricks without straw that we were under a greater than Pharaoh, even Satan Himself. We were in bondage that we could not break and from which we could not deliver ourselves. But God in His grace and mercy and power, reached down and drew us out. Out from and into. From our bondage and death into life and freedom.

This we've understood to be the pattern of the teaching of this event but we also recognize that after one has come into the wilderness, there are battles to be fought and issues to be met. Here we find a redeemed people, at least in picture and type that due to the absence of the teacher Moses, who's up in the presence in the mountain with God, becomes concerned about their own interests. And so they take things into their own hands, none able to trust the Lord. They're aware they're in a desert. They've got to have water, they must have food and they need a god that will help them.

The God that has brought them out of Egypt is no longer visible to them in the person of Moses who is there as his representative. And so they make Aaron, induce Aaron, persuade Aaron to make a golden calf. Now, we are not sure where the idea of the calf comes from. The worship of the calf in this form is not associated with Egypt. It is not there they worship the living ox or bull in Egypt. It is probably Semitic. It goes back to Ur of the Chaldees in that time before the movement of Jacob's sons down into Egypt.

At any rate, a calf is made and the people are told that this is their god and they bow before it. Now, God allowed all of this to happen as we saw Wednesday night last, in order that Israel might discover themselves. You see, before even God can help us, we've got to see ourselves. Now, they knew they were in intolerable bondage and they wanted to be delivered from that. They knew that they were in tasks that were demeaning and degrading and they wanted to be free from that. But you see, they didn't understand themselves.

After he delivered them from that which speaks of the sentence of death, by the blood on the door post and by His grace manifest and carrying them through the Red Sea, they still had to face themselves. And so it was circumstances that brought them to the unveiling of their own hearts.

I may speak to someone that years ago found forgiveness of sins and pardon of past transgressions. You've named the name of Christ and know or appear at least that if you were to die today, on the basis of the finished work of Christ, you'd go to heaven.

But my friend, God's purpose isn't only to deliver us out of Egypt, it's to deliver us from ourselves as well. We find that these people have come out of Egypt but they haven't come out

of tyranny and bondage to themselves. Here is seen their unbelief. Here is seen their pride and amorous. Here is disclosed their desire to be something that they are sure they can't be and they haven't confidence enough to trust God to bring them into. They need water and so they've got to have a golden calf that they can petition for water.

They need food. They've got to have a daily supply for a company some have said as many as 2.5 million people. They're in a desert, where are they going to get it? They have to take matters into their own hands. My friend, every sin that's ever committed comes because a person yields to temptation. Temptation is the proposition presented to the mind to gratify a good appetite in a bad way. The appetite isn't bad. The appetite for food, for knowledge, for sex, you name it. If it's there, if it's part of human personality, God made it and it isn't bad. Temptation was Satan's proposition to Eve to take things into her own hands, to become her own god. To make her own golden calf and to decide how she was going to satisfy that good appetite.

The sin is the decision to do it. Here they have needs and pressures which are recognized as being valid. God's aware of them but they aren't willing to trust Him. Instead of trusting their desires and their needs to the Lord, they do it themselves just as perhaps you've done.

Forgiven of the past but you couldn't trust God for status to give you the position you deserve and the recognition you deserve and the honor you deserve. The only way you know to do it is to become your own god and to climb up somebody else's frame, stand on their head and neck so that you can be six inches higher than you were before.

If you backbite, if there's whispering or backbiting or gossip, this is what it is. A tearing down of another to build oneself up. It's the making of a golden calf. If a person has to use means of duplicity and dishonor in order to have security and to have the sufficient for themselves, they've made a golden calf. They couldn't trust God to take care of their daily supply of food and so, they had to change it in such a way as to make sure that if God fails, they'll still be taken care of.

Whenever a Christian stoops to anger, wrath or malice, busyness or strife, to whispering, to backbiting, to uncleanness of imagination, whenever a Christian sins, it is equivalent to making a golden calf. He doesn't make it out of earrings but he makes it out of words that have gone into his ears. He doesn't make it out of wood but he makes it out of ideas that have come into his imagination so as to find some way to insure that he's going to get what he wants.

This is the sin of the golden calf, turning away from God, turning their trust away from Him and taking matters into their own hands. We find that God dealt with this as the enormous sin that it is. I will have to say it again lest anyone has missed it, that to be delivered from the past is wonderful but it's only a fragment, a portion of God's delivering purpose. He did not only want to deliver us from what we have done, he wanted also to deliver us from what we are. But before we can ever be delivered from what we are, we have to discover what we are.

God withdrew Moses for 40 days. God allowed these people to be in this situation for this period of time in order that under this abrasion of experience, they could have the little sophistication of their spiritual pride rubbed off to reveal the raw flesh of what the rub would show through.

This is what God does in your circumstances. You're put in a situation where the one that you work for, the boss or the people at the factory, just goad you the wrong way. Or rub you the wrong way and they cut you and tear you.

Do you think you're there by accident? Never. God has allowed this situation to come in order that you can see yourself because what happens to you never hurts you. It isn't what happens to me or to you. They weren't hurt by being in the desert. It's what they did about what happened that hurt them. When moved with unbelief, when moved with avarice, when moved with vanity, they made golden calves. They were hurt but it wasn't what God did, it's what they did about their circumstances.

And so it always is the case that we reveal ourselves. God said to Moses, "They have corrupted themselves. They've turned out of the way." Sin is ever thus. Always it's thus. Now, as Moses came down from the mountain, where he had interceded on behalf of Israel, staying God's hand by his intercession, he now came as the ambassador for God. Previously, he'd been the representative of Israel. He'd been an intermediary. He's been a warrior. He'd been an advocate appointed by the court on behalf of some guilty people.

So Moses, in the mount talking with God, begins to say these are your people whom you have brought out of Egypt and they're your responsibility. Your glory is at stake, stay your hand, hold back your wrath. And because he plead for them, not that they were innocent but that God was gracious, God stayed his hand. But said he would not go up with them.

Now Moses comes down from the mountain, and as he comes down he sees Israel gathered around this golden ox or calf. They'd been eating. They have sat down to eat and to drink.

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Now they have risen up to play, probably in some orgiastic rite that had been conveyed to them by some means.

Here they are engaged in all the foul, vilest of idolatry. Thus Moses seeing them takes the tables of stone which had on them the Ten Commandments and he dashes them to the ground. Now they had broken the first commandment, "Thou shall have no other god's before me." God is thus testifying that he that is guilty of breaking one law, has actually broken them all.

He that has sinned in one point is guilty of all and one sin leads to another, for making this has now led to immorality and to all drunkenness and all the other things that are associated with it. Moses breaks the table of stone testifying of God's anger that this is a people that are under the sentence of death.

The next thing he does is to break the idols. He takes this golden calf and burns it. It possibly was wood that had been carved and covered with gold or however it was. He burned it, he strewed the ashes on the water and forced the people to drink the water thus symbolizing that they are actually participants in the crime. Then, he reveals a great and just anger against Israel for her sin.

He not only reveals the anger but he proceeds to judge them and to chasten them and to vindicate God as he attacks this crime that they've committed. For we find in these verses here of 21 to 29 a setting forth of the awful, the awful anger. I say awful in the proper use of the word.

Here is Moses that has given a demonstration of how God feels about sin. He's been close enough to God long enough to feel the same way that God feels. It is a terrible thing when people, Christian people sin. When a child of God allows sin in his life, he somehow feels that it isn't as serious as it was before he was

saved. But I submit to you on the basis of the authority of God's word that he's never changed. Sin in my life or your life is hated just as much as it is in any pagan anywhere in the world.

Where did we get the idea? How did it come into the church? How did it ever get into Christian theology that God saved people in their sins? Where did it come from? It's out of the pit. There's no answer but out of the pit. God hates sin as much in a professing Christian as he does in the vilest sinner out in the world. His attitude towards sin has not been ameliorated by the cross. There is the revelation of his wrath and not the amelioration of his wrath.

Do you see it? He didn't give us a carte blanche credit card and when Jesus died said, here go out and charge your sins. They've been paid for in advance and there has been a deposit made that you can draw on so sin as you will. This isn't what he said but this is what I hear people saying in his behalf. Making him the minister of sin and it's a terrible travesty.

My friend, God hates sin. If that's the last word I ever utter over a pulpit, I want it to be known that God hates sin. God is angry with sinful people whether they are church members and know theology and have accepted the plan of salvation, God hates sin. Ours is a generation that's lost the fear of God before their eyes.

Someone said about a certain school in this country. Said the young man, "I'm sorry my father sent me there because they do everything there that they do in the high schools in the city except it's all done by Christians." And this makes me, he said, feel as though I shall carry through all my life a depraved view of the Gospel of the grace of God. "I'm sorry my father went to the expense of sending me to this school."

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Now I submit to you dear friend, that there's provision made for the Christian that sins when his attitude is right and he fulfills the provisions God has exacted. But the idea that a person can accept Jesus and then go on living without any concern in sin, is so utterly foreign to this book as to make it just laughable that it should have to be refuted. But we must refute it.

For I know of some teachers that say because the person has named the name of Christ and accepted him - one man proudly put into his paper that a Christian could live in sin and could die in the arms of a harlot and then go straight into Heaven that this being the practice of his life. I submit to you on the authority of God's word, that this is a travesty. This is a heresy. This has no relation to the revelation of God and his Word.

For the scripture says, "Whosoever is born of God doth not keep on practicing sin; for God's seed remaineth in him: and he cannot practice sin, because he is born of God. In this is manifest the children of God and the children of the devil." It is to be said and said and said again that our God is a holy God. He said to Moses, call the people and so he called and Levi came. He said, put your sword on your side and go through and every man find his brother, his father and his family and slay those that are nearest to you.

Three thousand people died in the camp that day as God had instructed Moses to give this revelation of his wrath. But the fact is the 3,000 is but a testimony that all deserve to be slayed. This is the truth that we see here. God hates sin but what is God's response to this? What does he say?

After Moses has sent them through, after they had burned and broken the idol and made them drink it, what does he say? Is it finished? No. God calls Moses up into the mountain as we read

in the 33rd chapter and he says, "You go down and tell these people that they are a stiff-necked people. For they haven't seen even yet." For there they are, they put their earrings back on, their necklaces on, their bracelets on and incidentally it was the men that did it. You go down and tell them that they have not seen or understood the nature of their sin.

Then he says, "I will not go up with you. I won't because if I do, seeing you as you are, I'm going to simply consume you in a moment." When Moses came down and told the people this, they stripped their ornaments from their body. They made themselves abase before the Lord. They repented of their sin. Now, understand these are a people that have seen marvelous things happen. They've been living in the midst of miracles. They stand as a redeemed people.

Can it be possible? Can it be possible that a child of God can sin? Yes. After all I've said, it is possible that a child of God can sin and still be a child of God. I haven't said anything about it. I said he can't practice it. He can't keep it on, keep it up and justify it and vindicate it. He can fall into sin. He can be overtaken in a fall but he cannot go on vindicating and justifying it. He must deal with it.

We find that this is what has happened at this time. Here, God has Moses take the tabernacle. It wasn't the main tabernacle later to be built. It was just a little tent that was set aside for a meeting place of God with Moses. He says, "Take this tabernacle way off from the congregation." Moses rolls down this tent of meeting and takes it up in some distance away; he sets this tent up, the place where he's going to meet with God.

And then he came back into the people and said, "If you want to be included among the blessed. If you want to have fellowship with God, it's absolutely imperative that you do

something about it." And they said, "What shall we do Moses?" He said, "Now that you've stripped the ornaments from all of you or now that you have taken your insignias of your vanity and your pride and your effort to please yourself away, you have got to go out in the sight of all Israel to that tent way out there."

You've got to separate yourself from your day and your generation, the opinions of your family and your friends. And the contempt in which you will be held. You must be different. You must be different. And so he moved the tent way out there. You say does this have any counterpart in the present time. Yes indeed it does. Indeed it does. I said that we were in the midst of a revival and we are. It's not following the usual patterns but it's of God and we'll rejoice in this. Let me give you the equivalent to the present time.

I'm reading from Second Corinthians 6:15. "And what concord hath Christ with Belial? Or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? For ye are the temple of the living God; as God said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty."

"Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." God is saying it again to the church at Corinth as he said it through Moses to Israel. If you're going to have fellowship with me, you've got to break. You've got to break with the past. With past attitudes, with past relationships, things that may have been right yesterday but

now in the light of what you see, from my face, they're not right today. You break today. You break with every questionable thing. You break with every doubtful thing. You break with everything that in anyways is going to grieve him whose name is holy.

I submit to you that if you are to be in the center of God's moving and blessing and want to be under the cloud of His presence, it's going to be absolutely necessary for you, today as a 20th century Christian, to experience brokenness of heart and brokenness of mind. You heard it in the song that was sung. It's in the 51st Psalm. It's in the Word throughout. "The broken and the contrite spirit, I will not despise." The sacrifice that God desires are a broken heart and again, He has said, "My name is Holy. I dwell in the high and holy place within that is of a broken and a contrite spirit."

This is what we learn from what we've seen. That repentance and that's what it is, is a willingness to change our mind about any action, about any attitude, about any acquisition or possession, about anything that we have. The bringing of ourselves into agreement with God.

Dear heart, you've got to choose. You must choose how much you want God. How much you want the presence of God and the blessing of God. You say Moses didn't do it, the leader, the preacher. Some of you might look at me and say, we've heard from you about the deeper life and the spiritual life and the Christ-filled life. We've heard for years and years and nothing's happened to us. My friend, it will happen. It will happen.

When you break. When you bend. When you bow. When you come to the cross. When you come to the end of yourself. When you go outside the camp. It will happen. The cloud will come down and God will meet you.

You can't blame it onto Moses. You can't blame it onto a preacher. You can't blame it on your teacher. It's a personal matter meeting God. It depends on whether you're prepared to pay the price. You're prepared to say I'm going out there with Moses. I'm going out there with God to that tent of meeting. All the friends looked and say he's queer. Gone to get excited. He's fanatical. You come to someone and say "I want you to forgive me. My heart has been utterly wrong toward you. I want you to forgive me."

They look at you and say, "Well, all right, I guess you saw it." And they see you walking out towards the tent. You go to someone else and say, "I took this and I've got to restore it." They look at you and say, "Well, that's not a very big thing." Here you are. You're the fool. You're the fanatic. You're the weird one because you're breaking, you're bending, you're bowing, and you're meeting God's conditions. You're moving out toward the tent of meeting, the place where the cloud comes down.

What we've been asking for, you see, is a revival that won't cost us anything. We've been asking for God to meet us at his expense where it's not going to involve us. I've known people that have prayed every day for many years, I suppose, for revival. And they don't want it at all because they'll be embarrassed. It'll break them. It'll make them sensitive about little things. It'll make them concerned about the inconsequential. It'll mean they have to turn over the whole of the past and bring it under the blood. Admit that their life has been lived in futility and emptiness and they don't want revival. What they want is some great emotional upsurge that will leave them unchanged and bring in a great many other people into the church.

Revival doesn't begin with the outside. My people called by my name will take off their ornaments, will leave the camp and go way out there in front of everybody, alone and conspicuous. Then, he said, I'll meet them. I'll meet them and this is exactly what happened. This is what God is saying today and the ones that he's going to meet. I see no prospect, hear me now, I'm speaking carefully though fervently.

I see no prospect of revival coming to this church. I see no prospect of revival coming to any church because revival doesn't come to churches. It comes to people. It comes to people. God can meet you. God can bless you but it's going to be a lonely thing when you have to take the sword of his Word and clap it to your side and go through in the darling of your heart this position, this relationship, this interest, and this possession. The sword of his truth cuts and cleaves the dearest thing you've known but it must if you're to be His.

It must go through all ambitions. It must go all through all relationships. It must go through all possessions. It must go through every interest. Fathers and brothers must die. The things we've born of our own flesh, not our family and such but these ideas, these positions, these interests, they've got to go. They've got to go because they've been in the place of God.

Dear heart, today, see what the reward is. What did he say? Come out from among them and be separate so that you can be queer and peculiar and get your satisfaction from the fact that you're not like other people. No, no, no, not that at all. Here's what he says, "Come out from among them and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing and I will receive you."

He's asking you to break over everything, every attitude. The smallest, the littlest thing, anything that he shows you. He's

asking you to instantly forsake it. Instantly confess it. Instantly put it under the blood. Why? To hurt you? No. To bruise you? No. To embarrass you? No. But so that it can be for "I will receive you." "I will pour water upon the dry bones. I will pour floods upon him that is thirsty."

Oh yes. It's when you come dry enough and when you become weary enough with yourself. You want deliverance from the tyranny of what you are and you want freedom from yourself. And you're willing to come outside the camp and you're willing to say I'm a failure.

You're willing to say I've been identified with this that is so far below the standard. Willing to admit that you have a need and break. Take the sword and put it right into the dearest thing you've known, your own pride, your own spiritual complacency, your own satisfaction and slay the darling of your heart. Then strip from you all the things that have stood in His way and out there, is a place of meeting.

So lonely. It's such a lonely walk because you see my friend, your wife isn't going to do it with you and your brother won't and your sister won't. And if you ever meet God, my dear, you've got to meet Him all alone. You can't wait for anybody else. The sword has got to go right now, right through. But I know this that if you're prepared to meet God, God's prepared to meet you.

If you'll break and you'll bend and you'll bow and you'll put the sword through and strip the ornaments which are just the picture of repentance. And go to that little place of meeting out there, the cross outside the camp, in brokenness, He'll cleanse you. He'll give you victory and then He'll fill you with Himself. He promised to do it. You've got to pay the price. Let's bow in prayer.

Father, thou art working today, thou art working here. We've been hoping we could give some good, tasty morsels of news to the people that thou aren't forgetting about thy terms and principles. And if churches will just have an all-night prayer meeting, thou will send revival. But Lord, we have to be honest with them and with thee and tell them that that's not how thou art meeting people today.

This revival is not something that's involving churches. It's just involving men that are tired of their failure and weary of their sin and hungry for thee, until nothing else counts or matters. They must have thee. We thank thee that thou art finding some. We trust and pray thou will find some here. They're so desperately hungry that they'll say "Whatever anyone else does, I must seek God." I'm going to let the Word, the sword of God's truth go right through the dearest things and let it do its worst.

I'm going to strip the ornaments. I'm going to go and drink the water with the golden calf in it. I've been guilty. Then I'm going outside that camp to that place of meeting, at the cross, throw myself down there and ask Him who cleansed me from the guilt of past sins to cleanse my heart and deliver me from the tyranny of myself. And to fill me with His Spirit and the cloud will come down and cover the tent, fill it.

Father, this is the word we have to tell them. We do want these people to go. Thou know now for six years, we've hoped and prayed the time would come that some Sunday, someday, the whole church will just move up toward thee. We see now, that isn't thy way of dealing. It's just that lonely one, like Levi that turns his back on his brothers and stands with thee. It's a personal matter.

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We see it Lord. Perhaps some thou have spoken to today that said I'm so hungry for God, I'm willing to deal absolutely, honestly with His Word and with everything that is sin. I want Him to cleanse me and I want Him to fill me. I can't go on. I've got to meet God in a new way.

While our heads are bowed and eyes are closed, I wonder if there are not some this Sunday morning in this closing moment that would stand and take the first step outside the camp saying, yes, this is me you've spoken about. I'm so hungry for God that I'm willing to meet Him on His terms.

I know you don't have any formula. I'm just going to meet God. I'm going to deal with everything that grieves Him. I've got to take a step outside today. I'm the one. Would you stand right now for a word of prayer if this is your case? Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Yes.

With your heads bowed and eyes closed, this is very personal, just between the individual you pray. Others, I'm the one, are there any others and in the balcony? I'm the one to stand. Five women where are the men? It was Levi that stood with Moses. Where are the men? Are there others? Thank you. God bless you.

Father, we thank thee for these that are here. Thou knowest now their hearts. We pray for everyone that has a testimony of the past being under the blood, but has been worshiping at some golden calf of vanity, pride, bitterness or strife or jealousy. Unclean thoughts or some other calf they've made that they may see what this has done. Thou will not bless them. Thou will not meet them. There's got to be an absolute transparency, complete brokenness.

We thank thee for these that have stood. We pray for those that should have and haven't and just know. Our Father, we ask that the Holy Spirit will speak in a very precious, real way to their hearts. Dear friends that are standing, if you wish, you may slip out now and go into Wilson Chapel and I'll come and join you for prayer. If you wish to remain where you are, that's well and good. I'm going to ask everyone to stand but you that are standing, if you'd like to go, I'll meet you in just a moment. Let us stand together for the benediction.

Our Father brood upon us, this is the place of revival. This is the place of blessing. This is the place where a nation was spared. This is the place where America will be spared when those who name the name of Christ in America begin to feel about sin the same way thou ought us feel.

There's nothing that's unclean, nothing that grieves thee in which they can make peace. There will be brokenness and a going outside the camp to meet thee so that thou will have a people separated unto thyself that thou canst bless and meet.

Bind this truth upon the frontlets of their eyes. Oh grant that there will be a sober people as we part, a sensing that somehow that God has spoken to us. Father, how we long for thee to have thy way in each life. We plead the precious blood of Christ over us and upon us. Let thy Word continue to do its work. Now may grace, mercy and peace from God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, be in abide with each of us now and until Jesus comes again. Amen.

If You Agree

If you turn please to Matthew 18, this will be the portion from which we shall think this morning. While you're turning may I recommend very heartily that you read carefully the last edition of the Alliance Witness especially the editorial by Dr. Tozer on Maturity and the sermon by Dr. Simpson. This was of manuscript found some months ago and now is available for you and I would urge you to read it. Both of these are in line and in keeping with the ministry of this morning.

The same portion was before us last Lord's day. It was approached however from an expository position rather than this morning more of a textual relationship. I'm reading from verses 19 and 20. Just these two verses: "And again I say unto you that if two of you shall agree." Its' that portion I wish you to see. "If two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name there am I in the midst of them."

We pointed out in the past that our Lord in this Book of Matthew is describing in details the new thing that he is going to do, namely his Church. In the Beatitudes he describes the kind of people that shall be in it. And in the portion of scripture we read in Matthew 16, he describes the foundation upon which it shall be built namely that he is the Christ and thus reigning, sovereign. In the latter part of that portion where he said, "If any man come after me let him take up his cross," it is to be built of people that have an experiential union with Christ in his death, burial and resurrection.

Now in this portion you will notice that they are to be an agreed people and they are to be at least two or three. I submit to you first that the location of the church geographically has ceased to be of importance by the time our Lord speaks. It is in John the fourth chapter that our Lord speaks to the woman by the well and utters some of the most profound truths that he had to say. You will recall she began the conversation by saying, "Our fathers say we ought to worship in this mountain, but you Jews say we ought to worship in Jerusalem." Our Lord's reply to that was this; it is not the place where you worship that is heretofore of great importance, that is whether it's in this mountain or in Jerusalem.

Up until this time it had been, for God had been related to the temple in Jerusalem and not to the mount of idolatry in Samaria. But something is happening, something is taking place. Our Lord is doing a new thing, and in this new thing the primary aspect will not be geographic but attitudinal. The importance is not going to be the place as much as it is the attitude of the people that meet there.

The grounds of the church in the Old Testament were the tabernacle in the wilderness and then the temple in Jerusalem. This was the place where people met with God. But, now our Lord is saying that the grounds of the meeting of the church or the place where the church meets is not territorial it's not soil primarily.

Obviously they'll have to meet standing somewhere on the soil. But this is not the significant factor any longer. It's not where they meet but how they meet. Anywhere, any number, two or three if they are meeting together in my name. And the key here is in my name.

We frequently think that all this means is a little appendage to a prayer "In Jesus' name." Or as sort of a little halo that we put over our actions, saying "I'm doing it in the name of the Lord." Or "I'm doing it for the sake of the Lord." But it's far more than that. If two or three are met in the Lord's name means first of all that they are met by his call. He has called them together. He has drawn them together. He has brought them together for his own purpose. They have heard his call and they followed.

You know what is the call of the Lord that draws his people together? I've heard people say "I had a call to Africa or to India." Before going to the mission field the issue had to be settled. Someone asked me, the Mission Society said "Do you have a call to the mission field?" I had to face the matter through and I went before them saying "No, I do not have a call to the mission field." There is only one call that I recognize in the Scripture and that I've had.

The call is to follow Christ, to submit to the sovereignty of Christ. To live in obedience to Christ. To walk constantly with one purpose and that is to glorify Christ. But I've not had a call to Africa. I believe that God is clearly, unmistakably leading me to Africa. But I allow the possibility that in his sovereign purpose he may lead me out of Africa into some other ministry. My call is to follow Christ, not to a geographical area, not to a place.

Well, I have tried to impress this upon young people in the past. The call that Christ gives is uniform to everyone to whom it comes. "Come follow me. Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden. Take my yoke upon you." The call is to yoke yourself to the sovereign will and purpose of Christ. Now therefore, the Ecclesia that is his people, our people, have heard his call. It's been a call from something to something.

It's been a call from self-will, from ruling one's own life, from living to please oneself, to gratify oneself. It's been a call from living under the government and direction of one's own whim and fancy to an entirely new government: no longer I but thy. Not my will but thy will be done. This is the call. It is a call to turn one's back upon one's past and commit oneself to Christ as the Governor of the future.

And so his people are a called people. They've been called by him but they have been called to him. This is a call to Christ. Not a call to a church, not a call to a doctrine, not a call to a ceremony or a ritual, it is a call to a person. "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

Tragically, today there are those that are trusting in the plan of salvation for rest. They've learned the truths concerning the birth, the life, the death, the resurrection of Christ. And they have learned that men who believe in these truths are saved. So they have responded to the call of truth and they have come to truth and they have received truth. They have intellectually consented to truth, but then stopped there. It has been a call to truth and not a call to a person. The plan of salvation does not save, it instructs one to the Savior but salvation is in a person. He that hath the Son hath life.

It didn't say he that hath the Word, he that hath the Son hath life. It says he that hath the Son hath life. Years ago down South we had an experience to the invitation being given, a man coming forward. A personal worker was assigned to talk to him. He asked his name and his address and what he came for. The man said "To be saved." So the personal worker opened his Bible to that verse, he that hath the Son hath life. He said "Do you believe that?" The man said "I do," and he wrote down saved.

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Now the personal worker said “Are there any questions that you have before I give this card to the Pastor?” The man said “Yes, there is one question. You asked me if I believed that verse. I guess that it said he that hath the Son hath the life and I said I do. Now there’s just one question. What I’d like to know is how do you get the Son?”

You see the personal worker made the mistake of thinking that because the man believed in the verse he had the Son. But, the man who came knew that there had been no change in his heart holding his life. Salvation is not in a scripture verse, it’s not in a doctrine, it’s not a new decision. Salvation is in a person and so it is a call to the person of Christ. It is a call not only to come to him, but it is a call that results when properly answered in his coming to them. It is Christ in you, not Christ above you, around you, beside you or before you and behind you. It is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

Thus these people that have come to Christ, that are met in his name, are a people that have been called by him and have been called to him. But they’ve not only been called by him and to him, but they have been called from something. Paul writing to the church of Thessalonica said “You have turned to God from idols to serve the living and the true God.”

The idols that we recognize in the Old Testament are those of Baal, Ashtoreth and Moloch. Baal was that evil spirit which was numerous, for in every location there was one. The evil spirit that must be placated in order that one could be prosperous. And rather than trust God for prosperity they were willing to sacrifice to Baal.

Today the counterpart to sacrificing to Baal is to exercise duplicity in business, lying, cheating, stealing or otherwise misrepresenting one’s product and one’s service. And we find

today that there are multitudes of people that are worshipping Baal in the literal 20th century sense of living dishonest lives. Some even who carry with them the name of Christ. They are of such a person who would practice duplicity in business. They were as the people in Israel, who feared the Lord but served Baal and Ashtoreth.

We see that the worship of Ashtoreth was to satisfy the appetite for sex and sensual indulgence, for it was the worship of the woman. And thus we find today that all that is in the world is the lust of the eye, things, Baal worship and the lust of the flesh, Ashtoreth.

Then there was the third type of worship in the Old Testament, that of Moloch. We pointed this out in detail in the past so it suffices to just remind you of it now. Moloch was that great king that was served, even Satan himself, who when properly placated could give to the worshiper position and power, and influence and authority. Thus the worship of Moloch was expressly for the purpose of being promoted in the eyes of one's fellows.

We would find today that the counterpart is the pride of life. To use means other than the perfect submission to the will of God where in one could acquire ascendancy over his fellows. And so the call to Christ is a call to turn to God from idols; to renounce the right to secure by any means that which one wants and to live within the will of God in respect to it.

It is a call to renounce the right to indulgence and to renounce the means of securing prominence and position for oneself. It is to turn from Baal, Ashtoreth and Moloch; the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh and the pride of life to serve the Lord Jesus Christ.

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So, it's a call by someone, a call through someone and it's a call from something. And to meet in his name means that one has heard the call by Christ, and the call to Christ, and the call from the world. He has come and fallen at the feet of the Son of God. He has been broken in the fall of all of one's plans and purposes, and will and intention, and rebellion and anarchy, and has submitted to the sovereignty of Christ.

Thus the call is answered by that response to Romans 10:9 the most familiar of verses used in personal work I presume; "If thou shall confess with thy mouth, Jesus to be Lord." What does it mean "to confess with the mouth Jesus to be Lord?" It means I've heard the call by him and I heard the call to him, and I've heard the call from the world. And now I'm coming to say with my lips that I have made a transaction in my heart and from today on as long as I live Jesus Christ shall be the undisputed sovereign of my life.

To confess with the mouth Jesus to be Lord is to verbally testify to an inner transaction of sovereignty from self to the Son of God. Thus one can believe in the heart. To believe in the heart you notice means to put it right in the center of one's being. The result of this heart faith is a saving relationship with Christ. Christ comes in to bring life.

So if two or three are met in my name involves all of this that I have described. These that have met in his name are people that have been broken, people who have been crushed, and people that have been slain by the revelation of their sin and have been healed by the nail pierced hand of the Son of God.

These are the two or three that gather. It is not the person that has sat back and said "Oh yes Jesus is a figure in history, Jesus is prominent in theology, Jesus is center of sociology and of history and therefore I am believing that he is the Son of God.

That he lived and that he died." An intellectual response without any interior effect, this is not what it means.

Our churches I am confident, across this land of ours are filled with people that are going to miss salvation, miss Heaven by 18 inches. Because they have their salvation up here, in an intellectual comprehension rather than down here, in the spiritual experience and the presence of the Son of God.

The two or three met in my name then have had this transpire. Now as previously said in the verse just before this, "If two of you shall agree as touching anything." Assume that they have had the same call. They have had this of which we have spoken. Now he said if two of you shall agree as touching this. May I point out to you that it is not agreeing about something but as touching something. I can't improve on an illustration that I've used in other groups here before, I use it again with your permission. And I know no one is going to deny it to me, I'm sure, since I'm here and you're there.

The matter is this; here are four people that are praying for the salvation of a man. He's a father, he's a husband, he is an employer and a prospective church member. The wife is praying for him because he started to live in such a way that if it continues it can only end up in a separation. She loves him but she doesn't want her home ruined and so she's saying "Oh God, save my husband so that we can continue in a happy home." The little girl is praying, "Save Daddy because I don't want to be in heaven and have Daddy in hell."

The employee is praying, "Oh God save Bill because he'd be so much easier to work for if he were just a Christian. He is so hard and cantankerous now." And the pastor is praying for him saying, "My, my, how we do need Bill, what a great influence he could be and his tithe would be a great help in

lifting the load." And so all four of them are agreed about the salvation but they're not agreed as touching it. There's no agreement as touching it. Each has a personal interest, a personal motive in this matter. There is no agreement as touching it. About the thing, yes, they all want it to happen. As touching it, no agreement whatsoever.

How would they agree as touching it? When the wife can say "Regardless of what happens to my home I want to see him saved for the glory of Christ." When the daughter can say "Regardless of hell, I want him to be saved for the glory of God's dear Son." When the man can say "Regardless of what my employer shall be I want him saved that Jesus Christ shall receive the reward of his suffering." And the pastor could say "Regardless of what church he should ever go to or what would happen I want him saved that our wonderful Lord Jesus shall receive that for which is his due."

Now, when they are agreed as touching it, it is all to the glory of Christ. Only for his praise, only for his honor and only for his glory. Now, they have a common grounds of agreement. All personal interest and personal motives have disappeared in the light of the one supreme, compelling reason why they want this person saved. And this I believe is one reason why in so many times personal prayers fail, we know it's true. James said it. "You pray and you asked and receive not because you asked amiss that you might heap it on your own desires." It is first prayer from a personal motive.

I'm sure the Lord Jesus Christ is interested in the rug in your living room that's frayed and you feel is a contradictory testimony when you bring the unsaved in, and he's concerned about it. However, your reason for praying, "Oh Lord, please supply the means of providing a new rug" is not so that you won't be embarrassed by it, but that he'll be glorified and there

won't be a hindrance when someone should come into your home.

Everything, however mundane, menial or personal it maybe, must inevitably be placed right back to this - the one reason and motive for all of our meeting together. This is what our Lord Jesus said in John 17:3 "Glorify thou me, with the glory I had with thee before the world was." This is the secret to answered prayer, the glory of God in Jesus Christ. And so he says that if two or three of you are met together, are agreed together as touching anything. You've been called by him, called to him, called from the world. You've been broken in his presence and now you're living only to the glory and the honor and the praise of his name.

You begin to see something of the foundation of his Church. Now I would point out to you the contrast of what we discovered here in the 20th century in America. I have no way of judging whether this has been true in the past, though those who lived in the past have indicated by what they've written that probably it was so then. But I feel that I'm speaking now for my generation, that which for the past 24 years I've been privileged to serve as a pastor or missionary or in some other capacity. And I think in some little measure that you will recognize the obvious truth of what I'm saying.

Today, we have churches of two major groups. The Liberal or now the neo-orthodox and the Fundamental or the Evangelical. This dichotomy or this dividing into two groups certainly is necessary because how can people walk together except they be agreed. Then we have two other groups that divide the Evangelical or Fundamental Group. We have those that are primarily Calvinist and those that are primarily Armenian, their background going back to two theologians of history.

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And so we find it that to some degree these divide still a second time. But, I am now no longer interested in the twofold division and we probably could press it still further. I'm submitting to you this morning a fivefold division. I would like to have you make some notation because it would probably be of help to you in the future.

We have talked now about the church, how he has called these to himself. We've talked about the union of what it is; this agreeing together, that it is with an eye single to his glory. Now let us take, for just a brief moment, a look at the church as we find it in the 20th century. I'm suggesting to you that you will find in the church five groups. May I give them and then I will repeat them more slowly so that I do not want anything to divert you from this initial hearing.

The first group that I'm mentioning is not because of its size or its priority but simply because of the habit of my thinking and therefore I give it to you first. The first group are those people that have met the Forgiving Christ. They discovered their sin through some means or another. They realized they had been caught and they didn't know what to do about it. They were told that there was a hell. About the hell they weren't so sure but they think they'd better be on the safe side. So someone said accept Jesus.

Their primary reason for accepting him was to be inured and immunized against hell. They wanted to have an insurance policy. And so their primary concern in Christ is that he fulfills what they've accepted him for. They were so grateful when they learned that Jesus Christ had died for them, that they wouldn't have to die. Well, to put it in more colloquial terms they were so happy when they learned that Jesus had taken the rap for them if I may express it that way.

They were so happy that he died. They had mistaken their pleasure at the fact he suffered for them, as being the Witness of the Spirit. But their whole concern about Christ is that they should be protected from suffering and from punishment. They've only met the Forgiving Christ and they've never gone beyond that.

When they want to see someone saved, actually what they want is to see someone else come to the place that if they died they won't go to hell. When they speak of revival what they mean is to have their heart filled with the same joy that they felt when they first came. There is an upper limit to their interest in the church and in Christianity and it all relates to them, they have met the Forgiving Christ.

There is a second group; these are the people that have met the Utilitarian Christ. They were in great need and they prayed and when they prayed God answered prayer. Or perhaps someone else prayed and answered prayer.

They were impressed with the fact that God was tremendously useful and handy to know. Because they were in a dilemma, they didn't have any answer to it and prayer brought the answer. They were sick and God healed them or they were otherwise in trouble and God brought them out. And so today they are extremely grateful, so grateful that they've joined the church, submitted to baptism, learned doctrines and tithed. But the whole of their interest in Christianity and religion is they should be where God can take care of them if they're in trouble or in problem. They've met the Utilitarian Christ.

Today we have what is very popular a cult of the Utilitarian Christ. We find that there is nothing to do whatever with this person as the sovereign God. It's just that faith in Jesus brings answers. You will find people whose lives are seemingly just

indescribably wicked that have learned faith. Then they write articles and say "I'm so glad, I wanted to be the Queen of Hollywood and so I asked Jesus and this Utilitarian Christ made me a success." And this I say is a cult that lacks every biblical evidence of being a movement in the stream of Christianity. The Utilitarian Christ, it has varying degrees, the Forgiving Christ, the Utilitarian Christ. Then there is a third group of people that have met the Status Giving Christ.

They were born in such a way that they didn't have the privilege of belonging to the country club. They weren't very accepted in society. They felt they had gregarious impulse and need so they were taken into the church. They found warmth and welcome and so because they wanted fellowship this was what they accepted. They were willing to submit to the doctrine, they are willing to pray, they are willing to be baptized, they are willing to tithe, to do anything that was required of them.

When they testify their testimony is "I'm delighted to be a Christian because there's such wonderful people in the church. I'm so happy because there are such grand people in the church, it's such a joy to be with such wonderful people and think we'll be together forever in heaven." They've equated status with the whole purpose of God; their status, satisfying their needs for social expression.

Then out of this group is another group that has become to some degree psychopathic and equates their own status in the group with the glory of God. Anything that pushes them up is to God's glory and anything that would bypass them or diminish their influence is just the opposite. And these are the ones whom we spoke about a year ago when I gave you a quotation from Christianity Today's article of November 1960 entitled, "Crucifying the Pastor."

This is the group that you find all over America. Just this past week I've been with a group of 50 pastors down at Summit Grove and they've talked to me of some of the experiences they've had. Where people who have felt that somehow they were bypassed and their status wasn't recognized have used every nefarious, wicked means that was possible to discover in order to bring grief and heartache. They would rather ruin the church than to let for one little moment, their own personal status be affected. This third group, the Status Giving Christ.

So we have three, the Forgiving Christ, Utilitarian Christ and the Status Giving Christ. Then there is a fourth group, this is the group of people that have met the Emotion Satisfying Christ. Oh they love to go to church because they enjoy the syncopation and the rhythm and the emotional appeal. If they can weep or laugh or do both at the same time or in some sequence, then they go away saying "My, what a wonderful meeting." The whole purpose of Christianity and religion is to satisfy their emotional needs primarily.

So we have these people. They have all the same doctrine, they've all been baptized, and they're all in the same religious organization. When they speak of revival, those who know the Forgiving Christ say, "Well I want to have others come to know forgiveness." Those who have met the Utilitarian Christ say "Well I want to see others helped." Those that have met the Status Giving Christ said "Well, I want to see others come into this wonderful fellowship." And those that have met the Emotion Satisfying Christ say "Well I want to feel the way I felt back there in July 6th in 1903, back at that Camp Meeting, oh then we'll have revival. "

But it's all below the level. Then we have another group called number five. These are the people that have met the Holy God and the sovereign Christ. These are the ones that have seen

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God in his majesty and seen God in his sovereignty. Have seen God in his holiness and seen Christ in his glory. These are the ones whose eyes have been opened to God.

And in the revelation of God they have seen their immense unworthiness, and their terrifying sinfulness. Obviously they've known forgiveness. For in that brokenness of heart, because they've sinned against such a holy God, they cast themselves on the nail pierced hands of Christ. They were forgiven.

God has obviously answered prayer, and they have certainly found status as the child of the King and their hearts have been satisfied with joy and peace. These which we find in this fifth group are these who've had a revelation of the glory of Christ and are living only for his praise. They're broken, they've committed themselves to him, they submitted to his sovereignty. The cross has pierced them through, and the one end of their being is that he be glorified.

Now, this is his Church. This is his Church. The religious organization can include other groups. But his Church is here. His Church is on this level. He is saying, "If any man hate not his father, his mother and his husband, his wife and his brother and his sisters yea and his own life also he can't be my disciple." The Lordship of Christ transcends all human relationships and his one purpose is the glory of God.

Then he has heard Christ say, "If anyone doesn't take up his cross and come follow me he cannot be my disciple." And he is gladly gone with Christ out to the Cross. There he has brought his ego and his ambition, and his vanity and his pride and all the things that once motivated and controlled him to the Cross. He has no plan, no purpose but the glory of Christ.

This is the one who has heard Christ say, "If any man does not forsake all that he hath he cannot be my disciple." He doesn't give a seventh of this time and a tenth of his money. He holds that everything is Christ. All is Christ. This is his Church. "So that if any man come after me let him deny himself and take up his cross and come follow me."

Now I submit to you that for fifty years in America or longer, pastors as earnest and as sincere as the one who would seek to be sincere standing before you has sought to see revival in America. During these fifty years, the church has become more cold, less powerful, more meaningless in society. Until today the world says the church is so weak and powerless that it is utterly irrelevant and obscurantist and has no place in such a generation as ours. This I categorically deny.

I submit to you dear heart, the reason may lie in the fact that we have been seeking to have a revival of five groups. It can't happen, it hasn't happened and it isn't happening. You wait expectantly for groups one, two, three and four, all of a sudden on some Sunday to come broken and crushed and hungry and open and yielded and abandoned, and they don't come.

I believe that the exigencies of this hour... Well, I submit to you that the Communist threat to America is as every whit as dangerous as was Sennacherib's army outside of the walls of Jerusalem. I submit to you that we can't longer go on waiting for the recalcitrant and the indifferent and the stubborn. The time has come when those who are of one mind and one heart must begin to meet on the grounds of the Lord's meeting. How will it be?

You say, "Well start another group." This has been done. We have 312 groups in America and the 313th is in the process of formation this morning. I submit to you that the 312 have made

not one whit of improvement in the situation. I see no answer there. What is the answer? Then is it to spend all night, seeking in prayer for the four groups to come up to the level of biblical Christianity? No, I see no answer there. I believe that the answer is going to come when we re-establish again that ground of fellowship as was done under John Wesley in the class meeting.

Our movement, the Christian Missionary Alliance began that way. We've never repudiated our genus nor abandoned our heritage. It is as much ours today as it was when 78 years ago Dr. Simpson gathered together in parlors, in living rooms. W. T. McArthur joined with him - hearts that were committed to Christ and they spent hours in the Word. Hours in prayer, hours in seeking and discussing and thinking together. Until the glory of God came down and men and women were so marvelously transformed that whole communities were shaken for Christ.

The answer...the answer is going to be under God that a call will go out. And it isn't going out this morning, it is being announced to you today that you can think and pray about it. Are you prepared to give a night of your life, above all the other responsibilities you have? If you can't give a night are you prepared to meet at 5:00 in the morning for 2 hours or more? Are you prepared to extend effort, and energy, and sacrifice of your time, because of the hunger of your heart to glorify God?

Will you submit to discipline? Will you submit to teaching? Are you prepared to follow in the way of the Word and of the Lord? Do you stand on the grounds of brokenness? I believe the time will come from this pulpit when such an invitation will be given. Whether it be an Elder or a Deacon or a Sunday school teacher, they will be asked to come and stand, publicly

declaring before all that this is the level of their commitment. Their names will be taken and they will be expected to meet at the time that they can with a group of those that have made similar commitments to the Lord.

Then it will be that those who have chosen not to come will have made their own choice. The question is always then, how can you avoid schism? How can you avoid division? If the pastor goes around and says "I'd like to have you, and you and you and you meet with me," then he can justly be accused of having created a group within a group. But when the invitation has been given and people come and stand there and say "I want to go on with God, I am desperately concerned for the fullness of Christ. I'm going to meet him at any cost. I'm willing to adjust my schedule, adjust my plans. I'm willing to take a night of my life and as many hours as God requires. I am going to find out how to live wholly for Christ." Then I believe we have found the ground. It isn't the grounds of a place, it isn't the grounds of a day; it's the grounds of unity in submission to the sovereignty of the Son of God.

I believe that when this happens the glory of God will come down upon hungry hearts and there will be such revelation that is powerful. For it was when you had people of one accord, one faith, one mind, seven days, that the Spirit of God was poured upon them. When you had a group of people bound together by their common needs and common commitment and common passion to see Christ glorified that the place was shaken.

There are those who stubbornly through years of entreaty and exhortation have refused to bow and break before Christ. Then we shall commit them to the Lord. We've nothing to say except that the grounds of the church are on the grounds of absolute commitment and absolute brokenness and absolute

submission. And such people have every privilege of meeting together, seeking to God's glory and blessings and to understand the Word and to move on with him.

I believe that which will save America is not going to be the great crusade as important has that has been, or the great church as significant as that is. But it's going to be the cell of groups of people that have been drawn by a commitment to Christ and spread spontaneously and move out. Beloved, we better learn how to worship alone in quiet because it may come before you're many years older that you have to, if you worship at all.

When you remember McAulley's testimony that England was saved from the abyss into which France fell by the development of the class meeting, perhaps the only way that God can save America is by a return to the class meeting under the direction and control of the church and its elders. But it will be a unit or place where hearts of similar commitment can be encouraged and encouraged and go on to know the Lord.

So, I ask you to take that which you've heard today and the scripture that underlies it and meditate and think and pray upon it and find out what level your commitment has come as of this good morning.

Some of you have reached the age when you do not anticipate another ten years. In the normal course of events your life will have been run. But some of us will expect under God's hand to live beyond 1973 and we have children, and we're desperately concerned because the world is on fire. The sword is hanging over the heart of our land and our country. And the church has been significantly innocuous, meaningless and powerless in the face of it. It ought not to be this way brethren. Time has come when people who love Christ and are wholly abandoned to

him, must have that opportunity to study the Word on how they find out, how they can live wholly for Christ and in the fullness of his blessings upon them.

The elders of this church have been studying for many months, trying to understand how we can establish a place for the hearts of men and women. And find the climate similar to that of Acts, where they continued steadfastly in the Apostles Doctrine and fellowship in breaking of bread and of prayers. This announcement to you this morning, I trust will have your prayers, your thought, your attention and your concern.

You will ask your own heart, "Am I so committed to Christ that I'm willing to spend and be spent, that he may have an opportunity to reveal how glorious he is?" Meet God, search your heart. Find out where you are, which one of these groups you're in. Then with all haste move into that fifth group where you see a Holy God, a sovereign Lord. You live only to his glory and to his praise. And you're willing to look into his face and say, "Lord what will thou have me to do?"

Father of our Lord Jesus look down upon us, see us. We are here at the Crossroads of the World in the center of this great world of iniquity called New York City. We are here Lord where there was in the yesteryear a bright light that shined here into the ends of the earth. Now hearts cry out to thee that thou will guide us and instruct us, restrict us and control us, direct us and order us in such a way that thy perfect plan and purpose for us individually and corporately can be realized.

Thus the Lord Jesus can receive through our blood ransomed lives all the glory that is His due. Breathe upon this people. Let a new commitment, a new consecration, a new abandonment come into their hearts and grant Lord that we shall see you rise up in this land from corner to corner from border to border. A

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great surge of hungry hearted men and women that are willing to meet with each other and with thee. That they might be the vehicle for blessing in days like these. So seal to our hearts what we've heard.

Perhaps there is some Lord who want to hear again through the tapes or read what has been spoken this morning, stir their hearts to that end, for Jesus sake. Amen.

Let us stand for the benediction. Now unto him who is able to keep us from falling, and to present us before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy. The only wise God our Savior be glory and honor, dominion and praise now and forever. Amen.

The Two Most Important Questions

I bring you face-to-face with the two most important questions that a man has ever asked. If I were to offer to you as a theme this morning, the most important question ever asked a man, I believe that many of you would understand the direction of my thinking and would correctly answer.

That question was given by our Lord Jesus Christ on one occasion to his disciples. When having first inquired, "Whom say men that I am?" They replied, "Some say thou art John the Baptist, some say you are Elijah, some Jeremiah, Isaiah, one of the prophets." Then the most important question that was ever asked a man, "Who say ye that I am?"

Without any hesitation the answer came from the heart, and mind, and soul, and spirit of Simon. "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." This was correct. This is the only correct answer. This is the answer that has saving difference. This is the answer that makes a difference between heaven and hell, life and death.

For that babe that was born in Bethlehem, cradled in a manger is none other than God, the Eternal Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Again, this same question was asked by our Lord to another company, "What think ye of Christ? Whose son is he?" But this company was not prepared to answer.

The difference lay not in the facts, but in the response to that which present followed the facts. For we discover that when the wise men came to Jerusalem and asked Herod, "Where he should be born, would be King of the Jews?" The Pharisees responded, "In Bethlehem," quoting the promise and assuring

the visitors that if he were come at all it would have to be in Bethlehem. But they themselves did not care to go. Although they were looking for the coming of Messiah, they were not looking for him to come as a babe and to be born in a stable and to be laid in a manger. They were not looking for this.

They had certain facts, but the pre-disposition of their hearts was such that they were not prepared for revelation. Our Lord Jesus said to Simon, "Blessed art thou Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee." This has not come from the teaching of the rabbis. This has not come from your reading of the prophets, though the prophets clearly spoke of Christ and the rabbis clearly taught of Christ. He said, "Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in Heaven. He has revealed it unto thee."

Now they are many people in our churches at Christmas season that have the facts, that have the information, that are acquainted with the historicity of Christ, and the prophecies concerning Christ and would want to be called as Christian. But the difference lies in the fact that they have been satisfied with information. The pre-disposition of their hearts is such they have never pressed through to revelation.

And so all they have at Christmas season is the sentimental journey back through the centuries to follow in the familiar paths that have been marked by poetry and hymns. They know nothing of the living Christ.

They know the Great I Was, the one who came and lived and died and ascended into Heaven. They have some information concerning the Great I Will Be, the one who will come to reign and establish his throne upon the earth. But they live in almost total oblivion of the Great I Am, neither seeing him nor hearing him nor feeling and sensing his presence. It is the Great I Am,

the Lord Jesus Christ that makes the difference between Christmas being a pagan festival or Christian.

To simply go to the crèche and see the doll lying in the straw is but one aspect. If this can be accompanied by the revelation of Jesus Christ in the heart then it has saving and Christian significance. But the question, "Who art thou?" cannot be answered alone by the theologian nor can it be answered by the historian. It can only be answered by the one whose hunger for reality is such that he has been prepared to submit. And by the disposition of his heart and mind has been opened for the revelation that Jesus is the Christ.

Let me illustrate the difference between knowing Christ by common knowledge, by theology or by history, and knowing him by experience. You will recall that there was a man in our Lord's day who was born in another city some distance away. Transportation being difficult and dangerous, the journey was probably not made by this young man whose life paralleled our Lords'.

I do not believe that he ever heard him, or that he ever saw him, but he heard about him. He was acquainted undoubtedly with the fact that in Galilee there was one who claimed to be the Messiah, who was healing the sick, even raising the dead, restoring strength to the cripples and making them whole.

I am confident that Saul, while he resided in Tarsus, framed opinions from the hearsay, from the gossip, from the information that was carried by the caravans and the itinerant rabbis; that company of tradesmen that would have attended the ministry of our Lord. And this young man, who was then probably the same age as the Lord, undoubtedly had a reaction to information. Just as the people that live in the building

where you live and in the city where you live, all have information concerning Christ.

This thing is not being done under a bushel and it is not hidden. I mentioned the other day that when the Board of Manager's meeting was on Time Square, with a ruckus blaring, we heard the PA system blare out O Little Town of Bethlehem. And Dr. Tozer said, "I wonder if the author ever anticipated, when he wrote it, that it could have been played in such a setting as this?"

Well undoubtedly he didn't for it was written decades ago. Nevertheless the community around us, this city, is aware of the fact that associated somehow with Christmas is the history, the tradition, the teaching whether they accept it as so or not, that a virgin conceived. Because round yon virgin, mother and child is the testimony of the song. They understand that Christians worship this babe that died and was said to have been raised from the dead, this is the feeling of the community.

They aren't sure they understand that there are millions of people who do believe he is God and who worship him as God. They associate Jesus Christ with the church in the community where they live. They associate it with the people that they see in the trade shop on the weekdays, going into that church on Sunday.

They associate Jesus Christ, the tradition around his birth, his life, his death with the people they know. And if you were to ask the average person in New York City about Jesus Christ, he would have formed his opinion on the grounds of hearsay. Something he has read in the subway on the bulletin board, something that he has seen in a department store, or something that he has heard in a song that he has come to sing in school.

He has a reaction to the historical Christ, but remember, Saul of Tarsus had a reaction to the historical Christ. His reaction was one of antagonism. His reaction was one of resentment. I believe that this young man went to Jerusalem motivated by a deep-seated resentment that anyone would claim to be the Messiah and thus seek to substantiate his claims by these miracles purported to be miracles. Miracles that he undoubtedly explained away and said were nothing but frauds.

Saul on all that he heard, all of the testimony that was given, all of the gossip that was relayed, all of the teachings that were supposed to have come from the lips of Christ- everything that had fallen upon Saul of Tarsus - had pre-disposed him to hate Christ. He felt that Christ was a threat to the religious unity of Israel. And the Church was a threat to the national existence of Israel and therefore he felt there could be no higher dedication of his life and energy than to exterminate the memory of Christ and the organization that he had founded, the Church. And he gave himself to this end.

Now obviously Saul of Tarsus knew the teachings and knew the claims for his own testimony was, he pursued and persecuted the Christians. He arrested Christians. He witnessed at their trials. He testified, refuting their claims from the scripture that Jesus was the Christ. Now you understand that to do this, he must be intimately acquainted with the strongest arguments that could be presented concerning Christ.

There could be no casualness about this. This man was an expert. He knew the promises. He knew the prophecies. He knew the claims. Perhaps this very reason is why he was able to immediately begin to preach after he arrived in Damascus, because he had familiarized himself with all of this.

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But I submit to you that scripture is not enough, that testimony is not enough, that words are not enough, that miracles are not enough. There must be a personal revelation of Jesus as the Christ if there is to be devotion to Him.

Now the weakness of Christianity around the world, in the second and the third generation, is that people are qualified by common acceptance to call themselves Christian who have Christian parents and grandparents, Christian traditions, Christian ideas, Christian dogma and Christian theology. But they have never met Christ. And thus the world looking at this expression of Christianity equates Christ with you and with each one who names the name of Christ.

To them you are Christ. To the world this church is Christ. To this community Christ is here. We are the only Bible they read. We are the only god they know. We are the only Christ they observe. And if you would like to find out the impact that we have made upon the community, I suggest that in the community, round about, you go and visit it.

If you would like to find out the impact you have made, you go to the ones that have lived on the same floor in your apartment building. The ones that have traded with you, the ones that have served you and worked for you, and then you will find out what they think of Christ. Because what they think of Christ is what they think of you.

Now there was a blow that fell upon Saul of Tarsus and I believe there is a blow that falls upon everyone. A blow that shatters these prejudices and ideas, and attitudes. You know that for 35% of our New York community, it is a mortal sin to come into this church, one that must be confessed and with it must go the promise of no repetition. You understand that.

You recognize that to others it is national treason to come to this church. You recognize that for many they are deep-seated antagonisms because of previous contact with Christianity and the church. And the consequence of that is this: that today it is imperative that there be a revelation from God that shatters all of these firmly fixed attitudes, and ideas, and dispositions if people are to ever meet Christ.

Now the simplest way to approach this is to say, "But what we need to have this shattering effect is miracles." Now I recognize that Paul said that from Jerusalem to Illyricum he fully preached the power of the Gospel through mighty signs and wonders by the power of the Spirit of God. And I realize the shattering effect of miracles, that the intervention of Christ does often break this crust and pre-dispose the heart to a sensitive hearing of the truth.

But I also remind you that there was no such display under Paul's ministry as under Christ. And it was those that had observed most of his miracles who were most vociferous in calling for his death. So we cannot say that this revelation begins merely with the supernatural event. It itself is supernatural. It itself is something that God does by his own sovereign grace and power, the awakening of a sinner, the piercing of his heart.

Let me illustrate. You recall on one occasion Saul of Tarsus, through a company of people who I perceived from reading that he was probably the leader, called out the young man Stephen, a deacon. A man who had been attracting considerable attention by the miracles that attended his preaching and his ministry.

Stephen stood before them and gave one of the most startling defenses that have ever been recorded. For this man not

schooled, not trained, having no opportunity for the kind of training that would have qualified him for such forensic display, stood before them. And I believe that this is a record of prophetic utterance, the Holy Ghost speaking through him.

He indicts Israel, going back to their history, synthesizing, drawing together as only a genius most intimately acquainted with the history could have done. But he did it by the enabling of the Holy Ghost. It so enraged the hearers that they forgot all of the usual procedure to be followed in such a case.

For you recall that there were calm enough when they met Christ to say it is forbidden for Israel to execute judgment by punishing with death. So they turned the matter over to Pilot. But when they came to Stephen, the presence of God and the wisdom with which he spake and the power of his words was so devastating that they forgot all about this prohibition of Israel, exercising capital punishment. This was reserved only for Rome.

They drew him outside of the city. They picked up stones en route, and when they came to the place they said was far enough away so that his cries couldn't be heard by the soldiers on the parapets, Saul stood there and held their garments lest they should be soiled by the dust. While he, as a representative of Judaism with charge with official authority, consented to this lawless act of stoning to death one that had been guaranteed by Rome a measure of religious freedom.

Here he stood. And the stones pelted the young man, one and then another. They bruised him, they hurt him until skull bleeding, scalp oozing blood, eyes blackened, nose broken, and bones protruding, he fell to the ground. Stephen should have expired there in weakness. But Saul of Tarsus is startled beyond words for he shakes the stones from him, stands up

and in vigor and in clarity declares, "I see Jesus standing on the right hand of God." Overwhelming. Overwhelming.

Then he says, "Father, lay not this sin to their charge. They don't know what they are doing." He died. He died. Now I believe this was the beginning blow of revelation breaking through the crust, breaking through the prejudice, breaking through the antagonism and breaking through the opposition.

I do not believe that anyone ever knows Jesus Christ until this happens. Words are not enough. Theology is not enough. Doctrine is not enough. Tradition is not enough. Ritual is not enough. There must be that blow of God upon the heart that cracks, that opens the fissure of the adamant human spirit.

Then a few days later on the road to Damascus there is the encircling presence of Christ. There is the light that shines from above and Saul walking, treading on the road falls though his staff might have supported him. Overwhelmed by this revelation he falls to the ground.

Now notice Saul knew that the one who appeared and he recognized it was one, that the one who appeared was good, was of God. For he used the term which would be used of an angel, which would be used of Moses, someone of great authority or would be properly used of God himself.

Now he knew that this was a supernatural event for he is falling to the ground lying there blinded by the overwhelming revelation of this person. He declares, "Lord." He does not know who it is but he knows that he is to be revered. He knows he is to be feared. He knows that he is to be listened to. And remember, he is a Pharisee that believes in the existence of angels and angelic visitation.

“Lord, who art thou?” All he needs to have is identification for he knows that this is of God. Ignorant, he doesn't associate this one that has caused this awe, this fear, this dread, this grief with the one with whom he is so familiar. “Lord, who art thou?” The silence is broken and from the light the voice speaks, “I am Jesus of Nazareth whom thou persecuteth.”

Now the Lord, he has recognized him as divine or a divine messenger. He has realized that this is an encounter with God and he hears the voice say “I am Jesus.” Just a few days before he had heard one dying and in vigor say, “I see Jesus.” Now he sees Jesus.

I believe that no one is truly Christian until they have had a revelation that the babe of Bethlehem, the man of the carpenter shop, and the victim of the cross is God. That he is God, not just from God, but he is God. Oh it is one thing to say it, but it is another thing to have your heart cleaved by the revelation that the babe of the manger is God. And Jesus of Nazareth now retaining the same word, the same reverence, the same obedience, the same total capitulation, the same entire abandonment, his word is “Lord what will thou have me to do?”

You tell me you are a Christian because you can quote scripture? It is not good enough. It is not good enough. The devil can do that. You tell me that you are a Christian because you have made a decision, it is not good enough. It is not good enough. Judas made a decision, but he died damned. You tell me that you are a Christian because you've observed ritual and tradition? It is not good enough.

You tell me you are a Christian because you followed taboos and have abstained from forbidden things? It is not good enough. I cannot believe that you have ever asked, “Lord who

art thou?" And heard the answer, "I am Jesus." Unless, following that revelation you have asked the second most important question that ever fell from the lips of man. "Lord what will thou have me to do?"

He only knows Christ who has abandoned himself to Christ. He knows about Christ who has abandoned himself to the church, to activity, to tradition, to ritual. But he only knows Christ who has abandoned himself to Christ. "Lord what will thou have me to do?" It is not asked once and then answered and forgotten. The evidence of the genuineness of the life is the fact that it is asked every day and at every crossroad in every day. In every interval, in every day, at every point of decision.

The next 35 years testified to the genuineness of the revelation of Christ in Saul. Referring to this tale on Damascus road he said, "When it pleased God to reveal his Son in me." He did not say "to me." Christ had been revealed to him when he was a young man studying up in Tarsus, through the caravan traders that had stopped in Galilee at the throngs and eaten the bread that he multiplied, seeing the dead raised.

He had been revealed to Christ long before he was revealed in Christ. And Christ could be revealed to Saul and yet Saul of Tarsus could be the utter, irreconcilable enemy of Christ because of the revelation to him. Thus you, by your rebellion, your treason, your selfishness, your unbelief, your murmuring, and your complaints, can have the identification with Christ's name of Christian and be an unswerving foe of Christ.

The only one who is the friend of Jesus Christ is the one who has had the revelation of Christ in him. And with that revelation there is one hallmark of genuineness that can't be counterfeited. It is the utter, irretrievable, absolute abandonment to the sovereignty of the Son in every area of life.

“Lord, what will thou have me to do,” has no qualifications, has no limits, has no restrictions, has no bottom, and has no sides, no top, and no end. Absolute.

He only has had a revelation of Christ in him who has asked and answered by a lifetime of obedience, “Lord what will thou have me to do?” I ask you tonight, this morning, “What have you done about the two most important questions in all the world?” If you are not convinced in your heart that Jesus Christ is God, there is no reason why you should be chastised, or whipped, or disciplined because you haven't abandoned all to him.

No one can wisely abandon all that he has to an unknown person. No greater folly is observed by older people than to see young people marry without properly understanding each other and properly preparing themselves for marriage. No one can abandon himself to a person of whose character and nature, they are not sure. And so if you have not answered the question, “Who art thou Lord?” we do not indict you.

But if you have answered the question to the satisfaction of your intellect and then you have not answered the second question by your obedience, you are indicted. Because you are as Saul of Tarsus, with information a perpetual, ceaseless, relentless enemy of Christ.

For Christ has suffered more from the hands of his friends, his professed friends, than he ever has from his enemies. He is the most devastating enemy of Christ whose intellect is convinced of theology, whose life is filled with ritual and tradition and whose rock is marked by taboo, but who in his heart-of-hearts has not submitted to the sovereignty of God's Son.

He is the most relentless enemy, because continuously by life, by word, by deed, is seeking by every action and word to exterminate the memory of Christ and the church he founded. He only is part of the Church and he only is the friend of Christ who having been convinced by revelation that Jesus Christ is God, has by utter abandonment, looked into His face and done the only appropriate thing that one can do for God, "Lord what will thou have me to do?"

He asks without strings, without qualifications but in absolute abandonment and a lifetime of obedience to prove the genuineness of that encounter.

Has it pleased God to reveal his Son in you? The answer is not by what you say; the answer is by your obedience daily, hourly to his will, his Word. As you come to this Christmas two questions you need must ask as you gaze upon memory and tradition down the avenue past, "Who art thou babe of Bethlehem? Who art thou man of Nazareth?"

Communion

Will you turn please to First Corinthians chapter 10, the 10th chapter of First Corinthians. Our text is found in verses 16 and 17. First Corinthians 10:16 and 17. “The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? Where we being many are one bread and one body, therefore we are all partakers of that one bread.”

One of the most significant things about my early contact in Africa with the Muslims was the fact that they furnished fellowship for those that were pagans; savages worshiping at shrines dedicated to evil spirits, groveling in filth and vile practices. The Muslim trader, businessman, government official came as a missionary, and he offered to them not only a testimony of doctrine, but he offered a fellowship.

They provided clothes for them, and they provided a dish, that is they shared in the common dish. Can you imagine a man that’s been standing in the background in his nakedness with beads and the tribal marks carved in his face, bonding him as the chattel of the evil spirits of a particular tribe, as he looks upon this scene? They’re there in a little African village, and the men gather and come, and sit down at this large dish. Then they begin to break the flat, thin bread, dip out of the common dish, and they eat together.

This is koinonia. This is sharing, as it’s practiced by the Muslims in Africa. The amazing thing about it is that this is probably one of the great reasons why nine people are being converted to Islam for one being converted to Christ around the world today. Yet in the early church, koinonia was a very practical matter. Fellowship, sharing, communion was a very

practical matter, and it marked those early days. On the day of Pentecost, 3,000 converted, many of them being rabbis who were disenfranchised, who lost their income, lost their homes and families, and were ostracized from all source of livelihood and fellowship.

You can find the sweet meaning of that verse in Acts the second chapter and 42. "And they," whom? These converts, "continued steadfastly in fellowship, in the Apostles' doctrine, in breaking of bread, and of prayers." This is the word 'communion', koinonia. 'Communication' comes from it. To communicate comes from it. It is a word that has also been used of any kind of fellowship, but we apply it to the table that's before us.

We are gathered this Lord's Day morning in communion. The point that I wish to make with you today is this, that if you have not had communion during the days of the week past, you can't have it in 15 minutes from now. Communion is not something that you can turn off or on as you would a light switch and its flow of electricity. Many of you will be here today that will take the bread, and eat it, and drink the fruit of the grape, but you will say we've been to a communion service.

Yes, but can you honestly in your heart of hearts say that you've been to communion, for communion is sharing. It isn't just receiving. This is when it is nothing more than an ordinance. It's nothing more than something that's presented to you that you eat. Then it could be a type of protestant mass, one might so view it. It could be a protestant ceremony of some lesser significance, but it cannot be communion.

What you are to do when you take the bread is to testify by the lifting of it, by the holding of it. You are testifying that you had communion up until that point. You were having communion

at that point, and you propose to continue to have communion after that point. And so my point I said is this, if your communion begins when the service of communion starts, then it isn't that of which the Scripture speaks.

Communion of course has to be on three levels. First, it has to be with God, and it is this that is the supernatural work of the Spirit of God, taking us out of our death, and estrangement, and alienation, and enmity, and uniting us in Jesus Christ to Himself.

We are born of God, born of the Spirit of God, made partakers of His nature and of His life, and we're brought initially into fellowship with God through the new birth.

And the way you know that you are sharing in the work of Christ is the Witness of the Spirit of God to your heart. The witness of the Word has told you how, but my dear, if all you have in your Christian life is what you've derived as a mental process from the Word, then you may have been sharing the Word with the teacher, but you haven't been sharing life with the source of life. It is through the new birth that you are born of God, and the testimony that you have shared in the effect of Christ's death is evidenced by the Witness of the Spirit of God at the time of receiving faith.

You know that you are born of God, not because you've assumed it, not because you've inferred it, but you have experienced that infusion of life, that invasion of life that enables you to know that you have passed from death to life. Sharing in the Christian pilgrimage begins at the point of the new birth when He tells you that you're His. Now you've told Him you want to be His. You've told Him in repentance that you're renouncing all other gods but Him, that you are

renouncing all other hope but His death, and that you are receiving Him.

You are sharing in the sense your sin with Him and yourself with Him. But the question is has He shared Himself with you? Do you have the Witness of the Spirit that you've passed from death to life? Do you know by that inner knowing or is it merely an assumption, something that you have presumed because you have constructed this system of thinking on the basis of verses taken from the Word of God?

Have you had communion that began back there when you were born of God is the second level of communion. Have you experienced the purging work of the Spirit of God through the Word? "Every branch in me that beareth fruit He purgeth it." This is communion. When God begins to share to you His mind and says, now I don't want this attitude. I don't want this action, and now He's sharing to you His disciplinary love. He's sharing to you His will and His purpose.

And you are responding to Him by saying, "Yes Lord." If you don't want that, neither do I. If you're not in this, neither am I. If you can't have that, neither can I. There's communion. It's the communion of discipline. Have you experienced this, has the Spirit of God spoken to your heart in the discipline of His grace? Then of course there's a more intimate level of communion than simply His teaching and His disciplining, not without which, however, is the discipline.

You're never going to go into the most intimate fellowship until you've passed this discipline period and have submitted to it whatever time God may bring it again. I'm confident we'll never outgrow the need for discipline. We are constantly experiencing it from His loving hand. But there is an experience in the Word of God for which this society has stood.

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It is called the deeper life, if you wish. It's called the fullness of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit filled life, the anointed life, the imbued life.

I would not bicker with anyone over terms, but I would simply say that beyond knowing that you've been born of God, and knowing that you have experienced the discipline that comes from His Word by His Spirit, there is an experience of the fullness of God. I relate it personally to Ephesians the third chapter, that wonderful portion that "Christ may take up His lasting dwelling place," the difference between renting a room and owning the house. "May take up His lasting dwelling place in your heart through faith that you might know the fullness of God...you might be filled unto all of the fullness of God."

Whereas it is absolutely true that there's a crisis of being filled with the fullness of God, and one cannot go into that relationship without it, so it is that there's a crisis of marriage. Many a home that began very happily when bride and groom kissed each other in the presence of the happy spectators has in the months and years that followed become a place of great misery and grief. Frequently, we discover that the happiest anticipations and plans have gone astray, have failed because there's lack of communion.

Maybe they didn't talk. Maybe they didn't share. It takes an awful lot of talking to have a happy home, of opening up, of sharing. And so it is that with the Father, it takes an awful lot of expressing what's on our heart. It takes time in praise, and time in waiting, and time in worship, and time in unfolding. It's absolutely imperative that we should take that time. Have you spent time alone with the Lord this week?

Have you heard Him speak to you? Have you had communion with Him? There's a second kind of communion that I touch

quickly in passing, and that is the communion with others, either those to whom the Spirit of God has joined you in the fellowship where you talk about the things of the Lord. Many times, you know, we have less than that. I've related in some other connection in the past an experience that I had back in Little Falls, Minnesota.

The first Sunday after being installed as pastor, one of the deacons said, "Would you come to our home? We have a time of fellowship after the service." Fellowship, sharing, communion, "Oh, certainly I'd be delighted, brother." I went to the home, and when I got in, I smelled the coffee cooking as does nowhere else but Minnesota, and looked at the table laden with cakes and cookies.

I thought, communion, well after we eat I suppose. We went to the table, and we sat down, and they began to communicate about how the people looked in the congregation and about other things. I felt at the time as though I was going to sort of say "Hurrah for Jesus." I wanted to get something religious into the conversation because for all practical purposes it could have been a group of salesmen sitting down in a nice restaurant, talking after a meal. Here were deacons, and here were people, and they were having fellowship.

The next time they asked me to come, I was quite just grief stricken because this was not in any ways my concept of what communion should be. We were there to commune about Him. We were to talk about Him. We were to share Him, what He'd shown us, what He'd done, what He'd said, what He brought, what He was. Our fellowship was to be in the Lord Jesus Christ and not just in compatibility of one another, and not just in the fact that we enjoyed each other, and we enjoyed being in one another's homes.

No, I believe that communion as it was intended to be in the church between believers was a communion where heart matches heart and shares that which is ... is it hard for people to start talking about the Lord in your presence? Is it difficult for them to begin to open up about their hungry hearts and their spiritual needs? Is there something about you that wants to keep the conversation light and on a rather frivolous tone? You don't want to really come to grips with your heart?

Do you know what it is to have spiritual fellowship with a group? Do you know what it is? I've wondered sometimes why it is, and it's not only here, but why it is that it seems so terribly difficult in some areas of an evangelical fundamental church to get the kind of groups that I've been pleading for, for so many years. I wonder if it isn't that we're rather afraid to share our fears, afraid to share our failures, and afraid to share our deepest longings.

Have you had communion? Is there someone somewhere with whom you can have communion and sharing the things of the Lord? Oh, you ought to covet this. You ought not only to covet to have it but to afford it to someone else. Have you been having communion with Him in sweet intimate fellowship, and worship, and praise, and in adoration? Have you been having communion with others in some kind of level of ministry?

Then what about the church visible as we're in it today? We have communion in the service. I am convinced that as you've come today and as you will partake in just a few moments now of the bread, that you're going to have to do one of three things. You're going to have to pass it by and say, I'm utterly out of fellowship with God. I'm out of fellowship with His people, and to partake now until I deal with the things which are there would be to partake unworthily.

This is what the Scripture means when it says judge yourselves. Because you are testifying when you take that little morsel of bread, part of a larger loaf, you are saying I am one of a body. I'm a member of a body. I've been brought into that body, and I have love for that body, and interest in that body, and concern for its welfare, and a desire for its fellowship. It might just be necessary for you to be honest with your heart to pass it by and simply say, no, this isn't the case. There are those in the body that I despise.

There are those in the body that...I just simply can't, and it would be far better for you than to compromise your heart. But oh, there's something infinitely better than that. If you find the stubbornness of your spirit is such that you are not prepared to do the second thing, then I think it's only fair to warn you and press you to do the first. But oh, I plead with you to do the second, and that is to break. To utterly break before the Lord and realize that everyone who takes that morsel is saying, in me and my flesh, there's no good thing.

I came utterly bankrupt to stand at the door of the cross. I brought nothing but a world of guilt and a mountain of iniquity. I offer Jesus Christ nothing but my poor lost estate, and there is no one that ever came to the door of Christ any worse than did I. Therefore, when you take that bread, you are saying, as did Paul, I am the chief of sinners where nothing could have atoned for my sin but Jesus Christ on the cross.

If you look around the congregation and you'll find that everyone that holds the morsel is saying to everyone else who holds the morsel, I brought nothing to the Son of God but bankruptcy, emptiness, sin, uncleanness, unworthiness, and condemnation. This is what you say when you hold that little fragment of bread. Then you are saying something else. When you hold it, you are saying but I have repented of my sin. I

abhor sin. I detest it. I loathe it. The heart cry beyond all others is that I might be free from its stain, and its dominion, and its power.

That's what you say when you hold that little morsel. You're testifying to the brokenness of your spirit, and the repentance of your heart, and the abhorrence of yourself, and every failure is the source of fresh grief. Furthermore, you are saying when you hold that little loaf, I know that in me, in my flesh, there's no good thing. Try as I will and seek as I have, I've been unable to lift myself by my bootstraps. Therefore, I recognize that it does not lie within me to be all that Jesus Christ wants me to be. But by holding this bread, I realize that when He died, not only did He die for me, but I died with Him.

This is what you say when you hold it. Then furthermore, as you eat it you say, and I'm asking Him, the wheat that was pure and spotless, and sinless, ground under the law and brought over the fire of God's condemnation, I'm asking Him to become the life of my life. When you eat that bread, you are saying, I know that only Jesus Christ is enough in me. Only He's enough. Only He can live. Only He can walk. Only He can stand. I've nothing in myself.

Now we are in the midst of the people who said, I brought nothing but bankruptcy, utterly unworthy. I offered Him nothing but condemnation. I have repented of my sin. I'm deplored of any strength in myself, and my only confidence is that this one represented by the bread I eat will live in me His life. And as this bread becomes flesh of my flesh, I'm asking the risen Christ to become life of my life.

This is communion. What are we sharing? We're sharing our lost estate. We're all in the same door. Nobody ... there's no second story entrance into grace. What are we sharing? We're

sharing our repentance. What are we sharing? We're sharing our helplessness. What are we sharing? We're sharing a wonderful Lord that loved the unworthy and the unclean, and loved failures and loved people with nothing to offer Him. Loved them enough that He was willing to die in their place and stand.

He loved them enough that He was not only willing to die for them, but He was willing to condescend to come and live with them. We're testifying to such a wonderful Lord when we eat the bread and we drink the wine. Are you sharing this today? Are you sharing Him? Shall we bow in prayer?

Now our Father, we've gathered, eternity bound men and women. We're nearer to thy gates than we've ever been before, and possibly to some here, this will be the last time they ever sit at the table of the Lord. It may not be the eldest among us at all. Thou dost know our days are in thy hands, and here we are, a privilege that we are enjoying. To some, it can be just rote, routine, and just doing it because this is what's expected.

Oh, Father of Jesus, might it be that today is communion, is sharing, sharing with thee, sharing with each other, sharing with the church, its entire company, this testimony of thy great grace and thy love. Minister to us as we minister to thee. We will minister to thee in thanksgiving, in confession, in brokenness. We will minister to thee in our receiving faith, taking from thine outstretched hand of love pardon, cleansing, and forgiveness, and deliverance, and thou would minister to us.

Oh, Father, let this be communion in thee. With heads bowed and eyes closed, are you prepared to communicate, to commune, to share? Will you come on these grounds to the table of the Lord? Seal it, Father, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

The Greatest Sermon of the 20th Century

Except Ye Repent

I turn you this evening to the words of our Lord as they are found throughout the gospels. There are five words that I wish to bring to you. Some of you may have heard me use these words before, but they are true and truer tonight in my own mind as they have ever been before and therefore I must share them with you again.

The first word is found in Matthew chapter 5 and verse 20. You recall that the third verse of Hebrews 2, "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord." What was it that our Lord at first began to say and to speak? Well this I believe is one of the first occasions when we have a recorded message of our Lord, given in its entirety – it's called The Sermon on the Mount. It begins with the Beatitudes.

How often we have heard the Beatitudes presented by some who deny our Lord and the blood by which we were purchased, as being just sort of a standard of conduct. More or less as a ten-rung ladder by which they hope to climb to Heaven. It is not so at all. The Beatitudes are the full length portrait of the child of God. The description of the blessed one. And who is blessed but the one that is a new creation in Christ Jesus. And here our Lord describes not how we become blessed, but those who are blessed. It is interesting that at the conclusion of this sermon, as they came down from the mountain the first one that they met was a leper.

You understand of course, that according to the laws of Israel, lepers were not to be on the path, as this one was. He was to be out in the place assigned by the priest. Equivalent to what we

would call the city dump. There in the caves, he would reside. But this one has heard that the Lord is present and he has heard that this one, the Lord Jesus Christ is able to heal lepers.

So he has broken all of the taboos and all of the rules and he's right there at the path as the Lord comes down from the mountain, followed by the entire company that is spread out behind him on the hillside. And instead of cringing in fear at the side and drawing the black cloth across his lips and crying as he was commanded to do, "unclean," he stands out right in the way of our wonderful Lord.

He looks him square in the eye and gives a statement of complete confidence. "Lord, if thou wilt thou canst make me clean." He had come to the right one. He had come in the right frame and state of mind, hopeless, helpless. He knew that all of Israel had no answer for him. The only thing that they could do is to isolate him and confine him to an area where he wouldn't infect others.

His case was hopeless. He was separated from his family, from his friends, doomed because of this terrifying disease, this loathsome disease. He stood there in front of our Lord saying, "If thou wilt thou canst make me clean." I am so glad that the record is complete. Our Lord looked at him and said, "I will. Be thou clean." And he touched him and immediately his leprosy departed from him.

If you will study the Beatitudes carefully, you will discover that they are a picture of the kind of spiritual health that you do not possess naturally by nature, by choice, by attitude and by practice. You were not broken in spirit, nor was I. We were haughty and proud and arrogant and rebellious and selfish. We were not pure in heart - impure and vile, lustful and lecherous were we. We were not peace makers, but trouble makers. Now

as God sovereignly chose that the leper should be the picture of the sinner, so by contrast and considering ourselves of the Beatitudes, we discover our dire plight and desperate need.

Have you ever been lost? Some years ago I asked a congregation how many had ever been lost. Four hands went up out of the hundred or more that were present. Now I said, "How many of you are saved?" And all the hands went up that I could see. Then I mentioned to the people what a strange thing this is. Four of you have been lost and all of you are saved and yet the Lord Jesus Christ said that he came into the world to seek and to save that which was lost.

Before God even can save anyone, he must see them slain. How strange it is that we often pray, "Oh God save my loved ones." Are you prepared to pray in accord with the sovereign and gracious operation of God? If you are, then you are going to change your praying. Instead of saying initially Lord save him - you are going to say Lord, slay him. Bring him to the awareness of his desperate plight. Awaken him to his danger. Convict him of his crimes. This will be the order of your praying.

Here was one who had been awakened to his need. He remembered the day when he first saw that spot on the back of his hand and in touching it felt no pain. Pricking it felt no pain. He went to try to cover it as long as he could. He had the sleeves of his clothes lengthened, but soon it was out. As sin will ever be out. And then it came to the time when he stood before the priest and was pronounced unclean, a leper. He was awakened and then he was convicted and sent out into that place there to live out his days in fear. Ostracized from family and friends and everything that was dear and precious to him.

But there came that hour when he said I will arise and go. I have heard that this one is there and that he's able to help people such as I am. And Lord if thou will, thou canst make me clean. Have you ever seen yourself the traitor that God declares you are? Have you seen yourself the rebel that your treason led you to? Have you seen yourself an anarchist ruling your own will and choosing your own way...an enemy of God?

God, living and governing the universe to secure the greatest blessedness and happiness of all men, including himself, and you, a moral gangster, an anarchist living only for your own whim and pleasure. Have you ever discovered that sin is the committal of the will to the principle and the policy and practice of pleasing self, regardless of the will of God and the rights of others?

It's interesting that in reading the thirteenth chapter of the Book of Leviticus you discover that the only one that could be pronounced clean by the priest was the one who had leprosy from the top of his head to the sole of his feet. When there wasn't a place on him as big as the end of his thumb that wasn't soiled by the disease, then the priest would pronounce him clean. And you recall the procedure?

How the priest took this one that was covered with leprosy down to the brook of flowing water and there the clay pot would be put in, and the water gathered. Two turtle doves were brought. One was left bound and the other had its throat cut and the blood was pumped from the body into the water until first pink and then rosy and then finally scarlet. It proved that the life of the bird had flowed into the water.

And then the living bird was dipped seven times into the water until its white feathers were likewise scarlet. The little thread that bound the wings was cut and the bird began to beat its

wings and the drops of blood would fall upon the leper and then the string around the feet would be cut and this one would go off into the sky, carrying with it the proof of the death, the blood that had been shed.

What a picture it was of the Lord Jesus Christ, who could say to that leper, "I will. Be thou clean." What a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ who could say to you a moral spiritual leper, to me, undone because of our sin, "I will, be thou clean." In order for it to be possible for him to make you clean, he had to be made what you were in order that you could be made what he is.

And there had to come that hour when innocent of all sin, and without sin, he reached out and drew you to himself and stood before his Father as you, as me, and died. The just for the unjust that he might bring us to God. Thus our Lord Jesus Christ could stand that day in the presence of that multitude and say, "Blessed are the poor in spirit." Because he was providing everything...he was making it possible. He had come to do a new thing. To bring an entirely new thing into being, thus his testimony, "These are the blessed."

We have it today and we know that if any man be in Christ he is a new creation. Old things are passed away and all things are become new. But the Word, let's come to the Word - it's that twentieth verse I've said. "Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and the Pharisees, you shall in no case enter into the Kingdom of Heaven."

There would be the possibility that His hearers, listening to him describe this new creation would say, "Oh we know the ones of whom he speaks. There sit the Pharisees and the Scribes and the Sadducees and these extremely diligently religious men. Certainly, these are the blessed." But our Lord wanted them to

understand. All His hearers to understand that that which he was doing was completely other than anything they had known previously. And so, his Word was the categorical statement to which you can bring no challenge, "Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and the Pharisees, you shall in no case enter into the Kingdom of Heaven."

Let's look for a moment in that which this righteousness did consist. We are all too apt to think of the Scribes and Pharisees simply as whited sepulchers. As platters clean on the outside and foul within. But we must give credit where credit is due and evaluate this properly if we are to make the application correctly. Remember that there were in those days two classes in Judaism. There were the Sadducees, who were the liberals of the day. They didn't believe in the existence of angels or in the resurrection from the dead, nor did they believe in the necessity of blood atonement.

There was another group, a much larger group that had the attention and influence with the common people, called the Pharisees. The Pharisees were fundamental in their theology. They believed in the inspiration of the Torah and in fact, they almost went too far, believing also in the authority of the Talmud which was the commentaries or the rabbinical writings. They believed in the existence of angels and expected the supernatural. They believed in resurrection from the dead. They believed in the necessity of blood atonement. They were fundamental. They were orthodox in their theology...as orthodox as you could be.

Then they also were evangelistic in their zeal. So successful were they in their personal evangelism, converting people from heathenism to Judaism that when the plans for the reconstructed temple, that is the Temple of Herod, were drawn

up a greatly enlarged Court of the Proselytes had to be provided in order to accommodate these that had converted from heathenism to Judaism. They had been circumcised and baptized and given new names. The Pharisees were diligent in witnessing to all who came to Jerusalem and remember that Jerusalem was the crossroads of the world.

And then the third place, the Pharisees were missionary in their fervor. For it was said, that adage and watchword was, that the Pharisees would encircle the world to make one proselyte. There wasn't a trip too difficult, too dangerous, too arduous, and too distant if at the end there was the possibility of persuading someone to convert to Judaism. For they believed that only those that had come into the truth as it had been revealed to the fathers and had renounced the idols and had been circumcised and baptized and committed to the faith of Israel, only these could ever be saved from perdition.

They were also pre-millennial in their hope. They were looking for the personal, fatherly, imminent coming of Messiah to establish the Kingdom of David and to give back to Israel the glory that she had had under Solomon. Think of this, they were anticipating his coming. Then they were devout in their practice, we sometimes forget this, but they fasted two days every week. So diligent were many that they wouldn't even swallow their spittle from sun up until sun down on the day of fast. They prayed three times every day. They prayed, it's true on the street corners and some even the more inordinate ones desiring the praise of men would manage to be on the street corner at the time of prayer, but not all.

Many of them prayed in their own courtyards earnestly and sincerely, the shortest of their prayers would require ten to twelve minutes. Then they observed all of the Talmudic requirements regarding dishes and diet and food. They also

brought all of the offerings. The reason that you were allowed a thirty percent deduction on your income tax is because the Council of Rabbis in studying the Talmud and the Scriptures discovered that the Pharisees had in those days given the equivalent of about thirty percent of their income. So less there should be a penalty attached to obedience to faith, you have been given this privilege that incidentally very few exercise.

So, here we have a people that are fundamental in theology, evangelistic in zeal, missionary in their fervor, pre-millennial in their hope, devout in their practice. And we must recognize that many of them were sincere and earnest in what they knew, in what they taught, what they practiced. And our Lord said, "Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and the Pharisees, you shall in no case enter the Kingdom of Heaven."

Now let me ask you, does your righteousness consist in theology? Theirs did. Does yours consist in zeal? Theirs did. Does yours consist in missionary enthusiasm? Theirs did. Does yours consist in pre-millennial hope and expectation of the Lord's return? Theirs did. Does yours consist in devotions, praying, tithing, and fasting? Theirs did. Well was this wrong? No. Our Lord simply said it wasn't enough.

All of this could be, as it was in their case, the product of intellectual personal endeavor. All of this could be naturally produced. All of this could pull out of what a man is. But a man can't take away his leprosy. A man can't make himself whole. A man can't make himself alive. And our Lord said, those that are prepared to enter into my presence in that day are those that have had something supernatural, miraculous, transforming - what he first began to teach. This is what he said as he began to speak of so great salvation.

Another word that I give to you is found in Luke chapter 13, verses 3 and 5. It's keyed to us by this same word, unless or except. This time our Lord is speaking to current events, so we have good reason for doing as he did. Two accidents have happened or two events have taken place. One was an accident, the falling of the Tower of Siloam. The other was Caesar's soldiers entering into the Temple to find certain Galileans and there to slay them and mix their blood with the blood of their sacrifices.

So they come to the Lord and said "Lord what does this mean, interpret it for us?" And our Lord looked at this company and said, "Do you think that these are sinners above all men? I say unto to you nay, but except..." there's the word, "except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."

Now when I approach this word, I do it with a deep desire that we might see again republished and made available to the Christian public a book by Harry Ironsides. It was the prize-winning treatise of that year, published by the American Tract Society entitled, "Except Ye Repent." I have read it. I have tried for years to secure a copy. I know the one who holds the copyright and only wish that someone would make possible a republishing of that splendid little volume.

There has been a great deal said about repentance. One of the things that I would have you see today is that the word itself means, a change of mind, a change of will, a change of intention, and a change of purpose. It brings us back to that word which I referred last night, Romans 10:9. "If thou shall confess with thy mouth, Jesus to be Lord." You see the sinner has by every attitude confessed that he is lord.

I remember in my own home some years ago, my little daughter was in the living room plucking the leaves off of one

of her mother's plants. And I said, "Sarah stop that honey." And she looked at me and took another. I said, "Sarah dear, stop that." She looked at me and took another. I went over and stood in front of her. I didn't want to do what sweet fathers are so often forced to do you know...apply the board of education to the seat of learning, but it was necessary. I said, "Sarah stop that." And she put her little foot down and her little chin out and she said, "I won't." Well she did, I saw to the matter immediately.

But here was something in this little child of mine that so was of me and so like me that it was an illustration of the very thing that characterizes Adam's family. "I won't" to the will of God. This is an attitude and this was something that she'd learned. She probably learned it from the children, but it was natural to her. It came by her. It had just run in the family for generations ever since back in Adam's time. I won't. And we find it expressed by the attitude that's given in *Invictus*. "I am the master of my fate. I am the captain of my soul." I will is the attitude of the sinner. Now, we recognize that this can be manifest suddenly or it can be in some overt and some ugly manner, but it still characterizes every sinner.

They have turned everyone to his own way. In other words, they've gone into the God business for themselves. They have determined how and when and where and the manner in which they will please themselves. It is the policy, the committal of the will at the age of accountability to this principle of making one's own pleasure the end of their being. I am going to do what I want to do, be what I want to be, get what I want to get, and have what I want to have. But Christ said, "Except your mind changes and your will changes and your purpose changes and your direction changes, you will perish."

In Romans we read, "If thou shall confess with thy mouth Jesus to be Lord." Now you recognize that God demands perfect obedience. If from the moment that one determines to please God, he were to perfectly please God – now hear me – if from the moment one repents he were to perfectly please God, that perfect obedience from that day on would not acquire enough merit to atone for one sin. Because God has demanded obedience and that minimum that God demands carries with it no acquisition or accumulation of merit.

So repentance cannot be viewed as a work. It's a change of attitude. But you know that there is no pardon for the criminal who holds the smoking gun with which he has taken a life. As he looks into the face of the Judge and says, "Listen Judge, I know that there was a man who died for murderers and I am claiming interest in his death and let me go because I have got a long list of people to kill." You know that there is no possibility for pardon for such a one as that. And so Christ said, "Except you repent." Except you realize the enormity of your crime of getting on the throne of your heart and ruling your life and playing God, you'll perish.

Now we realize that this is what Peter preached. I remember some years ago a dear friend saying to me, "You understand of course, that Paul never preached repentance. All Paul said was believe." Well, I had been taught the same thing and parrot-like I repeated it. And one day I took my Bible and went to it. You know what I discovered? When Paul stood on Mars Hill in the presence of heathen philosophers he said, "Now, God commandeth all men everywhere to repent." He never changed it, he never abrogated it. It's still there.

And then again, when he took leave of the Ephesian elders he said, "I was with you night and day from house to house teaching repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord

Jesus Christ." And still again, when he stood before King Agrippa and recounted how the Lord had spoken to him saying, "I have appeared unto thee for this purpose to make thee a minister and a witness. To turn men from darkness to light and from the power of Satan under God. Wherefore oh King Agrippa I was not disobedient under the heavenly vision, but I have delivered to them of Damascus and Jerusalem; the Jews and the Gentiles, how that they must repent and turn to God and bring forth works meet for repentance."

Repentance is the product of that work of the Holy Ghost producing conviction. It is that change of intention from pleasing self to pleasing God. It is the right about face and purpose from I'm going to live to please me to "Thy will be done." And Christ has said it, "How shall we escape, oh how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord."

I talk with pastors all over this country. And they tell me that their hearts are breaking, as they see their young people going on claiming every verse in the Bible that has to do with salvation and yet living in sin. Living without concern for the will of God and even without the common decencies often to the community. And doing it all in the name of Christ. I submit to you that we have produced in America a Frankenstein, which if we are not careful will turn and rend us.

For when you have salvation preached apart from a breaking upon the rock, then you have made moral monsters that have taken the grace of God and turned it into lasciviousness. And have found license for every sin.

Antinomianism has ever been considered by the church a heresy. Paul saw that road was born in hell. He saw it peek its filthy nose up through the grating over the pit and stomped

upon it in Romans 6. "What then shall we continue in sin that grace may abound, God forbid." And yet there are people that take the blood of Christ as though it were a *carte blanche* credit card and they can charge their sins to Jesus and live as they will. This I say is turning the grace of God into lasciviousness.

Christ said except you repent you will perish. I press upon every pastor the reading of the sermon by Charles Spurgeon from Psalms 7:11. On that text "God is angry with the wicked every day. If he turn not, he will slay him. He hath whet his sword. He hath bent his bow." I say it is one of the most needed sermons in the twentieth century and probably one of the most important sermons ever preached in the English language.

I pray give it to you for your thought, because the lost note in modern preaching is a breaking upon the rock of the authority of Christ. We've had people who have exercised a head faith in Christ and agreeing to the plan of salvation. Or a dead faith appropriating the doctrines, rituals, and taboos of Christianity. Or a devil's faith emotionally responding to the truth. But they've never had heart faith, because the Scripture says "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth, Jesus to be Lord." It's not to say it. "Not everyone that sayeth unto me Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven."

John Bunyan saw Ignorant coming up to the gate and the man on the top of the gate said, in *Pilgrims Progress*, "Do you have the certificate?" And Ignorant fumbled in his bosom and answered not a word. And the angels went to the King of the place and said, "There is one standing out there who claims that he knew you, that you taught in the streets and he has eaten with you in the marketplace, but he doesn't have a certificate. Shall we let him in?" And the King said, "Bind him hand and foot and take him away." And then John Bunyan

said, "I saw that they came and bound him hand and foot and took him to the mountain and a hole opened in the mountain. And he went into destruction."

Then the writer of Pilgrims Progress said, "I saw that there was a way to hell from the gates of heaven." My dear friends, "Not everyone that sayeth unto me Lord, Lord shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father, which is in Heaven. Many will say unto me that day, Lord, didn't we teach in your name? Didn't we prophesy in your name? Didn't we cast out devils in your name? And I will say unto them from within, away with you. I never knew you."

I never ask people anymore "Do they know the Lord?" I never ask that question anymore. The way I have to do it because of deep conviction is this, "Does the Lord know you?" This is life eternal that they might know thee the only true God. When the angels spoke to Mary and told her of the birth of Christ she said, "How can these things be seeing I know not man?" And Mary knew not Joseph until she had conceived and brought forth her first born. This knowing that makes the difference is that impartation of divine life by a miracle of God's grace. That is why Christ said, "Except ye repent you'll perish," because he will not impart himself to an impenitent heart.

Another word that I give you quickly, Matthew 18:3. There you have again a situation. For these have professed faith in him and forsaken all to follow him. Yet in the morning on the walk, they have been arguing as to who would be greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven and our Lord said, "What did you talk about on the way?" And they didn't answer him, they were ashamed. Then he said, "Except ye be converted and become as little children, you shall in no case enter the Kingdom of Heaven."

When Peter said, "I will never forsake you. Though all the others forsake you, I'll never do it." Our Lord said, "Peter, you're going to deny me three times before the cock crows. I prayed for you. Satan wants to sift you as wheat, but I have prayed for you. And when you are converted, strengthen your brethren." Do you know what it means to be converted?

To be turned again. Turned again, turned into the way. Let me ask you, have you a broken spirit? Speaking of the matter of repentance, Spurgeon had this to say, "It must be, to be genuine, it must hearty and not reluctant. It must be entire and not partial. It must be permanent and not temporary." And I submit to you that the evidence of the genuineness of God's work in your heart is the fact that when you are led aside by your appetites and you do fall into sin, your heart is broken. Not because of what it will do to you, but because of what it will do to Him who loved you and gave himself for you.

The best evidence that you're born of God is three-fold. First that you have a hatred for sin; secondly, that you have a hunger for God; and thirdly that you have a heart of compassion for the lost.

Except ye be converted and become as little children. What is this? This is an attitude that whenever you tend to turn out of the way, you come to God's Word and you turn back in. I think you can bring it in correspondence with that word that you have in Romans 12, to transform by the renewing of your mind. Oh, how many there were that at the day they met Christ they were willing to break, but they haven't broken since. What about you? Has brokenness characterized you?

When you find that you are led aside by the habits of your mind and the attitudes of your heart, the temptations that assail you on the way, you come in brokenness before the Lord.

You've been converted and you are as the little child. You want to walk in the way that he has given you and something happened that made you hate sin, made you want to please him.

I give you a third word. There is so much more I would like to say about each of these, but I quickly pass on to John 6:53. I mentioned it in passing last night, but I would like to give it to you again tonight. Our Lord has had this company of people who have eaten the bread and they stood before him. He has spoken to them saying, "Except you eat my flesh and drink my blood, you have no life in you." Except you eat my flesh and drink my blood, you have no life in you. You understand, do you not that salvation is not from the Lord, but it is the Lord. How frequently we think that the Lord died to provide salvation.

The Lord is there and salvation is in our hearts. But that's not the case at all. The Lord is salvation. His name is Joshua Jehovah Savior. We saw it last night from Psalms 27, "The Lord is my light and my salvation. He that hath the Son hath life." The plan of salvation doesn't save. The decision doesn't save, the scripture verses don't, He does. He is salvation and when he comes, he brings life because he is life. He is eternal, the eternal Son.

Oh you might have everlasting life. Life that didn't cease without him, but you couldn't have eternal life. To have eternal life, you must have someone who is eternal and God only is eternal. And therefore, this is life eternal that they might know thee, the only true God and Jesus Christ, whom thou hath sent. So he spoke to that company that had called themselves his disciples and he told them how to have eternal life. He said, "You must eat my flesh and drink my blood." And all they

could think of was a cannibal feast. They couldn't comprehend, they couldn't understand and they went away.

You remember they said to him something like this, "We're rejecting you." And he said, "No, you're not rejecting me, because all that my Father will give me will come unto me." You recall that he said that they've been rejected by the Father.

Listen to me, dear heart, do you know what we have done? By changing the word that first began to be spoken by the Lord, we have filled our churches with people that have less than Christ. Fifth columnists for hell that have been inoculated with just enough of the truth of God to immunize them often to the work of God. And the consequence of this is, as I pointed out last evening; there is the possibility that the church as we know it as an organization, is useless and hopeless to God. Oh, I trust I am wrong. I trust I am wrong.

But as I read church history, I discovered that there was a period in the history of England, when the church was useless to God. It was orthodox. It had the thirty-nine articles. It had all of the crystalized orthodoxy of the century. And yet it was useless to God. Thus God rose up John Wesley, who went out preaching and he took the broken; this man and that woman and this young person and he met with them at five o'clock in the morning often.

For nearly forty years he had a class meeting at five in the morning. Because he knew that there could be nothing done through the organized church, but God had something to do and it could only be done by those that had met God on his own terms. The class meeting said McAulley was the instrument that God used to save England from the abyss into which France fell.

The Greatest Sermon of the 20th Century

It may be, that America has seen the infusion of its organized church with so much that has Word and name and form, but is without life, that it is useless to God in such an hour of jeopardy as this. It may be that God will have to turn to something like the class meeting in order to find broken people that can be the two or three where the Lord himself meets. Where there can be released moral, spiritual power of the risen Christ that will change the day in which we live. I hope I am wrong. I hope I am wrong.

But I submit to you, dear heart that if the Lord Jesus had changed his message to hold that crowd, he would have ruined everything the Father had sent him to do. I can see Peter standing there as the Lord begins to preach about eating his flesh and drinking his blood. And Peter is just chewing his fingers and turning to the disciples and muttering under his breath and said, "You know we told him not to preach that, we told him not to preach that sermon. Every time he does, he loses his crowd and there goes the offering and oh everything we are working for."

Finally, when the Lord is finished, they've all gone and he turns and says, "Well what about you fellas, you going to go?" They stand there with their hands over their eyes, rubbing their chins, and after a while Peter says, "This is a hard saying, Lord."

And then I can hear, and it isn't in the scripture, but I can hear something like this; he stands there and he says "You know Lord, you came to us up there in Galilee and you told us that you were the Son of God. And God the Father confirmed it and we know you're the Christ. We know that. You know that we sold everything - we've just sold everything. We have given up our business and our homes and our families and everything. We've committed it all to you. We've burned our bridges.

We've cut all the ropes that hold us. We don't understand this Lord. We don't know what it means, but we can't go away, we've got to stay. Thou only has the words of eternal life." And our Lord built with those that he couldn't drive away.

When he could drive them away, he let them go. His Father said, "I have given you a people and the only way you will ever know who the people are that I have given you is if you say what I have told you to say. You speak that which I have commanded you and I will give you your people." If he had changed the message, he'd have changed the people and that's what we've done.

What is he saying, "Except you eat my flesh and drink my blood." He is saying that just as in hunger and dying of thirst and starvation, you come on bread and you come on wine, and in your desperation you take the bread and eat it and take the wine and drink it. And in the process of digestion and assimilation that bread becomes the flesh of your flesh, the wine becomes the body of your body and it's part of you...so said he.

In your death, in your desperation, in your lostness, you come to a table in the wilderness. What table is that? The cross. And there you see me, with my body nailed to the cross and my blood poured out. And you take me and eat me and just as food becomes part of you, I will join myself to you in a miracle that will make me part of you.

The last word I give you in closing, John 3:3, John 3:7. "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God." "Except ye be born of water you cannot enter it, you cannot enter the Kingdom of Heaven." A lot of "excepts." "Except your righteousness exceed...you won't enter into the Kingdom of Heaven." Except ye repent, except you be converted, except

you eat my flesh, except a man be born again. Oh dear heart if you've been born of God, God came down to make you alive in Christ. Has he? Has he?

I went down to Ashville, North Carolina to our Alliance Church. First night I was there, the invitation was given. Several came to the altar and knelt in front of the platform. The pastor said to me, "There is Mr. Brooks, one of my most faithful elders; you better see what he wants." So I went right down and said, "Mr. Brooks, what is it?" He said, "Brother Reidhead for the last several months, I've been troubled I believe by the Lord as to the superficiality of my relationship to Christ." "I think it's all in my head. I would like to talk with you and pray with you."

So we made an appointment and then another and then a third during those two weeks. Here was a man twenty-three years an elder in that church. He knew the plan of salvation. He knew scripture verses. But God had been troubling him, I hadn't. It wasn't my preaching the first night. It was not even pertinent to the subject, actually. And then I left and I looked over the heads in the crowds, "How is it Brother Brooks?" He shook his head. I didn't see him for several months, and then down at a camp meeting in Hendersonville, North Carolina, I saw him - so different.

He came up to me after the service and I said, "What happened, how is it with you?" He said, "Well you see, I was counting on you. I'd gone to others in years past when I didn't have assurance and they'd given it to me. And you hadn't done it. So when you left, I didn't know what to do. I did what I should have done all the time...I turned to the Lord." And one night in my room about one thirty all alone, I broke before the Lord." He said, "Jesus Christ came into my heart and made me a new creature." And then tears came down his cheeks, he said,

“Think of it brother, twenty-three years an elder and not born of God.”

What about you? What about you? What about your loved ones? What about your family? What about people you know? How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord?

In Pittsburgh a few years ago, Dr. Tozer said in his estimation only twenty percent of the members of evangelical churches in America gave viable evidence of regeneration. Down in Spartanburg, South Carolina a few years ago R.G. Lee said only ten percent of the members of his fellowship gave viable evidence of regeneration. I don't know if they are right. I only know that when you neglect that word, which first began to be spoken by the Lord, you fill the church with some other kind than his kind. Could it have happened to you? Could it? Those you know those you love? Shall we bow in prayer.

Poverty, Mourning and Meekness

In Matthew chapter five, the King describes his subjects. I read beginning with the first verse and concluding with the 12th verse. This is what he said infinitely more important than anything I shall say about it. "And seeing the multitude, he went up into the mountain and when he was set, his disciples came onto him and he opened his mouth and taught them saying, "Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they that mourn for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness for they shall be filled.

Blessed are the merciful for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called the children of God. Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye when men shall revile you and persecute you and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake, rejoice. Be exceeding glad for great is your reward in heaven for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you."

Our Lord Jesus came preaching saying, "Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." He called unto himself men that instructed by him and empowered by him would continue to preach this message of repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. With his disciples, he went about all Galilee teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the Kingdom and healing all manner of sickness and disease among the people.

As you know, they brought to him from Syria and from beyond Jordan the maim, the halt, the blind, the sick, the wounded, the weary. Everyone that came telling his need received from Christ the answer to it. Our Lord by his ministry of love and of miracles, of healing and of deliverance was testifying that in the kingdom of heaven, another king rules.

You recall on one occasion that a woman taken with infirmity, with arthritis would be the nearest thing we could find to it, was brought to him and our Lord looking at her said, "Ought not this daughter of Abraham, daughter of faith bound all these 18 years by Satan, by the devil. Ought not she be loosed. Ought not she be set free."

He testified therein that this woman was in a world system that was governed by another than God. We know for well from the scripture, all of us would do this, would understand this, that there was no need for sickness or death if there hadn't been sin.

You will understand when I say that that the human body was made by God. So that periodically some say every seven years, another say much more frequently every cell in the body is replaced by an entirely new cell and this process of replacement is going on constantly. Apparently God made the body in such a way that it could continue without getting old or weary or sick.

But we find that when sin came into the world, there were four terrifying consequences. First was spiritual death, separation from God. Our legal death, no longer dependent upon God. Physical death and the eternal death. This physical death apparently was put into the stream of humanity because of sin. Death passed upon all men for that all have sinned. The universality of death that men everywhere die testifies that men everywhere are sinners by nature and by choice.

We find in Deuteronomy the 28th chapter in a careful study that the sentence upon sin, the penalty upon sin is death. But the curse of the law was a foretaste of death in the form of suffering. In other words, those that even having come out of Egypt and into Canaan, for he's on the bank of Jordan about to send them over into Canaan, He said, "If you go and obey God, you'll be blessed but if you do not, all these curses will come upon you."

We find that he attached blessing for obedience and the curse for disobedience. These curses touched basket and store, family and animals that might be owned by the family and possessions and the bodies of the people. He describes in minute detail the kind of malady that will afflict the one who comes under the sentence. The person sins, the sentence is death but in the interim from the time the sentence is pronounced until it's executed, there's a period of curse or a period when there's a foretaste of death. In order that there should be that which would move the people to repentance and return for forgiveness and pardon.

The kingdom into which you and I were born was a kingdom governed by the god of this world. Our Lord Jesus said, "The prince of this world cometh and has nothing in me." We understand that this prince of the world is none other than Satan. The god of this world is the way the apostle Paul describes him, the god of this world has blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the gospel should shine unto them. This world system as we know it is governed by Satan with his minions, his hosts, his cohorts, fallen angels, and evil spirits that work today in a hierarchy of evil.

There are the prince and the power of the air, the princes' of darkness. There are the rulers of darkness and the wicked spirits in high places and a whole hierarchy of evil that controls

the world's system. All that is in this kingdom of this world is the lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh and the pride of life. We were by nature and by choice reared in the kingdom where we were sensualist. The only thing that had meaning and value was what we could see, what we could feel, what we could handle, what we could experience sensually.

That's the kingdom into which we came. At the age of accountability, you as your parents and all before committed yourself to this king and to this kingdom and to this government and to this rule. You became a sinner by choice as well as by nature. God sent his Son into the world in order that he might translate you from the kingdom of this world into the kingdom of his dear Son. When our Lord Jesus Christ came down, he says, "It's the kingdom of heaven." He wasn't talking about a jurisdictional administration as some would have us think.

He was talking about a kingdom which would have heaven nature and heaven atmosphere and heaven government and heaven blessing and heaven riches and heaven enjoyment. That's where we are told we are translated from the kingdom of this world into the kingdom of God's dear Son.

Now I know there's an eschatological aspect having to do with the future reign of Christ upon the earth. But I'm speaking now of this of which he speaks we enter by our repentance and our faith. He describes it as the Kingdom of Heaven. Now he came saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." God has become flesh, the one by whom all things were made now here is in the affairs of men.

He demonstrates something of the nature of this new kingdom by rebuking those that the evil spirits possess, by opening blind eyes, by healing withered limbs, by raising the dead, by all of

these miracles that we find here. Our wonderful Lord Jesus is demonstrating that in the Kingdom of Heaven there is blessing for those that are the subjects, those that are his.

But you see it isn't only to demonstrate in this object lesson, for he went teaching and preaching and healing. What's he preaching? He's preaching, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come among you." What is he teaching? He is teaching how to get in. What repentance means. What the implications of it will be. Then he is healing in order that he might give an evidence of the benevolence of the King.

Now this is the point that I want you to see. You understand of course that Satan's lying diatribe against God is this. He blames God for everything he does. Everything that is...in a sense God as sovereign of the universe has allowed the things which transpire on the earth. We recognize this and we realize this. But the origin of these things are not in the heart of God but in the heart of God's arch enemy and ancient foe who works only as he is given opportunity because of the hearts of men.

For instance, the scripture says to you as a Christian, "Give no place to the devil." This is a very real scripture overlooked by most people. Most Christians think that if they sin, all they're going to do is lose their reward. Something far more tragic than losing your reward transpires when a Christian sins. Because by that sin in the life that is tolerated and not forsaken and not confessed, the door is left open for the devil as a roaring lion to get in to touch business and family and possessions and bodies.

Thus the scripture says, "Give no place to the devil." How is this done? By obedience and faith. By walking in sweet simplicity and union with Christ and walking in the light of his word. Now he is speaking about this kingdom back here and he is healing and he is demonstrating that these maladies that

have come have come because of sin, because of unrighteousness, because of ungodliness. And he is now the one who is going to set up a new kingdom in which these things shall not prevail, shall not stand.

You see, it's important, everybody is going to want to get into a kingdom where there will be this deliverance from all of these terrifying things that have tormented and hurt and injured. And so the King describes his subjects. He gives us here in his word an explicit description of just who it is that is a member of his kingdom. Who it is that has been transferred from the kingdom of Satan into the kingdom of God's dear Son.

You see, many people would like the benefits of it, just like many people would like to go to heaven and be saved from hell. They don't want to be saved from sin while they're on earth. They want the benefits of the death of Christ but they do not want the dictatorship of the Son of God, the government of God's Son in their life. And so he makes it now very clear as to just the company that are having any part with him in his kingdom.

Blessed is the word he uses. We say bles-sed. It's the archaic form but blessed because certainly, there's no blessing in the kingdom of Satan. There's no blessing in the kingdom of darkness. There's nothing but terror and fear, grief and death. Blessed are they.

You see, the 10 commandments do not constitute a 10-step ladder, the 10-steps step ladder into Heaven as some people have thought. I am sure there are those that have thought; now if I will just do the first Beatitude and then after a diligent application to that, I can achieve the second and then perhaps the third. Maybe when I come to the 10th, I'll be high enough

so I can step over the top of the ladder into heaven. It doesn't work that way.

This is not a description of how one gets there. This is a picture or a description of those that have arrived. He's not giving you a ladder to reach heaven. He is telling you, just giving you that full description of the one that has come into this blessing of being part of his kingdom. Notice therefore in the third verse, "Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

By virtue of his using these words, "Theirs is the kingdom of heaven," he is establishing once for all, finally and authoritatively that no one can ever feel that he has part in the kingdom of heaven unless he has whatever is implied by poor in spirit. For these words in the language in which it were written are explicit to the extreme. Perhaps we could paraphrase it and give some of that significance.

Hear it now. Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs, only theirs and no one but theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven. This is not an exaggeration of the strength of these words. The Lord has fixed it once and for all that everyone in the Kingdom of Heaven is poor in spirit. That anyone who is not poor in spirit is not in the Kingdom of Heaven. That no one can ever be thought by others to be in the Kingdom of Heaven who was not poor in spirit. That this now has become the not without which.

It overrules all theology. It overrules all ritual. It overrules all deeds of the sacrifice and service. That this now has become the absolute qualification for having part in the Kingdom of Heaven. Now you will agree with me that if anything has this degree of meaning, it's of tremendous importance. What does it mean? Well first, what doesn't it mean?

It doesn't mean blessed are the poor spirits, as though God were now putting a premium on cowardice, on effeminacy, on non-willingness to take ones responsibility, on a weak vacillating type of thing. This isn't what it has reference to at all. Not in any way. Nor does it said, "Blessed are the poor." It's not talking about the physical poverty or financial poverty. It's not talking about those that would do without.

Of course, the ancient Catholic writers, the point where it says, "Blessed are the poor," would then say, "For theirs is the spirit of the kingdom of heaven." This is a complete twisting of the words. It isn't what it has to convey at all. There's no virtue in poverty. You may have at one time been poor and I assure you of this that within the days of your poverty you certainly had it no more readily that you were spiritual.

Now I'm sure I am confident looking back on them that the Depression did not make the United States one bit more spiritual than prosperity has made it. I just don't think there's any spiritual significance at all now to the amount of money that one possesses or the degree of poverty that they experience. It's not talking about that.

Of course, there's much to be said about loving the world and the things of the world. We're trying to isolate this and see how it applies to you in your life. What does this mean, blessed are the poor in spirit? Obviously, if it doesn't mean a natural weakness of character and vacillation of purpose and it doesn't mean financial poverty, then it must have something to do with the attitude of an individual towards himself.

Now, what's the attitude that the scripture makes so clear characterizes the unsaved? What is the attitude? What does characterize the lost men and lost women in our communities? Many times we will find people that are lost, that are very

meek and mild in disposition. I think of one girl that came to the prayer room down in Florida, in a meeting that we had many years ago. She said, "You know, all my life ever since I was a little girl, I have been the meek and the mild and the quiet and the sweet."

She gave her name. She said, "I don't know when it started but somewhere back there, I found out that if I fought, people fought me but if I gave in, was sweet and was just so mild then everybody patted me on the back and I came to like it." She said, "My means of dealing with life was to be the ever-loving, ever-giving, ever self-effacing little Annie." She said, "Everybody thought I was such a sweet little Christian."

But she said, "They didn't know what was in my heart. Deep in my heart was resentment and hatred and I used to go to bed at night, and lie awake and stare at the ceiling and think of the things I'd like to say and like to do to get even with these people that took advantage of me." She said, "My heart was just like a furnace - white heat all the time. But I had cultivated an outward demeanor, an outward façade that made everyone think that I was so meek and so mild."

So I would have you understand that it does not refer necessarily to that person, that type of thing, the part of the unsaved that's here. It can be duplicated but it's not what we're talking about. We're not talking about that at all when we count it. This is not what the unsaved are. They may imitate it just as you can teach a parrot to say the 23rd Psalm presumably. I don't know that it's been done and he won't understand it.

So you can teach someone that's unsaved to behave in a self-effacing manner but they're still going to be as cocky and arrogant and proud as they were. This does not characterize the

unsaved. As you look back on your own experience, what marked you? Wasn't it self-interest and self-will and pride and wanting and insisting on your rights and perfecting yourself in getting?

Aren't the common adages of the world an expression of the temper. Look after number one. If you don't, who will? Get while the getting's good. Do others before they do you. This whole common philosophy by which men live, this whole atmosphere of I, me, my and mine, this is what characterizes the world.

Now, Jesus Christ, our wonderful Lord is saying that anyone that has part in the Kingdom of Heaven has had something happened to him that's of such a nature that it has completely cut across this spirit of selfishness, self-will, self-assertion, self-right and pride and arrogance. He's not telling you here how to get it. He's simply saying, "This is what everyone that's in the Kingdom of Heaven has and if they don't have this, they're not in the Kingdom of Heaven."

The spirit of the world is one of arrogance, of haughtiness, of pride, of selfishness, that's willing to murder, to steal, to lie, anything to get one's own way and right. No, this says our Lord Jesus says, is totally abdicated in the Kingdom of Heaven; just it's completely cut across.

Now we're coming to the heart. This word poor is a word that's used of the most despicable and needy of beggars. The word in the Greek is *ptóchos* and it means bankrupt or broken or beggarly in respect to the spirit. Now, how does this come? That's not natural. It's just as impossible for you to say to the Ethiopian, "Change your skin," to the leopard, "Change your spots." As to say to a person, "Change your nature from

arrogance and pride and haughtiness to one of brokenness of spirit, poverty of spirit.”

I am looking at you an unsaved person today and I’m saying to you just as God’s word says, that unless you are broken in spirit, beggarly in respect to the spirit, unless this thing that is represented by the word ptóchos has happened in you, you have no part in the Kingdom of Heaven. You look at me and say, “Where will I get it? How am I going to get a spirit like this?”

There’s only one way, only one way. That’s to recognize that by nature and by attitude, by habit and by practice and by policy and by principle of life, you have been a bona fide member of the kingdom of this world. You followed in the pattern of your father, the devil and his nature. You’ve manifested and reflected. In the Kingdom of Heaven, there is an entirely different nature, entirely different principle, entirely different mode of operation.

The only way that anyone can ever get from the kingdom of this world into the kingdom of God’s dear Son is by a supernatural work of God’s grace. It’s supernatural. No other way. No other means. You say, “Well, believe the gospel.” There’s only one time and one place where believing the gospel can have saving significance and that’s after repentance. For its repent and believe. It’s repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus.

Now, what’s repentance? First, it implies conviction or recognition that you’ve been a bona fide member of the kingdom of Satan, a bona fide member of the kingdom of this world. That his philosophy and his attitude, his governmental principles and policy have characterized your life. You’ve been there as a citizen, participating in the activities.

Some of the grosser ones you may have rejected but actually in spirit, you've been there. You see, this is what we call lost. This is what we call convicted. The reason why few people are being genuinely saved in the 20th century is because so few people are being truly lost or brought by the Spirit of God to that place of lostness or awareness of it. The Spirit of God is the one who causes you to see that you are not in the Kingdom of Heaven. That's what Christ is saying.

Here's a multitude of people gathered around him and his disciples and he is telling them that only those that have this thing are in his kingdom. Why? Because they would have assumed that since they were in the kingdom of Israel, that since they had been circumcised and they've been presented to the people at their bar mitzvah that they had been accepted into the life of the community. Since they had brought their offerings to the temple and observed the holy days and knew the 10 commandments, that they've fasted and they tithed that they were all right.

The Lord Jesus is saying to the list, "No, no, no, no, no, no. That isn't enough. You aren't in the Kingdom of Heaven unless you've had this supernatural work of grace performed upon you. When this policy and principle that characterized the world has had the knife go right straight through it both ways, crossing it out. And some other spirits come into you, some other attitude.

Now, the first thing that has to happen to anyone is that he discovers that he is a bona fide member of the unsaved community, that he is lost, that he doesn't have eternal life, that he isn't in the Kingdom of Heaven. No one can be saved until their lost. We've been trying to get people saved before they were lost and it won't work because Christ only came to seek and to save that which was lost.

The Greatest Sermon of the 20th Century

What's the lost man? I am deserved of God's wrath. I know I'm wrong. I know my heart's wrong. My mind is wrong. My will is wrong. My whole being is wrong. There's nothing in me that's right. And I don't know what to do about it. I hate it but I can't break it. Well you say this is a hopeless place to bring a person. Sure, of course it is because salvation is supernatural. You've got to come to the place where you realize you're just as hopeless as can be. Then what do you do?

Then you discover that Jesus Christ has been exalted to give repentance and remission of sins. In this state, you'll have to go to him and say, "Lord, my heart is as hard. My mind is as wicked. My will is as obdurate as anyone's could be. And I know not how to change it." Then you come to him with this recognition of what you are and what happens? Then God in his sweet grace works this miracle in your heart.

The first miracle that you have is a miracle of repentance. Truly, this brokenness of spirit that he knew there's nothing good, nothing to bring, nothing to offer. Your purpose is no longer to please yourself but to please God. The point of this ptóchos operation, this changing one from the arrogant, haughty, prince that reigns in the dominion of his soul to the broken beggarly one in respect to his spirit is a supernatural work of God.

Obviously, we reduced everything down to formulas in the 20th century. It's all so simple, one, two, three, four. Have you sinned? Christ died, accept him. Good, now you're in. That's all true but listen, no one, no one can repent until he's been convicted. No one can believe until he's repented. No one can truly be born again until he's believed. It's all there. It's all in the formula.

But “A” has to happen before “B” can and “B” has to happen before “C” can and “C” has to happen before “D” can. What Jesus Christ is saying is no one has any part in the Kingdom of Heaven until by the operation of God he has become poor in spirit, broken in the spirit. Everyone in the Kingdom of Heaven has. Anyone who hasn’t isn’t in the Kingdom of Heaven. It’s just there. There it is. Blessed are the poor in spirit. Blessed are those to whom this awful, tyrant of self [has been broken]. You say, “Isn’t this what you deal with at the cross?” No, it’s an aspect of this that you deal with at the cross.

Here, you’re dealing with the thing as far as your attitude toward it is concerned. At this point, it has to come that one discovers that he is everything God has said he is and that he takes sides with God against himself. Our Lord has now made it perfectly clear, absolutely clear that the only one that is in the Kingdom of Heaven and has any possibility of so viewing himself has to have come to that place of poverty in spirit, brokenness in spirit.

It’s going to be manifested and I quickly touch it by a mourning. Blessed are they that mourn. Mourn over what? Over their life of rebellion against God, over the arrogance of their mind and will and spirit, over their constant crimes against the holiness and grace of God.

Blessed are they that mourn. These that are broken in spirit having seen themselves alright are going to mourn over what they are. There will be no self-defense. There will be no self-vindication because they’ve seen themselves and stood at the cross as having nothing and needing everything. Bringing only to Jesus Christ all of the accumulated guilt of their lives against him. Blessed are they that mourn and then blessed are the meek. Blessed are the meek.

Three things therefore characterize these as we see it now. And as Christ describes the subjects of his kingdom he says they're poor, they're broken in spirit, they mourn over their past sins and their crimes against God and in their meekness, they know that in them, in their flesh, there's no good thing.

This describes born again people. I don't believe we should view this as any other way. You know there's been a lot of talk in the past about this referring to the constitution of the kingdom in some future day. This is the description of the regenerate heart. This is what God does in the one whom he redeems. There's two things that it does. God looking at you today bears witness to your heart. Yes, yes, yes your heart responds.

There came a day when I broke. There came a day when I broke and I know it. I know it today. There came a time when I mourn not only because I was in trouble in thought but because I hated sin. I have discovered that in me and my flesh, there's no good thing. Then this has the effect of exhilarating you and thrilling you and lifting you and causing you to say, "See what great things God has wrought. God performed this miracle in my life."

If on the other hand, however many years you may have been in the Christian way with the profession, you with God as your witness do not find this poverty of spirit and this mourning and this meekness he describes. Then I say there's only one possible response that's wise and proper and that is to face it.

You may have been in the church organized and the church visible, but not in the Kingdom of Heaven. Not have made the partaker of that supernatural life by the divine impartation that's necessary for everyone that's his. For everyone, everyone, this is the absolute rule. Everyone that's met Jesus

Christ in the saving experience must acquire these three things: poverty of spirit, mourning and meekness.

It characterizes the household of God. You say “must they always manifest it?” I tell you what will happen, when they do not manifest it. They will treat the failure to manifest as the sin that it is. This won’t characterize them. I do not say that without exception that such a person will always manifest it. But when he’s brought to see it, he will deal with the failure to manifest that poverty of spirit, that mourning, and that meekness as the sin God holds it to be.

He will not justify himself. He will not vindicate himself. He will not insist on his rights. He will bow and break because God wrought the work in his heart. Now let me ask you. Has God wrought the work in your heart? When he describes the subjects of his kingdom is he describing what he’s done in your life? Listen, if you say, “No, no, he doesn’t,” don’t despair. Come to him. Come to him.

The only ones that ever have received such as he describes here have to come with the very opposite and get it from the Lord. You come to him. He didn’t put something here impossible for you to attain and to reach. All he did was to tell you what he’d come to provide. He requires it but he provides it.

Let’s bow our hearts. Our Father, I’m glad that everyone who gets into thy kingdom has to come the same way whether wealthy or poor, whether wise or foolish, whether successful or failure. There’s only one door and it’s so low that the only way anyone can get in is crawling on his hands and knees, broken. Oh, Father of our Lord Jesus, thy dear Son told that people, the only ones who were blessed, were those that had something they could never earn or secure or get and he closed them up to thee, he sent them to thee.

The Greatest Sermon of the 20th Century

If they listened well, they knew that they had to come to him to get it, to know Father. Anyone here today whose heart bears witness with thy word and says, "Yes, this God has done," will have to say, "God has done it." For I was utterly unlike this and I came to him and he wrought the work in my heart.

Therefore for those who say, "I am not like this. This has not been done in my life." Let there be not despair, or sense of futility but a glad going even with their grief to the Lord Jesus Christ. For he who has commanded has also provided. Might it be that today we shall recognize a fresh anew that the King had a right to describe the subjects in his kingdom. Let us supply that word to our own hearts. For Jesus sake, Amen.

Wheat or Chaff

Matthew 7 verse 13 commences the portion. We have seen in this that it is called the Sermon on the Mount, that our Lord is giving to us a description of his people. Many times during the past 18 months I have spoken to you in one way or another by reference direct or indirect to God's new thing, the church. This new thing that he promised through Isaiah, the new covenant that he gave through Jeremiah, the new relationship that he described through Ezekiel and now the Lord Jesus is building his new thing and he is describing it here in Matthew 7.

In the Beatitudes he tells us that the man that is going to be part of this new thing is going to be remade from the inside/out, a new nature, a new heart, a new spirit and a new creation. He is going to be an enigma to those around him. He is going to be a contradiction to the world. Blessed is this one, blessed are the poor in spirit, blessed are they that mourn, blessed are the meek.

These are the blessed because they are poor in spirit and are meek and mourn as the result of God's glorious operation upon them making them new creations. Therefore, if any man be in Christ he is a new creation and old things have passed away.

Then he describes the attitude of this new creation toward the law. Not that he is lawless, but that because the law giver indwells him, he is enabled to keep the law. As Ezekiel said, "I will cause him to walk in my statutes." The law will be fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. Then he described the works of piety, praying, tithe or giving alms and fasting. Again, it would be not just the outward activity of words being addressed in a reverent tone toward God

somewhere, but the inner devotion of the heart and life to the Lord.

The alms would be given not as money, but as love. Fasting would be not the refraining from food alone, but the complete consuming of the life and concern for those for whom prayer was being offered. It is going to be an interior life. It is going to come from something that God does in the secret chamber of the heart. The Christian is going to be one that has partaken of God's life. Outwardly, he will seem the same, but because he has partaken of the divine nature everything about him will be new and different and fresh and vital and alive.

Every spiritual relationship will reflect it and then he said every economic relation will affect it. The way he works, the way he serves, his social relationships will reflect this. Finally we came last Sunday to that matter of judging. He is not going to be censorious. He will not judge others as to their motives. He will judge himself and he will recognize that he has partaken of life and that this life is being manifest in him. If someone else has not partaken, not behaving consistent with that life, he is not to be judged as much as he is to be pitied and to be prayed for.

The one that has been born of God will have the mind of Christ and his great concern will be that in everything he conforms to what God has purposed and planned for him. His great burden is going to be that he shall be all that the Lord Jesus intended him to be. He will manifest therefore, this life by asking God to make him to be what he should be. Asking God to cause him to become what God has purposed that he should be. In other words, the whole of this portion is an explanation of the verse, "Except your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the Scribes and the Pharisees, you shall in no case enter the kingdom of heaven."

Theirs consisted in ideas, in doctrines, consisted in activity, consisted in national expectations and in privations such as fasting, tithing, praying, but all done outwardly, all done by the mere energy of human personality. The Lord said, "This is what you know. This is what you see. This is what is ever before you. What I am doing is completely other than that which you have beheld with the Pharisees. I am going to start not by the outside nipping off here and trimming there and pressing in the other. Shaping and molding as a sculptor takes a piece of wood or stone and would shape it." "No, no," said the Lord. "I am not doing that. I am going within. I am going to give him a new heart and a new nature and a new spirit. I am going to make him a new creation. I am going to begin where the man's need really is."

Now we come to this portion that I have chosen to call a fan in the Lord's hands. You remember John's words saying, "Repent and be baptized for there is one coming after me that is prepared before me, the latchet of whose shoes I am unworthy to loose. He it is that shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire for he shall gather his wheat into garners, but his chaff he shall burn with everlasting fire for the fan is in the Lord's hands."

Well now he is going to separate wheat and chaff. The primary concern with this company this morning is not to [imply to you that you are one of these that will be chaff] - though there maybe that application and I want you to honestly put the word to the measure of your own heart and its need. My great concern today is rather to let you see the glorious privilege that it is yours of being wheat, the Lord's wheat. And what he has prepared to do for you and what he has prepared to give you and how he intends you should be blessed by him.

Of course the negative aspect is here with that shall be mentioned. But primarily I want you to see what the Lord's people are and how they will live and how they will walk. From that point of view, we see the first of the four analogies that our Lord makes to his own. He begins by saying that, "The entrance into this new thing is through a gate, but beware," said he, "Because there are two gates, they seem to be the same." They are placed where the wayfaring man might behold them. There are those on the outside exhorting the passersby to turn in.

But said he one of these gates is very appealing, very attractive. Outwardly it seems to be everything that one could ask for. It is a wide gate. It is easy to go through and there is a broad way palm-lined and comfortable with pavilions on the side for resting as you will. A most attractive way from this wide gate. It's a religion is this. It isn't the unsaved. I don't believe that the broad way here described is the broad way of the world such as we have a block to the right. The scripture speaks of the rebellious sinner saying, "He is as a sheep that has turned to his own way."

I don't believe that the impenitent sinner that is the irreligious sinner is interested in any gate or any way, he simply wants to please himself. Here the Lord is talking about a religious system, two systems if you please, one leading to death and one to life. I would say that they are constructed out of the same doctrinal material. My own personal feeling is that they both are made of the same substance just as we would relate our theology and our position in theology to that of the Pharisees as over against the Sadducees. For the Pharisees were fundamental, they were orthodox, but they lacked life.

The gate to which they pointed and to which they beckoned the passersby, would lead to this broad way that went to death. So

our Lord is saying here my people have turned in at the straight gate, this narrow gate. They are in this narrow way, the strict way. Let's see for a moment the contrast by way of character of the people on the two ways. Second Timothy in the 3rd chapter will give to us the means of measuring the two ways.

Let me read the first several verses. "This know also that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters and proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, high minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God;" Now notice, "Having a form of godliness."

These are religious people. These are people that have turned in a gate and are pursuing a way. They would have so many of the doctrinal marks and stamps of the orthodox that they would pass for orthodox, having a form of godliness. We have elsewhere in the scripture a description of the ungodly. Those that have no interest in Christianity at all or religion as such, but here are those that have a form of godliness.

They have turned into a wide gate and they are going down a broad way. It is wide enough so that they can be lovers of their own selves and covetous and boasters and proud and blasphemers, disobedient of parents and unthankful and unholy without natural affection and trucebreakers.

They can be there and still be on the way and still think they are going to heaven and still be comfortable. Still be religious, still be accepted even though they are traitors and heady and high minded, lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God. They have a form of godliness, but they are denying the power, that

power which transforms the life, makes all things new and changes all things to the will and purpose of God. He says, "From such turn away." But these are religious people and he is describing what will pass for orthodoxy.

He says in the last days perilous times will come, but it was perilous then because here at this very time we find after the resurrection of Christ the Judaizers came in. They put this gate in front of the church and beguiled and enticed many. It has been something that has continued down across the entire period of church history. Two gates and two ways and two destinations, one leads to life and the other leads to death. They both have the same scripture, the same doctrine, the same scheme and the difference is that one has a straight gate.

I think of the evangelist in Pilgrim's Progress, to which I have referred in the past, when he spoke to Pilgrim as he came out of the city with a great weight upon him. He said, "You see yonder a wicket gate that little old gate, that straight gate to which one must come." The only way to forgiveness is through repentance. Except you repent, except you repent you will perish. And repentance here is in my thought and mind, is this straight gate. Where this change of purpose from pleasing self to pleasing God, a change of intention, the change of goal (happens). It is the seed of all holiness and all righteousness.

Think of the travesty on truth if repentance is made sorrow and emotion and someone can come into a gate because he has had sorrow. Emotion is a fleeting thing just as it flips. It goes so quickly. It is just an emotion. Ephemeral, passes like the breeze. What value is an emotion? One day you are sorry and the next day you are glad. One moment you are sorry and the next moment you are glad. Can you put dependence upon your emotions? No, this straight gate has to have something more than emotion. It has to have something more than feelings.

It has to be the commitment of the life and the fixing of the will and the setting of the purpose enabled by God and made possible by the grace of the Spirit of God. A setting of the purpose from pleasing self to pleasing God. Thus everyone that has come, that is Christ's, at the very outset of his meeting galore, formed firmly that purpose to please God. This you can expect of every child of God. Now let me ask you have you done that? If you're a child of God, you have done it and today in your heart is a deep passionate longing to please God. You came in the straight gate.

If in you as you know yourself and search yourself, you find that you turned in a wide gate, just an emotional response to the dangers of hell and the beauties of heaven. There wasn't fixed within you this purpose to make Jesus Christ Lord and to obey him and please him. You didn't commit yourself to him in this, to his sovereignty. Then I submit to you that you would better realize that right in front of you today is that straight gate. Meet him now, you can't go back across the years and undo the past. You may have been in a wide gate in a broad way, but there is still the narrow gate in front of you this moment.

You don't need to return any place. You can't undo the years, but right now you can recognize that what is required by Christ is a total commitment to his sovereignty in every area of your life and render it to him now. Then that narrow way is to walk in the light of his sovereignty, in the unfolding of his will through his word and by his spirit. Everyone that is born of God has come in through that straight gate. There isn't any other way to life. If you haven't come through that straight gate you are not of God, you have not been born of him. If you have been born of him, then you have come in that gate.

It is just that simple. You can't make any alternatives. You can't make any extenuations. It is there. You today then as a child of God know that you have come in that straight gate and you are on that narrow way, if the deep inner purpose of your heart is to please God in everything. You are willing to take any attitude, any action, any motive, any relationship, any part of your life and stretch it against the word of God at any time. This characterizes the child of God. This is what has happened to you dear Christian friend. If you have been born into God's family.

The second thing is this, something has happened to the tree. There he describes prophets, teachers, or professors. We will use this as professors. "Beware of false professors, which come among you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravaging wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit."

You are a corrupt tree by nature, all of us were. Under the sentence of death because of that inward pollution, this terrible thing of sin. What was it that characterized us? What was that fruit that was found on us as being corrupt trees? I think Romans the first chapter, again ought to be seen by us. There are some scriptures that we never should outgrow and one of these scriptures is Romans chapter 1 verses 29-32.

Here we find the fruit that you find on the corrupt tree. "They who do such things are worthy of death being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness, full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity, whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, spiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents,

without understanding, covenant breakers, without natural affection, implacable, and unmerciful.”

“Knowing the judgment of God that they who do such things, are worthy of death. Not only do the same but have pleasure in them that do them.” Here is that tree, that fruit that you find growing on that tree that has unchanged. It may be in the vineyard. It may be in the orchard. Maybe associated with the other trees. The same leaves, the same bark and outwardly the same species. But there’s something different, there’s something interior, there’s something supernatural in those trees that have undergone the miracle of God’s grace. The heart of the tree has changed and the nature of the tree has changed.

Such trees that produce this [evil] fruit, such persons that continue to bring forth that brand of fruit are going to be cut down and cast into the fire and be burned as he has said. What is he doing? He is going by his grace as you come through the straight gate of repentance toward God. Then you meet him in a miracle in which he goes right to the very heart of your being and changes your nature and puts within you a new nature. Yea even himself. Thus, the tree is changed inwardly because it has partaken of the divine life.

Thus, the good tree cannot continue habitually to bring forth this kind of fruit. And if there is one that falsely professes to be in Christ, that brings forth this fruit habitually, perennially and continually he evidences that he never had the miracle performed upon him that changes the nature of the tree. That is what he is saying here. He does something within his people. He puts within them a new life. He says, “I will take away the heart of stone and I will put within them a heart of flesh. I will put my Spirit within them and cause them to walk in my statutes.”

You say, “Well can’t a Christian do one of these things?” You mean to say if I want to do one of these things and I would say ‘no.’ But if you do one of these things and say you have done it, you are going to deal with this as sin. You can’t make peace with it. You can’t justify it. You can’t vindicate it because a good tree cannot be content to bring forth evil fruit because something has happened to the tree. That’s the kind of life it’s received. What is the fruit that you will find on the tree that has undergone this miracle of grace?

You find it in Galatians 5. The fruit of the Spirit is love and joy and peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, meekness, faith, and temperance. Oh something has happened, the partaking of new life. Simply taking the branches as it were and putting into it a whole new life force, it is changing it. This is what has happened to you dear child of God. Therefore, if you are born of God and see that in your life is something, so much as one that is corrupt fruit, that life within you is going to cause you to hate that thing that is evil and bring it to the Lord for forgiveness and cleansing and pardon.

You can’t make peace with it because something happened. Now if a person professes to be a Christian and be content to bear generation after generation, year after year, month after month, week after week, and even day after day these fruits of evil. And live with it and culture it, to nourish it and fertilize it with thought and effort, then yes the evidence is they never had the miracle take place. Because the good tree just can’t be content with the evil fruit, something has happened. It’ll be there, but it won’t stay there.

Now, let’s notice the next thing. He speaks about the people that have come in the gate of repentance and have had the miracle of changing their nature and life performed upon them. Now he says, “Those that call me Lord thou shall confess with

thy mouth Jesus to be Lord.” Now he said either two gates, one is wide. There are two trees one has the leaf and bark not the heart of the matter. Then there are two ways to say Lord. One can say Lord as a fact of history; Lord in Heaven. There is Lord in history and there is Lord in the future, but there is only one way that there is saving significance to saying Lord. “If thou shall confess with thy mouth Jesus to be Lord,” where?

Well, in the place that the crime has been committed. What was the crime? The crime was this, that I was Lord of my own life and you were Lord of your life and we ruled and reigned to please ourselves. Now we see this crime. We have turned in the straight gate. We have taken and performed upon us this miracle of a new nature imparted by the sovereign and supernatural grace of God. Now we say, “Lord” how? Just Lord in terms of an enunciation of a fact? No, the Lord is the testimony of a transaction. There was a throne in my heart that I usurped. It belonged to another sovereign and I took it as mine.

Now I’ve abdicated the throne and abandoned it to the rightful sovereign. Now Lord, this is yours. Confess with the mouth Jesus to be Lord. What is he saying? There are some people that have said Lord, Lord, but they have remained seated on the throne. They have continued to rule their life. They have continued to live to please themselves. They have continued to govern. They have never abdicated. Oh they have learned what to say. They said Lord, Lord and they have learned what to do. They have cast out devils and done miracles. They have learned where to go. They have associated with the people of God.

They have passed through the years undetected. But now they come to the door and they knock on the door and say, “Lord, let us in.” From within they hear him now say, “Away with

you, I never knew you, ye that work inequity." Did he know them in the sense of his omniscience? Yes. Didn't they know him? Yes. How many times we hear people say to others or use it, perhaps you've used it yourself in personal work- "Do you know the Lord?" I wonder perhaps it wouldn't be well for us to change that and say, "Does the Lord know you?"

Has the Lord given you his life? Have you received from him this supernatural gift of redeeming transforming life? Have you been born of God? Well you see every one that has been born of God has said Lord, but said it in this manner, "Lord Jesus Christ is the sovereign of my life to reign and to rule." Is he the sovereign of your life to reign and to rule? It is that he is indeed if you have received him thus, but should it be that you haven't received him thus, then it could be that you would go on undetected by the church. But you will never pass by his scrutiny because he looks on the heart.

And one day, that person that has refused to meet him on the terms that he demands will be exposed. What of this now? Have you turned in the straight gate, his people have? Have you had the miracle upon you that has changed you inwardly so that you hate the fruit of your own life and are willing to denounce it? You have made war against it and love the fruit of righteousness. Have you said, "Lord" in the sense that you want to obey him and everything that he asks of you and have committed your life unreservedly to his sovereignty? His people have.

You see what I am trying to get you to see is what his people have done that you might know the exquisite joy that is yours of being one of his people. You have turned in that gate and you received this miracle of new life. Now you gladly know him as Lord in every particular in every detail. Your purpose is to please him in every area of your life. His people are. Then

we come to the last thing. His people have built a house. Well they built it on a foundation. What's the foundation? Well right back there at the straight gate.

There were foundations of repentance toward God. Recognizing that Jesus Christ is Lord and he is the rock upon which we build. While we have said this has been a crime living to please myself and governing my own life, I am through with this crime. Right under our whole Christian testimony the rock was placed. The rock, Christ Jesus since he is Lord, my life is built upon his deity and not only his deity but his sovereignty. His sovereignty extended into my life. Then upon that rock, in our relationship to it, we build our testimonies that we are sinners worthy of death, but that Jesus Christ died for sinners and we have repented of our sin.

We have received him as Lord and as savior and the structure begins to be built and that structure now gives us shelter and it gives us comfort. It is the place of pleasure. It is the place of joy. Around us is a structure, a structure of truth, a structure of doctrine that provides security and comfort and assurance to our hearts. Well over here is another man. He has the same doctrine, has the same scripture verses and he has assented to their truth, but what's the difference? He has built the structure, but not upon the rock of repentance and conversion and regeneration.

They are both against the ground and they can't be discovered until that day when the wind rises and the water falls and the flood comes and the house on the sand will be destroyed. Our Lord is saying that throughout the entire period that the gospel is preached, these two things are going to go side by side and it behooves you to check for yourself. Certainly you can't check for others. How are you to know what gate, another may have gone in other than by the way he lives? If he lives in the

manner in which you have seen, the scripture says from such turn away. How do you know what has happened to another other than by the fruit that may be there?

How do you know how one says Lord other than by the obedience that is read? No, this isn't for you as an individual. You will have private judgment of others in this regard. The church of course has the necessity of testing the genuineness and by this means alone can the purity of testimony be protected and can the church remain blessable before God. The great concern ought to be in your heart today, is this true of me? Well if it isn't? Let's make it so. Let's not wait. Let's deal with the matter. It can be true. Let's get to the thing. Let's go right to it now.

Don't hide it. Don't bury it. It would be like an infection. It is going to burst out in an eruption sooner or later. If there is any uncertainty let's face it, get on with this thing in prayer and in study. It is going to be exposed one day. It is true. These things are true that you have turned in the straight gate. What does it mean? It means that the purpose of your life is to please God in everything. How many times we think that we were to please God at the gate entrance? No. We were to please God there and then to keep on pleasing him the whole journey.

With everyone I guess, would like to please God today so they wouldn't have to bother about it tomorrow, but that is not it. You turn in this straight gate so that you can walk the narrow way of total obedience to the will of the Lord as long as you live. Has the Lord produced this fruit then let's go to it and tear off anything that is of the old life. Break before God, confess wherein that fruit may have come that we hate and God hates. Breakup our hearts and break off those limbs and branches that continue to bear that evil fruit. Deal with it.

Let's get on now with this thing so God can bless. This is what he is saying. This is what he does to the redeemed heart perhaps because of the blight and the fungus of the world around us. Some of the fruit in your life has this character of the old life, but you know God has done a miracle in your heart. All right, don't coddle the poisonous fruit, rip it from the tree. Rip it from the branch. Confess it. Get it under the blood so that the tree healthy and wholesome can begin to bear heavenly fruit again. This is what he is saying.

You have said Lord back there, but somewhere along the line you've become Lord of your own life and turned to your own way. Well now, let's see here what are we going to do? Get on with it. Confess the things you have done in your own strength for your own pleasure and reestablish his Lordship. Let me illustrate, if God has done a sound work in your heart and you may have this; the oldsters have said backslidden or gotten out of fellowship with God, "What are you going to do about it?" Well deal with it right now.

Suppose you were going on a trip from here to Chicago. Your ticket read from here to Chicago. You got on the train, but there was an unusually long delay in Buffalo. You said, "Well I am going to go for a little walk," and the conductor assures you, you would have time. But somehow he was incorrect and when you came back you found out that the train had gone on and you were stranded in Buffalo. Now what do you do? Walk back to New York and start over again? No, you don't need to do that. You get right on the train where you got off.

If God has done a sound work in your life and you have entered in the straight gate and God has done this work of transforming you inwardly and you have confessed from the heart Jesus to be Lord, you have built your house on the rock. But things have come in to corrupt and pollute and to change

and to hurt your testimony and grieve God and put you under discipline and censor from the Lord. What should we do dear child? Deal with it right there. Right at the point, point of brokenness, right now for the point of brokenness is the point of blessing.

We will never outgrow the need for brokenness. If the work is genuine in our lives it doesn't mean that the tree won't need to be pruned. We won't need to keep checking on the narrow way. Not so, but it means that we purposed to please God. We have undergone an experience, the supernatural work. We have owned Jesus to be Lord. We've built a house on the rock. And anything that comes, we break over this for the responsibility is ours. We confess it. Forsake it. Know the cleansing of the blood and reestablished fellowship and then go on with the Lord. If the work is genuine.

But no amount of brokenness and confession as a false professing Christian is going to set the matter right. You may have to go right back to the gate and come in if it wasn't done genuinely. I am talking now to those who know they are children of God and yet you strayed from that narrow way. The fruit has become poisonous, bitter. Deal with it now. That broken fellowship, wrong attitudes and motives. Those things that God calls sin. Deal with it right here then reestablish it and go on with the Lord.

For this is what his people do, they want to be right with God. They want to be right. The difference between Saul and David is what I bring you in closing. Saul was rebellious and proud, a professor of religion, but when Saul sinned and Samuel said, "What is the bleating of the sheep I hear and the lowing of the cattle?" Saul said, "Don't tell the people." He tried to hide it. The difference was this that when Samuel came or when

Nathan came to David. Remember what he said, "Thou art the man."

What did he say? "Have mercy upon me oh God." David broke. David had turned in the straight gate walking the narrow way, he had a miracle. He is a friend of God. Jesus was Lord. He built a house on the rock. And he said that God forgave him when he broke. Saul wanted to cover it and David wanted to be cleansed from it. And you evidence the genuineness of your profession by what you do about sin uncovered in your life. Oh that we might say yes the work is right. God has done a work. But this has come in to interfere, and hinder. Now I am going to break before the Lord and blessing always comes through brokenness.

Won't you, if God has done a real work, won't you just see that everything is right and God will meet you and bless you. Let's bow our hearts.

Oh God let none of us be like Saul who knew all the words and phrases, acts and ceremonies, but his heart was wrong. Like Judas who was with Christ but he betrayed him. Father, we would be like David in everything save in his sin. We would love thee and seek thee. Then Lord when sin is uncovered would break before thee. God be merciful.

Have mercy upon me oh God, blot out my uncleanness. Cleanse me from all iniquity. This is the man, a friend of thine oh God. Grant that those that have turned in the straight gate and have had the miracle change their natures, and of confessed with the mouth Jesus to be Lord, and built on the rock, but have been veered aside and gone off the path, Lord that they might get back on now today. God forgive me, cleanse me, purge me. Let this be the cry of every heart and know that this is what thy people do oh God of grace.

The Greatest Sermon of the 20th Century

Let thy people here realize what thou hast done in them and then allow thee to do for them all that they need. Dear heart you know your life, you know what the Lord has done. You know whether you have actually been born of God, have the Witness of the Spirit, that you are born of God. You know that. If you aren't sure you better make sure. Oh dear child of God if sin has come into your life don't cherish it, nourish it. Let the word of God uncover it and then break and bend before the Lord. Have mercy upon me oh God.

This is the cry. This is cry of the redeemed heart. I entreat you. I give you this invitation. Meet the Lord. If I can help, at this place of prayer here you will be protected and be quiet. Obey God, meet the Lord. This is what he asks of you because of all he has done for and in you. Now let us stand for prayer and the benediction.

Father, thou art looking for a people thou can bless, but before thou can bless, thy people must be blessable. Thou hast said my name is holy and dwell in a high and holy place with him that is of a broken and a contrite spirit, to revive the hearts of the broken and to revive the spirits of the contrite ones.

Now our God we pray thee that thou by thy Spirit will hold thy word upon us. And where we see we have turned from the narrow way, we have allowed that corrupt fruit to come again, we have said, Lord, but haven't allowed him to be Lord, oh grant Lord we shall deal with it ruthlessly. Knowing that as we are thorough thou also will cleanse and pardon.

Father go with us, keep us from frittering away what though mayest have said by light talk. Help us to think and to meditate and work in our lives Lord. Get for thyself here something wholly thine, by which thou can spring glory, and honor and praise to the Lord Jesus.

Bless every heart and may they lay hold of all the promises in Christ knowing that they are yea and amen in him. Now may thy grace, mercy and peace be in abide with each of us now and until we meet again. Amen.

The True Vine

John the 15th chapter. I shall read the first eight verses. "I am the True Vine and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit, He taketh away and every branch that beareth fruit He purgeth it that it may bring forth more fruit. Now, ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. Abide in Me and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself except it abide in the vine, no more can ye except ye abide in Me. I am the Vine, ye are the branches. He that abideth in Me and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit for without me ye can do nothing."

"If a man abide not in Me, he is cast forth as a branch and is withered and men gather them and cast them into the fire and they are burned. If ye abide in Me and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will and it shall be done unto you. Herein is my Father glorified that ye bear much fruit, so shall ye be my disciples."

Let's go back to the first word, shall we "I am the True Vine." By the very statement we understand clearly that there must be another vine, for the word 'true' distinguishes the vines that to which He would make reference. If He is the True Vine, is there not another, a wild vine, a false vine? Is there not another source of life, another kind of life and obviously there is. We understand that the wild vine of Satan's planting in the garden with the first branches Eve and Adam and then across the centuries included the whole family of men. And finally included you and me, is a vine the fruit of which is bitter and poisonous.

There is evidence, clear evidence that God has been searching across the centuries looking for some branch in His Vine that did not have this death in it. For He said, "The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, who can know it? I the Lord, which search the heart." The picture is God searching each branch that sprouts on this vine looking for one the nature of which is not corrupted and not polluted. And finding that every single person born into the world, possessing human life and nature, has the same corruption and the same poison.

What is the nature of this? Well, we find that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God and death has passed upon all men for that all have sinned. The other evening we spoke briefly as to the nature of sin. What is it? Charles Finney once said 150 years ago, "I don't preach any longer, I just try to explain what other people preach." We hear a great many sermons about sin but seldom do we hear it explained. We've pointed out that sin in its essence is self-ish-ness, self-will, self-pleasing, the deification of self, the making of one's personal happiness the end of his being. The setting up of rules by which one will achieve and secure and enjoy that happiness.

It's a self idolatry, self worship, self glorification and it is this that was introduced into the family of men back in the garden when Satan said to Eve, "Ye shall be of god." Choose how you're to be happy. Make your own rules. Decide what's good for you. And so across the centuries, this poison has continued in the heart stream of the race and we call it a vine, a wild vine.

What is some of the proof? What is some of the evidence that the Word of God has to prove to us that this vine is indeed as poisonous as we would assume from what we've said? I think if you would make note of these Scriptures, they'd be of help to you in the future when perhaps you're using this or some other portion in your witness to another. If you'll turn first to a

scripture to which I come so frequently because it is so pertinent and clear and it's back in the Old Testament. We seldom find scriptures that are quite as applicable to the human heart as this in the Old Testament.

Proverbs chapter six, verses 16 to 19, here the wise man, the king, is writing for his son has described those things which God hates, which God abominates. In these few verses, four verses, we have a cluster of the wild grapes found in the wild vine. "These six things doth the Lord hate, yea, seven are an abomination unto Him." What are they? First, a proud look. Be it understood tonight that God is opposed to pride, every kind. National pride, racial pride, family pride, pride of standing, social standing, financial pride, cultural pride, linguistic pride, facial pride, educational pride and above all, I think the one that is most important is religious pride.

That which wraps the robes of its improper and incomplete self-righteousness around it, that tucks in its skirts and looks across the way and says, "Oh, thank God, I'm not like other men are." Pride, and God hates it. And it's stated here conclusively that this is something that with which God cannot find any way to make peace.

"God hates a lying look, a lying tongue" Excuse me ... A proud look and a lying tongue. That which uses the speech organs for the intention of deceiving for personal gain. "Hands that shed innocent blood," behind the hand is a heart that has the intention to hurt and thus God has said that he that hateth his brother is a murderer. Hands that shed innocent blood really refer to a heart that has the intention to harm.

"A heart that devises wicked imaginations" is a lascivious heart. A heart that enjoys immorality on the mental level that wouldn't perhaps consider an act of immorality but would take

the thoughts of sin. "Feet that be swift in running to mischief," obviously has reference to tale bearing feet but feet don't bear tales, hearts do. Men have the intention to use information for the purpose of harm and so they whisper. But always it's to tear down the one about which the whispering is done. They back bite and so we'll see this is elsewhere referred to.

"God hates a false witness that speaketh lies," or one that would attest to something which isn't so. And finally, "He abominates the one that sows discord among brethren." Now this is a cluster of the grapes that you will find hanging on the wild vine. We'll join to this another which I think is equally pertinent. In Mark the seventh chapter, our Lord Jesus describes what comes out of the defiled heart. He himself has been rebuked and His disciples because they haven't gone through ceremonial washings before their meal. So our Lord says, "That which cometh out of a man, that defileth him." And then He said "For from within, out of the heart of men proceed evil thoughts."

Here again a cluster of bad conduct that is expressed by the life of the wild vine and reveals the nature of that life. Evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness, all these things come from within and defile a man.

Again, we'll turn to Romans, the first chapter. Therein we can see the last of what could be many different clusters that would be appropriate to describe and define the nature of this wild vine of Adam's family. Your nature and mine, the fruit of sin or the conduct of those that are committed to the end of self-pleasing. Notice in verse 29, "Being filled," here is a full cluster, "all unrighteousness." If anything's omitted in that which is particular that follows, it's here in this general statement.

“Fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness, full of envy, murder, debate, deceit.” Now notice, “malignity, whisperers, back biters and haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant breakers, without natural affection, implacable, and unmerciful, who knowing the judgment of God that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same but have pleasure in them that do them.”

Now here it is, this is what comes off of that wild vine. This is what you'll find and it doesn't all have to be there. You'll notice that each of these omitted some that were found in the others and included some that were not found elsewhere. For one to discover that his nature is that described by the wild vine doesn't mean that he has to have any one of these clusters complete. But any one of them in abundance is of sufficient evidence to reveal the nature of the vine. My purpose in dwelling on this is to give you some idea as to the difficulty that is expressed here in this first verse of the 15th chapter of John.

“I am the True Vine and my Father is the husbandman.” He didn't say my witnesses are. He didn't say preachers are. He didn't say Sunday school teachers are the husbandman. He didn't say evangelists are the husbandman or the personal workers were. You understand that we have a part with God in this task of taking a branch out of the wild vine and putting it into the True Vine. But our 20th century church is in its debilitated and unbleisable state largely because we have usurped the sovereign prerogatives of the Holy Ghost. We have assumed them to be ours and have neglected the responsibilities that were given to us by God.

Let me illustrate what I mean. Only God can awaken a sinner. You can shout at him, jostle him, frighten him, but you can't inwardly awaken him to his danger. Only God can do this and He can do it by any of many means. He can do it by national calamity but there's nothing in national calamity to awaken sinners for when national calamities come, sinners would be awakened generally. He can do it by personal accident but there's nothing in personal accident to awaken sinners because multitudes have personal accidents that are never awakened.

He can do it by a climatic change such as a drought or a hurricane but obviously there's nothing in these events to awaken sinners because many go through them who are not awakened. He can do it by war. He can do it by sickness. He can do it by financial loss. The thing we must understand is that it is the work of the Spirit of God to awaken the sinner and not the natural effect of the event.

If we see this then we realize that we can't awaken sinners, only God can do that, but we can do something for them. We can intercede for them. We can take their place before God. We can legally represent them at the throne. We can witness to them. We can thus, by our word bring a proper class of scripture to bear upon their state, scriptures which the Holy Ghost will use. And we can live Christ before them as samples of His grace.

These three things we can do but we can't convict the sinner. However, our lives have been used by the Spirit of God to do that and the words that we apply can also be in His hand the scalpel to divide between soul and spirit. We can't bring a sinner to repentance though we can tell him he must repent. It is the work of the Spirit of God using those agencies that are consistent with His character and purpose that causes a man to

come to the place where he utterly renounces his own right to rule and abandons himself to the sovereignty of Jesus Christ.

We can tell a sinner that He must receive Christ by faith but we cannot give him that faith. "I know not how this saving faith do me, He doth impart or how believing in His Word wrought peace within my heart." It is the work of the Spirit of God, He's the husbandman. Now we are laborers together with him but you see what we have done that's caused the tragic condition of the church is that we have reduced the Scripture down to fit our agency and our abilities. Some of us did, have done, and are doing as I did for many years, become personal workers that assume that God finished all that He was doing when He gave us the Book and the rest is up to us.

And so we see a sinner. We say, "Are you a sinner?" "Well, I guess so." "If you die, would you go to heaven or hell?" "Well, I guess I'd go to hell." "Would you like to go to heaven?" "Well, sure." Then we get into one verse and then he [personal worker] says, "Agree with that?" "Well yes it's in the Bible." "The second [verse]?" "Yes, we agree to that." "The third [verse]?" "Well, now what's that say? That says saved, doesn't it? Now don't make God a liar."

See that says saved and so the person then agrees that says saved. It's perfectly clear, that's what it says, saved. And you said that if he says he wasn't saved, because it says there he's saved, he'd made God a liar. He doesn't want to do that and add to his already mountains of crimes and so he says, all right. Then you smile very broadly and shake him by the hand and take him. And he assumes he's saved and you've thus become the Spirit of adoption.

You have witnessed to him that he's born of God and have usurped the prerogative reserved to the Holy Ghost. Thus with

that as the ground of his assurance he may come into the church and he may take his place as a Sunday school teacher, as an officer. All he has ever seen is the fact that there is a hell, he's a candidate for it, Jesus died 1900 years ago and he believes it. And because he believes it, he's assumed that he's born of God. And he has everything but life.

He's been put there by the pastor. He's been put there by the evangelist. He's been put there by a Sunday school teacher. He's been wrapped around the vine. He's been tied to it but he's never been placed into it. He may have been one half of one percent or three percent or ten percent, some anyhow, bless God, are through even this means brought to a saving relationship with Christ. So when we would deal with it, we're not trying to hurt anything but to correct and to help us to see what happened in our hearts that we may understand all that God has for us.

Now when God's purpose is realized, there has been something you have done and something the sinner has done and something that He's done. Perhaps we could put it this way, all of salvation depends upon you. If you don't pray and witness and live consistently then God's fine means of reaching others is thwarted.

All of God's grace depends upon the sinner for if he doesn't repent and doesn't believe and savingly embrace Christ, he'll perish. We can turn around and say all of God's grace depends upon God. For it's God that awakens and God that brings to conviction and He that stirs the repentance and quickened faith. He that justifies, He that regenerates, and He that witnesses. And so it is the sense, it is dependent upon us, it's dependent upon the sinner and it's dependent upon God. But the text says, "My Father is the husbandman."

Notice what He does. The first thing is to awaken the sinner with an inward awareness of his need, an inward sense of danger, of jeopardy. This is the good work of fear, when he becomes convinced by some inward operation of God there is that in his life that places him in eternal jeopardy, awakening. Then on the basis of this, and the proper application of the Word to his mind and heart, he's brought to conviction.

Here it is that the Spirit of God enables him to see himself as God sees him and causes him to take the same attitude toward himself that God has taken for him. In other words, he stands on the side of the law and says to himself the culprit, you're guilty.

Now usually the culprit stands on the other side, looks into the face of the law and says I'm innocent. But when he's convicted of the Holy Ghost, he feels the same way about himself that God feels. He takes side with God against himself and says to himself, yes, I deserve everything that God's wrath could bring. He himself is convinced in his own mind of his guilt, of his unworthiness, and of the justice of God's condemnation upon him. But he's furthermore seen the enormity of his sin and so he repents. It is to this that the Spirit of God brings him, commanding him to repent.

The reason sinners don't repent is not because they can't repent but because they won't repent. And they never would repent if God in grace didn't move upon their heart. But there are still those upon whom He moves who do not repent. And so we bring it right back to the moral responsibility of the individual to whom God speaks saying repent or perish. Turn or burn. This is the next thing that's done when the Spirit of God would put a branch or cut a branch out of the wild vine and put it into the True Vine. And then there is repentance produced in the heart by the good offices of God's grace.

Then as he, the person is brought to that place where he sees what he is and is abhorred by what he is and turns from what he is, utterly changing his direction and purpose, on the basis of this, faith is released in his heart. His mind and his spirit coincide with the truth he's learned and is faithfully felt across 1900 years to savingly embrace Jesus Christ. And at that moment of receiving saving faith two miracles happen, in heaven he's justified. This means that all of his sin is counted to Christ and the righteousness of Christ is counted to him. He stands before the tribunal of eternal justice as righteous as is God's Holy Son.

He's justified. At the very instant that he's justified in heaven he's regenerated in his heart. The Holy Spirit joins himself to him in life quickening agency and word and he knows that he is born of God because he has the Witness of the Spirit. Now this is something of what the Father does as the husbandman when he cuts the branch out of the wild vine and puts it into the True Vine.

Now do you know anything about horticulture? You wouldn't have to know much to know as much as I do, I assure you. But I did learn this years ago when I was down South. I saw and later it was confirmed in a magazine article. I learned that there was one place somewhere in the hills of Virginia that they found a tree no one remembered having planted. They hadn't intended it to be that kind of a tree at all, but when it began to bear fruit everyone in the community was amazed because the fruit had a peculiarly wonderful taste. It was so sweet and there were five little knobs on the end of each apple.

The Stark Brothers' nursery out in Missouri heard about it and they said why there is a fruit that has a built in trademark. They came over to Virginia, found the place, bought the land on which it stood, put a house and cage over the tree, tenderly

took the branches from West Virginia out to Missouri, grafted them into the basic stock that they used for apples and produced what we call the delicious apple.

Now you know that when they send those trees out to Persia and plant them on the hillside on the Ur of the Chaldees and water them with irrigation water that they get the same kind of fruit under the Persian sun and in Persian soil that they get in West Virginia. Even though that little bud was grafted into a bitter sour crabapple root that could resist fungus and all the diseases of the soil.

Now you say, what is there to be excited about that? Nothing, that's just the law of nature when you graft from one tree into another, the branch produced bears the kind of fruit that characterizes the tree from which it came. But notice what that would mean. If you took a branch out of the wild vine and put it into the True Vine, when the life of the True Vine came into the branch, it would still bear the kind of fruit that characterized the wild vine. That's nature. But notice what happens when God's the husbandman, it's just ... everything gets reversed.

He cuts the branch out of the wild vine and then He brings that branch over and He puts it into the True Vine. And when the life of the True Vine surges into the branch, the nature of the branch is changed because it bears the fruit that characterizes the vine into which it's come, not from which it's come. And so we find that every branch that the Father puts in begins to bear some fruit and if the branch is there and it doesn't bear fruit, it's cut out.

When the Father does the work, there is the evidence of the genuineness of His work because it bears fruit. And then you see the Father isn't satisfied with fruit, He wants to take all of

the influence and all of the effects of that wild vine and so He begins to purge. And He cuts here and He cuts there and when a sprout comes that characterizes a wild vine He cuts on that and pretty soon the branch gets a voice of its own. It begins to complain and say, you know I never knew what temptation was until I was born again. Oh, my, how hard it's been for me to ... ever since I become a Christian.

I just heard on the radio this evening from my friend Ord Morrow from out in Lincoln, something that thrilled me. He told of a man that had gone into the peach business and had planted his peaches. He'd bought the land, fertilized it, put the peaches in... they just got the place. And they were big enough to bloom and they were all blooming and then they had a frost.

So he didn't come to church for one week and he didn't come to church for two weeks and he didn't come to church for three weeks and finally the preacher went to see him. And he said, no, I'm not going to go to church anymore. God knows how hard I worked to get this peach orchard and He just waited till my peach trees got in bloom and then He sent a frost. I'm just not going to go to church and support a church when God does things like that to people.

The preacher looked at him and said, wait a minute, did you know this, God isn't in the peach raising business. God's in the business of raising men and whereas it would be much better for the peaches if you didn't have a frost, many times the only way you can make a man is to have a frost. God's more interested in you than He is in what you're doing. He's more interested in making you like Christ than He is in making you prosperous. And so He's just sent this along to purge you of a lot that He has to deal with. You understand that this is what God does in grace.

His purpose in grace isn't to make you successful and prosper. His purpose in grace isn't to make you famous. His purpose in grace is to make you like Jesus Christ and so He says every branch in me that beareth fruit, he purgeth it. You know anything about pruning? Have you ever seen an expert horticulturist go into his vineyard or go into his orchard? Have you ever seen the way that knife cuts?

It cuts here, it cuts there and if you stand back and scream at him and say "Don't you're ruining the tree!" He said, no, I'm not ruining the tree; I'm just cutting away what isn't important. And he snips and he cuts and he snips and he cuts and pretty soon you think there's nothing left. He said come back this fall, we'll see what's left. When you come back you find that all he cut away was that which would have drained the life off and kept the fruit from forming. My dear friends, when He puts you into that vine, it wasn't just to secure you against the fire into which the branches are cast that bear no fruit, that wasn't it.

Oh, where did we get the idea that God's purpose in grace was to save us from hell? As if that was the prime object. Blessed be His holy Name, He's intended to do that and He will do that but that's not His primary object. His primary purpose is to save us from sin and save us from ourselves and so for that reason, He has to use something to cut. And He does. He uses friends and He uses circumstances and He uses accidents and failure and sickness and every kind of thing that could possibly come to a member of the human family. It comes when you're in Christ for one end and one only. That is to shape and mold and purge you so that you can bring forth more fruit.

What is this fruit? Well, we read, "Now may the God of peace give you joy and peace in believing through the power of the Holy Ghost." The first fruit of your being born again is that

The Greatest Sermon of the 20th Century

well, the burden of sin is lifted and you have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. You know that your sins are gone and you can call Almighty God Abba, Father. You know you're saved and that'd be a good place to stay except God doesn't want us to stay there.

We'd be content but He isn't. So the first thing you know pretty soon He takes away a little of that joy and he presses us to the Word. Then He takes away a little of that peace and He begins to make us restless. Then He allows us to be tempted and occasionally there are times when we might fall and fail. And so in our despair we cry out and say, "Oh, God, what is this?" He then brings us further to the Word and closer to Himself and He says, now this must go and so He snips here and this must go and that. He's purging and He's cutting so that there'll be more fruit, more fruit.

But, you know, that which does the purging isn't just circumstances, it isn't just events, it isn't just accidents or sickness or something else. These things God uses but I think that they're just sort of the prelude, just the beginning. He has something far more than that. That purging that I see here is that which brings us to the place where instead of the knife trimming around the edges, the knife goes right to the root of the problem and the heart of the matter. I believe that the purging to which our hearts at least would bring us, whether He made direct reference to it or not, I make direct reference to it.

Every branch in Him that beareth fruit, He purges. You know where that pruning takes place? I'll tell you. It takes place right at the cross. Up until that time there's preparation. You say, "Oh, God, I want you to give me victory over my tongue. I'm so nasty mean to my children, I just lose my temper so." And then you say, "Lord, give me victory over my thoughts. I don't

use my thoughts ... I think such critical thoughts." So you allow your heart to be purged by praying for separate things and pretty soon it gets just too much for you. You say, "Lord, it doesn't seem to help. I get victory over criticizing or scolding my children then I ... then I scold my husband and I get in trouble with my neighbors and my problems seem ..."

"I can't keep up with it. The sprouts grow so fast, Lord, that I just can't get around the bush fast enough to trim them all. Isn't there something better?" A letter came to someone here the other day about a person who said that some years ago they'd heard of the message of the cross that went out in Georgia. And he said it's been such a long process, doesn't God have sort of something equivalent to a good old automobile accident where you can get it done in a hurry. And I ... I anticipated writing to this person whom I've known in the past and tell him that there is an accident, it's not an automobile accident, but it's worse. It's at Calvary.

That's the place where the cross instead of just trimming along the edges goes right to the heart. Have you heard about the little boy that was given a puppy and according to its breed its tail should be docked. So he said, daddy, please let me take care of it because I'm afraid you'd hurt it. And pretty soon the little dog died and daddy went to him and said what happened son? Well, I don't know, I was just cutting his tail off an inch at a time so it wouldn't hurt him so bad and he seemed to just die of the pain. And there are some people that seem to prefer this.

They want to have the problem just cut off an inch at a time and it'll never do, it'll never do. The place of purging here is when you come to that point where you see that it isn't just something that's the matter with you. It isn't just some problem that you have. "If God will help me here," isn't going to solve

the problem at all because everything that grows out of the place has the same smell. It just is everything.

Years ago when I was a boy there was a man up in the country near us, of north Minneapolis, and I worked on his little truck garden. One of the jobs I had to get money, enough to go to the YMCA camp was to bunch onions and I hope you've never done it. If you have, I feel as sorry for you as I feel for myself when I felt about it. But for about three weeks, or ten hours a day, ten cents an hour, I'd peel these onions and then I bunched them together.

You know what? It took me all summer to get my hands cleaned. If I ate ever so nice a piece of candy, I was eating onions. If it was roast chicken, it was onions. If it was mother's apple pie, it was onions. Anything that got up there was onions. I'd wash it off and soak my hands in perfume and then they would dry. Perfumed onions. Onion perfume. I just couldn't get the onion off and I thought I was hard put.

But there came a time when I found that there was something worse than onions. I began to deal with some other problems I had. I said, oh, God, if you'll save me from my critical mind. I wanted Him to purge me there because it didn't help - my censorious spirit and my sarcastic tongue, it was all onion.

Peel it off here, it came back there, didn't make any difference. Oh, I'm so glad that there came a day when I went down to a little conference in the West Coast of Florida. I heard a missions man say, you know some of you have been trying to get victory over yourself and your nature and your traits and your disposition for years and years and years, and you haven't gotten anywhere. You've been cutting it off a little at a time and trimming here and trimming there and praying about this and working on that but it hasn't done any good.

He said “You know what’s your problem?” And when by that time there were only two of us there as far as I was concerned, him and me. I almost shouted out in the meeting; go ahead tell us what is it, I’m anxious to know. Then he said your problem is that when you came to Jesus Christ the only thing you were concerned about was the sin that was going to send you to hell. You saw Christ dying for you to take away the sin that would send you to hell and you received Him as your substitute.

You received Him as the One who died and sacrificed His life for you and all you believed for you got. All you asked for was forgiveness, all you asked for was pardon, and you got everything you asked for. Ever since then you’ve been trying to live the Christian life in your own energy and your own strength and you thought that you could produce something for God. You’ve been falling on your face and stumbling and crawling, getting up with good resolution and new determination only to fall again. All of your problem comes because you’ve never looked at the cross from the inside. I might just have shouted out, what do you mean? Look at the cross from the inside?

Then he said to the congregation shut your eyes and he took us up by imagination to the cross and then he said now walk around under that arm, that left arm of the Lord and under the cross turn around and look up. Do you see those nails? You see how far they’ve protruded through the board. Look, do you see there’s a form there, like a person. Can you see who it is?

Don’t you see now, why that person on the other side of the cross is you. Didn’t you know that there were two people on the cross? That Christ not only died for you, but He died as you. When He was there for you, you were there with Him. And you know what your trouble is, and I almost shouted, what, what?

You've never put your back up to the cross and put your hands over those nails and said, Lord, from tonight on as long as I live, I'm going to stay right here, crucified with Christ. If you'll do that and understand that God couldn't figure out any way to separate the good and the bad. In His eyes it's all bad and that you are the one that died there that day. The day Jesus died, you died. That you are prepared to come and just as you saw Him dying for you back there, you see yourself dying with Him and you'll stay there with your hands on the nails.

God for the sake of His Son will in the time of your temptation, release the life and power of His Son into you that you can have victory. Will you do it? You know what I did, I went home, I took a piece of paper and drew up a contract. "I, my name, the time, the place, the date, do hereby declare that this day on as long as I shall live, that I ... that I am by nature..." Then I described it as God had shown it to me; proud, arrogant, lustful, sensual, deceiving, thieving, devout, earnest, praying, hard working.

For it's a mixture, you see, it's a mixture and I put it all down. That I, that stood outside the cross and pled for mercy, I count from today on to be on the cross crucified with Christ. Oh, it's wonderful and so wonderful to know that the purging that He offers comes right to the root of the matter. That life that we carried with us out of the wild vine, that natural life, that self life, that I, God has dealt with it. It doesn't have to impede the life of the True Vine and interfere with the fruit that would be born. So part of God's great grace is to provide for us a place where we can bring what we were and find that staying there brings release and deliverance from what we are.

But you notice He wasn't satisfied just with some fruit proving the genuineness of His work and more fruit, proving that He had purged. It says, "Herein is my Father glorified that you

bear much fruit." Much fruit, but how is this? "Abide in me and I in you. He that abideth in me and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit." So if you're prepared to abide in Christ, crucified with Him and you might like to write that down, Romans 6:6, "Knowing this that our old man is crucified with Christ."

And if you're prepared to abide in Christ, buried with Him for what happened to Him, happened to you. For in Romans 6:4 we read, "Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death." And if you are prepared to abide in Christ, quickened with Him, for in Ephesians 2:5, we read, "We are quickened together with Christ." And if you will abide in Christ, raised with Him, for in Ephesians 2:5, we find, "We've been raised up together with Him." And if you will abide in Christ, seated with Him for in Ephesians 2:6, "We've been seated together in the heavenlies in Christ."

In other words, if you will count everything that Jesus did for you, you did with Him and will live in Him, crucified with Him to have victory over yourself, buried with Him to have victory over the world and seated with Him to have victory over principalities and powers, if you will abide in Him, and then will invite Him and allow Him and want Him to abide in you, then there can be much fruit borne.

And it won't be you but it will be Him. But you, He can't abide in you. Oh, how many people there are that have never understood the secret to the book of Romans. Because you are Bible students and have your Bibles I'm going to tell you the secret to the book of Romans for the Christian life, you know what it is?

Well, here it is, it's profound. Romans 12: 1 and 2 comes after Romans 6 and no one can ever understand and experience

Romans 12: 1 and 2 until they've experienced Romans 6. And to come from Romans 3 and 4 - justification - to Romans 12, and omit Romans 6 is an impossibility. You can't present your body to Him a living sacrifice while it's still a vehicle of your own personality and the instrument of your egotism.

It'll be impossible to present your body a living sacrifice until you've presented yourself to the cross. So unless you are prepared to abide in Him, to live in Him, to dwell in Him, it is utterly impossible for Him to abide in you and live in you and dwell in you.

There have to be both aspects of this, our identification with Christ and Christ's union with us. If you understand this, then you are seeing the Lord is saying when you abide in Him there is a conscious union on your part, in faith. When the Lord Jesus did certain things for you, you did them with Him.

Not only was He crucified for you, but you were crucified with Him. Not only was He buried for you but in the mind of the Father, there were two people in the tomb and you were buried with Him. Not only was He quickened for you but since there were two people there in the mind of the Father, you were quickened with Him. Not only was He raised up for you, but since you were there in your substitute, you were raised up with Him. Not only was He seated there for you, to intercede for you but since He was your substitute and representative, you were seated there in Him and with Him.

Therefore, you must abide in Him if you are to allow Him to abide in you. Now you'll notice that this is not automatic. It doesn't have reference to being placed in the vine. It's something subsequent to and apart from. It is something that you can deliberately do. It's in the imperative mood. If you do it, good. If you refuse to do it, it will not be done. He said abide

in Me. He doesn't make you dwell in Him. He makes it possible for you to and great blessing flowing from it. But you tonight can say, no, I do not wish to pay the price. I'm not prepared to go to the cross. I'm not prepared to abandon the rights of my name and my reputation, my time, my energy, my strength, and my possessions.

I am not prepared to meet Christ on His terms of identification with Him. I refuse to reckon myself crucified with Him and I am proceeding to live as though my life were still my own. You may do that, I sincerely trust you won't for God won't make you do it but, hear me, my dear, He'll make you wish you had. So He said, abide in me. Abide, live, dwell, reside in me. Whatever it's going to cost you to do that, it's going to cost you infinitely more if you don't.

The consequence is this, the Lord Jesus said it is quite possible for you, it is my specific plan for you, it's my intention for you that you should deliberately, intelligently and permanently reside in me, crucified with me, buried with me, quickened with me, raised with me, and seated with me so that I can abide in you. I want to live in you unhindered. I want to live in you unimpeded. I want to live in you unrestricted. I do not want your hand grabbing the wheel. I do not want your foot on the brake. If you're going to turn your body over to me as the vehicle for my working then you've got to get out from behind the driver's seat. Therefore, it is necessary for you to abide in me and dwell in me and reside in me if I am to be able to abide in you and dwell in you and reside in you.

Then when our Lord Jesus spoke of this great salvation to which He has added the warning that we are in great danger if we neglect it, He said, "If you abide in me, I will abide in you and when I do abide in you, you will bring forth much fruit."

Now I ask you tonight, are you abiding in Him? Have you consciously and deliberately brought that what you know you are by nature to the backside of the cross? Have you been prepared to abandon the right to your rights for this is included? You have a right to your name, to your time, to your talent, to your strength. This isn't sin, we're not talking about sins we're not talking about the things we read about early, the fruit of that wild vine. We're talking now about that which you were. We're talking about yourself. We expect if you've been born of God, you're going to ... when sin occurs, you're going to confess it with great concern and great burden and longing.

But we're talking now about deliverance from the tyranny of yourself and your will and your plans and your purpose in order that the Lord Jesus can have in your brain and in your faculties and in your body a vehicle. I use the word again, a vehicle for His working. You present your brain to Him so that living in you He can use your brain to think His thoughts. You present your ears to Him so that He can use your ears to hear the wail of the sheep caught in the briars of sin.

You present to Him your heart so that He can have your heart to be moved with compassion. You present to Him your feet so that living in you, He can use your feet to go anywhere He wants to go. You present to Him your hands so that living in you He can use your hands for whatever services He pleases. You present to Him your lips so that living in You He can use your lips to speak or refrain from speaking. That it will no longer be you but it will be Christ living in you and you are relinquishing all right to your body and your personality. You are turning it over to Him and asking Him to fill you and possess you and control you, to live in you and live through you His own life.

This is what we have here. This is His intention for the branch that the Father puts into the vine. Now it's my experience that those who give good evidence of being born of God want this. I wouldn't want to go so far as to say that those who have not ... who do not want all that we're talking about ... are not born of God. I wouldn't make that assumption because I know in my own life there were many years when I heard these truths and they fell on powdery dry ground.

But I still believe that it is the will and purpose and grace of God to contradict all of the pressure of nature and all of the teachings that are contrary to His Word. And then to bring us sweetly and gently and persistently to the place where above everything else we want Jesus Christ to abide in us.

In His high priestly prayer, He said, "Father, that they all may be in union, in just the same way that You've lived in me and done your work through me and I've lived in You and enjoyed all that You are, I want them to live in me and enjoy all that I've done for them. I want to live in them and do my work through them." And so He said, "Abide in me and I in you."

Are you prepared for that? Will you do it? Perhaps I could close with something that touched my heart two or three years ago when the president of the Christian Missionary Alliance spoke one afternoon in our Deeper Life Service in New York. He was a district superintendent up in New England and he heard this - and there's historical grounds for it I'm sure but he couldn't trace the actual member's party.

There was a young man whose parents aspired for him to be a doctor. He had a brilliant family, there had been doctors in the family but his particular branch of the family were very poor. They saved their money for many years so that their son could go to the medical school. Then the father in an accident died

and so the mother was left with the vision. So in addition to the work she was doing, she took on laundry and then at night she was a charwoman cleaning out offices.

The harder she worked, the more she saved, seemingly the faster he went. He won one scholarship after another but the higher he went the more sophisticated and proud he became. So that when he graduated with his MD, he told everybody in his class that he didn't have any parents. He never even told his mother of the graduation because she was so bent and her hands so worn, she'd have disgraced him. So he pretended that he didn't have any family. Then he went to Boston with a doctor and soon was in society and became an outstanding surgeon. He married in society a very prominent young woman and told her that he had no family.

He sent some money through the family lawyer to his mother but only once a year would he go see her. And then on a pretext of something else and he never wrote to her. Always her letters were forwarded through the family lawyer but then she began to get a little older. He then got a letter from the lawyer saying your mother will not go to a home. She insists that you are her son and that she come to you and he wrote back and said, I have told everyone that I have no family. I'll take her on only one condition and that is she tells no one that she's my mother and so she agreed to come on that basis.

He told his wife there was a woman, you know, when I was a little boy that did our laundry and cooked for us and took care of us. Julia was her name and she needs a home. Would you mind if she came? He fixed up that upstairs and his mother took her maiden name and so it was that the mother came, went up into that third floor. He kept it up very well and never let anyone guess that the woman up there was his mother. But

one day a letter came addressed to "Mrs." and the young doctor's wife thought it was hers.

She opened it and began to read and to her amazement it began, "Dear Julia" and then she discovered that the woman on the third floor was her husband's mother. She was filled with loathing. She despised him. She abhorred him. She hated him. She couldn't wait for him to come to tell him what she thought of him, the contemptible person he was. But then she began to think what agony he must have gone through, how he'd been living a lie, what he must have felt like and that probably part of the guilt was hers. So when he came home, she faced him with it.

Like a little child caught in a ... stealing ... he fell right down at his wife's knee and put his head down on her knee and sobbed like a baby. He confessed it, the pride, the arrogance, the rebellion of his heart. She said, I'll forgive you on only one condition and that is immediately you and I go up and do with your mother, both of us, what you've done with me. They then went up to the third floor and both the doctor and his wife knelt at the chair where the mother, aged mother, was seated. Like little children they confessed their sin. And she by this time had joined her heart in guilt with his.

Then when they finished, the young woman looked up and she said, oh, mother, we want you to come downstairs, tonight, right now. We're going to take the front bedroom and make it a parlor and then you can have the little connecting bath in the back bedroom and it'll be yours. Then we're going to have a party and we're going to invite in all our friends and we're going to tell them who you are and what we've done and that you are the honored matron of this home.

You listen to me and say that's impossible. That's impossible. No, it's not impossible. I know people that have asked Jesus Christ to come into a room and save them from hell and even save them from some of their sins. But they've ... they've just kept Him in that room and they want to live the rest of their life to their own choosing.

They want Him there, they wouldn't want Him to leave but they're not willing to go up and fall at His feet and tell Him that He deserved the whole house and the place of honor. That they're going to just relinquish their right and turn it all over to Him.

So they've crowded Him up to a little garret room called Sunday morning and Sunday night. I'll do what I want to do and these are my plans and Lord, You bless me. Thus they've robbed Him of the possibility of getting out of their life the joy and the glory that He deserves.

Oh, that's infinitely worse than what I've described and it could be you. It could be you. You're so glad you were cut out of the wild vine and put in the True Vine but you've never gone to the cross. You've never deliberately decided to abide and live crucified with Him and buried with Him and seated with Him. You've never presented your body as a house and invited Him to fill it. You've been content to go on this way, robbing Him of the glory that He only can get when there is His Presence uninhibited and there can be much fruit in your life.

But you can change that tonight. You can change it right now. If you are still in the wild vine, you come to Him, He'll put you in Christ. If you're still with that which is of the old vine, come to Him. He'll purge it. He'll carry you with Him to the cross. If you've never known what it is to have Christ move up, move in

and take up His lasting dwelling place in your heart, He'll do it tonight. He's such a wonderful Lord. He loves you so much.

