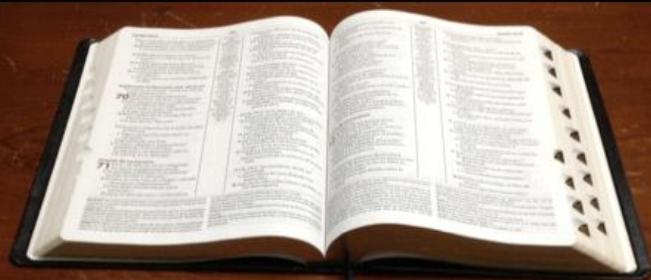


PRACTICAL SERMONS FOR OUR SPIRITUAL GROWTH



Willie A. Alvarenga

PRACTICAL SERMONS FOR OUR SPIRITUAL GROWTH

**A compilation of lectures presented at
various brotherhood lectureships**

Willie A. Alvarenga

**“But grow in the grace and knowledge of our
Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To Him be
the glory both now and for ever. Amen”
(2 Peter 3:18)**

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Dedication

This book is dedicated to my wife Lucy and my daughters, Maggie and Vanessa who have always stood by my side as I proclaim God's Word.

I also dedicate this book to all my former instructors at the Brown Trail School of Preaching. I am thankful for all the knowledge I was able to receive from them.

My Former instructors

George Bailey
Bobby Bates
Maxie Boren
Bill Burk
Furman Carpenter
Ron Coleman
Everett Chambers
Perry B. Cotham
Robert Dodson
Gary Fallis
Dan Flournoy
Tom Gaumer
Ken Hope
Furman Kearly
Avon Malone
Richard Massey
Dave Miller
Hardeman Nichols
Eddie Parrish
Don Simpson
Mike Vestal

**PRACTICAL SERMONS
FOR OUR SPIRITUAL
GROWTH**

Willie A. Alvarenga

**TURNING TO THE GENTILES: THE
ENCOURAGEMENT THAT CAN COME
FROM TURNING TO OTHER CULTURES
(Acts 13:46-49)**

**Power Lectures at Southaven Church of Christ
Southaven Mississippi**

What a great joy it is to study the Word of God. What a blessing it is to study God's Word through several faithful gospel preachers who remain loyal to the oracles of God and sound doctrine (1 Pet. 4:11; Tit. 2:1). I am thankful to God for giving me this privilege of preaching His Word during the Power Lectures. I have always admired the great work this congregation does and I commend the elders, and the ministers for the great work you do in the kingdom. I thank the elders and Brother Wade Webster for the invitation to be part of this great lectureship. What a great joy it is to be together with brothers and sisters of like precious faith (2 Pet. 1:1). It is my prayer that the things we will study throughout this week will help us to be better servants in the kingdom.

A great topic has been assigned to me entitled, *"Turning to the Gentiles: The Encouragement that Can Come from Turning to Other Cultures."* The purpose of this lesson is to encourage the Lord's people to extend their vision of preaching the gospel, not only to those of our own language, but also to those of other cultures. We live in a country that is composed of people who speak other languages. We as Christians have a great responsibility of reaching out to them as well. The Bible teaches that "God desires for all men

to be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim. 2:4). The phrase "all men" refers to Jews and Gentiles, that is, to everyone in general. The Apostle Peter also tells us that God "does not wish that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2 Pet. 3:9). Therefore, as we examine this lesson, let me encourage each and every one of us to be "doers of God's Word and not hearers only" (Jam. 1:22). May we remember the blessings that come our way when we practice what the Word of God teaches us (Luke 11:28; Jam. 1:25).

In the next few minutes I want to direct your minds to the subject of evangelism and the great responsibility that each of us has to share the good news of salvation with other cultures. Therefore, let us consider in this lesson the following points: Our command to preach the gospel of Christ, the need to share the good news of salvation, the encouragement that can come from preaching the gospel to other cultures, and, finally, let us examine some practical ways of how you and I can share the gospel of Christ to other cultures.

THE COMMAND TO PREACH THE GOSPEL TO THE WHOLE WORLD

Brothers and sisters, it is imperative that we remember at all times the great command we have to preach the gospel of Christ to the world. The New Testament is very clear concerning the command we have to preach the gospel. The Lord Jesus Christ gave this command to His Apostles in Mat. 28:18-20 and Mark 16:15-16. Logic demands that we reason

correctly about this command and to recognize that it also applies to us all. Each member of the body of Christ has the obligation to preach the gospel to as many people as possible. The verb “preach” in Mark 16:15 is found in the imperative mood, which reveals a command to follow. Sadly to say, there are those in the Body of Christ who believe the command to preach the gospel only applies to the preacher, and not to the members of the church. Some have come to the point saying “*that is why we pay our preacher.*” An examination of Acts 8:1-4 reveals that the responsibility of preaching the gospel belongs to the preacher and to each member of the Body of Christ. In this context we see Christian going everywhere preaching the Word of God (v. 4). Brother Johnny Ramsey used to say that the early church went everywhere preaching the Word, but the church of today does not go anywhere preaching the Word. Why you may ask? The reason: some think this is the responsibility of the preacher only. Brothers and sisters, this is not right! We must be obedient to the command of preaching the gospel of Christ to a lost and dying world. Jesus Christ said, “If ye love me, ye will keep my commandments” (John 14:15). Have we taken the Great Commission seriously in our congregations? Are we, individually speaking, reaching out to the lost? In order for us to take the Great Commission seriously, we must have a love for the souls of this world. We must have the kind of attitude that the Apostle Paul had. Notice what he wrote to the saints at Rome, “I am a debtor both to the Greeks and to Barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish. So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach

the gospel to you also that are in Rome" (Rom. 1:14-15). Unless we have this attitude in our hearts, we will never share the gospel of Christ with the lost. The life the Apostle Paul lived is a great source of encouragement for you and for me who desire to preach the gospel to the lost. Paul was able to preach the gospel in many places (Rom. 15:19; Col. 1:6). Why? The answer is simple: He took the Great Commission seriously, and so must we!

THE GREAT NEED TO SHARE THE GOSPEL TO THE LOST

Let us remember that people are lost without the gospel. The Apostle Paul tells us that the gospel of Christ is the power of God unto salvation (Rom. 1:16). The gospel is the only solution to the sin problem. There is a great need for us to preach the good news of salvation to the whole world. People of every culture in this world have a soul that needs saving. It is imperative that we acknowledge that sin affects everyone in this world. The Apostle Paul wrote to the saints at Rome that everyone within the age of accountability was guilty of sin and stood in need of the gospel (Rom. 3:9-10; 6:23). During the early century, Jews and Gentiles needed to obey the gospel of Christ. Paul establishes the fact that Gentiles are lost and stand in need of the gospel (Rom. 1). He, also, establishes the fact that even Jews are lost and need to obey the gospel as well (Rom. 2). In Romans chapter 3, he establishes the truth that "all have sinned, and have fallen short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23). Friends, nothing has changed today! People of every

country need the gospel today more than ever. Sin is a universal problem that affects everyone. Thankfully, God has the solution to the sin problem. You and I can teach the gospel of Christ, the power of God unto salvation to every person we come in contact with. People of every nation are dying in this world every single minute. It is imperative that we acknowledge this; otherwise, people will continue to die without the saving message of Jesus Christ.

Christians today need to put aside every bit of favoritism and begin to share the gospel of Christ with those who do not look like or speak like we do. There are those Christians who would not even consider the possibility of preaching the gospel to other cultures. This was the mentality that the Jewish people had back then. On a certain occasion, Jesus Christ was willing to go through Samaria in order that He may preach the Word of God to the Samaritans (John 4). He ended up staying two days with them. Can you imagine that? Jesus Christ held a two-day gospel meeting in Samaria! I am pretty sure that the Apostles were not very comfortable with that; nevertheless, they still followed the Savior, and were willing to spend a few days in Samaria. We must be willing to preach the gospel of Christ to everyone. Other cultures need the gospel too! The Apostle Paul acknowledged this truth and this is why he was willing to preach the gospel to the Gentiles.

We must remember that God desires the salvation of every single person in this world. There are several passages that reveal the divine desire of God to save all men. Please take the time to read the following passages: Mark 16:15-16; Mat. 28:18-20; 1

Tim. 2:4; 2 Pet. 3:9; Tit. 2:11; Eze. 33:11; John 3:16. Each of these passages includes people of other cultures. This is something that you and I must understand. I am thankful to God for those faithful brethren who have taken the time to travel to other countries to teach the gospel. I am thankful for brethren who take the time to learn another language so they can preach the good news of salvation to others (e.g. Russian, Spanish, Swahili, Telegu, Chinese, Korean, etc.). We are thankful to God for those congregations who support missionaries across the world. We are thankful to those congregations who are willing to let our Spanish brethren use their facilities so they can have their worship services in their own language. I am thankful to the Gospel Broadcasting Network for contacting me about material to teach others the gospel in Spanish. We are thankful for the House to House publication in English as well as in Spanish. Many have benefitted from their sound material. We are thankful to the brethren who work at Apologetics Press and for their sound material in Spanish. We thank Brother Moises Pinedo for taking the time to translate articles from English to Spanish so many can be taught the Word of God. Friends, we are thankful to God for all of these avenues we can use to teach the Gospel in English as well as in Spanish. We are thankful to those faithful gospel preachers who give us permission to translate some of their material into the Spanish language.

I am thankful to God for the opportunity to be able to speak two languages. This provides me the blessing of being able to preach the gospel of Christ in most parts of the world. I truly enjoy the

opportunities to preach lessons bilingual. I have had the blessing of preaching for several gospel meetings where I get to preach bilingual lessons. If you have the opportunity to learn another language, please consider doing so. You will be able to reach out to more people by speaking in other languages. If you are a gospel preacher, and cannot learn another language, at least try to have someone translate lessons for you. Thank God for those faithful brethren who are willing to translate God's Word.

I am thankful to God for the Brown Trail School of Preaching Spanish department. For 9 years we have been training students in their own language so they can preach the gospel and sound doctrine in Mexico, Costa Rica and many other Spanish-speaking countries. The same courses that each student study in the English department are the ones that all of the students in the Spanish department study. We thank our supporters for helping Spanish students receive their training at Brown Trail. We thank congregations who call the school to ask for preachers who can evangelize in Spanish the community where the church meets. Some of our students are bilingual and can preach the saving message in English as well as in Spanish. We also offer a course in English to those who do not speak the language so we can help those who come from another country learn some things about the language that can assist them in trying to teach others also. When we go on door-knocking campaigns it is interesting to see how the students from the Spanish department who do not speak the English language struggle to teach others the gospel.

They, at least, make the effort to tell others about Christ. There is a great lesson we can learn here!

THE ENCOURAGEMENT OF PREACHING THE GOSPEL TO OTHER CULTURES

What type of encouragement do we get for preaching the gospel to other cultures? Brothers and sisters, the encouragement is great. Therefore, let me encourage each and every one of us to please consider the following:

There Is Encouragement In Knowing That Other Cultures Can Receive Forgiveness Of Sins

We know that forgiveness of sins only comes through obedience to the gospel of Jesus Christ. When we teach them the gospel and they obey it, then they are baptized for the remission of their sins (Acts 2:38; 22:16; Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:14). Remission of sins is necessary in order to be able to see God one day (cf. Mat. 5:8; Heb. 12:14). We can help people receive the forgiveness of their sins by teaching them the gospel of Christ. People today can be justified before God through an obedient faith in Him (Rom. 3:28; 5:1). They can be justified just like the Gentiles did in the early century, through an obedient faith.

There Is Encouragement In Knowing That Other Cultures Can Be Added To The Body Of Christ

It is a great blessing to be members of the Body of Christ! You and I can help other cultures experience this same blessing. Let us teach them that

when they obey the gospel of Christ, they can be added to the Body of the Son of God (Acts 2:22-47). They can become members of the one true church of the Bible. Obedience to baptism is what puts people into Christ (Gal. 3:27; Rom. 6:3-4). Once they are in Christ, they will begin to enjoy all the spiritual blessings found in Him (Eph. 1:3). Therefore, let us teach them this great truth!

There Is Encouragement In Knowing That Other Cultures Can Have An Opportunity To Be Reconciled Back To God

The reality of sin in man is what keeps him separated from God (Isa. 59:1-2). The only solution to the sin problem is Jesus Christ and His gospel (cf. Rom. 6:23). Other cultures need to learn that reconciliation is found only in Jesus Christ (cf. Eph. 2:13-16; Rom. 5:10). Other cultures can become part of the family of God by being reconciled to Him (Eph. 2:19). You and I can help other cultures learn what they must do in order to enjoy reconciliation in Christ.

There Is Encouragement In Knowing That Other Cultures Can Experience A New Life In Christ

Through the preaching of the gospel to other cultures, we can help them experience a new life in Christ. We will teach them about the gospel that can help them to be born again of water and the Spirit (John 3:3, 5). Once they are baptized into Christ, they will begin to walk in newness of life (Rom. 6:4; 2 Cor. 5:17). They will experience a great change in their lives, a change like the one the Corinthians

experienced (1 Cor. 6:9-11), or a change like the one the Apostle Paul experienced (Acts 9, 22, 26).

There Is Encouragement In Knowing That Other Cultures Can Enjoy The Opportunity To Worship God In Spirit And In Truth

The only way to worship the Creator of heaven and earth acceptably is by being in the Body of Christ. Only these are the ones who are authorized to worship in Spirit and in Truth (John 4:23-24; Eph. 3:20—21). The Apostle Peter made a great statement when he was preaching the gospel to the Gentiles. Notice what he said, "And Peter opened his mouth and said, of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is acceptable to him (Acts 10:34-35). Only those who are faithful to the commandments of God are qualified to worship God acceptably. We can bring more people to God who will give Him the honor and glory He deserves. We can be the means by which other cultures can forsake paganism in order to come and worship the living God. The saints at Thessalonica forsook their idols so they can worship God (cf. 1 The. 1:9-10). They did this because of the preaching of the gospel through the Apostle Paul.

There Is Encouragement In Knowing That Other Cultures Can Enjoy The Hope Of Eternal Life

We need to teach other cultures what they must do in order to enjoy the hope of eternal life (Heb. 5:8-9). Let us teach them that by being baptized

into Christ is how they can have the hope of eternal life. They need to know that this hope is found in Jesus (cf. 1 John 5:11—13; John 11:25—26). The Bible teaches that eternal salvation is found only in Jesus Christ (John 10:9; Acts 4:12). We can help people get into Christ by teaching them the gospel. Once they obey it, they will begin to enjoy this great hope of eternal life.

VARIOUS MEANS TO SHARE THE GOSPEL TO OTHER CULTURES

How can you and I reach out to other cultures with the gospel of Christ? What are some of the things that we can consider to accomplish the preaching of the gospel? Let me invite you to please consider the following:

Try To Learn Another Language If Possible

We have several gospel preachers who have taken the time to learn the Spanish language as well as other languages. They had the desire to do mission work in other countries and so they went to a school to learn the language. Some of them learned so well that they were able to preach in that particular language. If you have the opportunity to learn, please consider doing so. It is a great joy being bilingual because you can teach the gospel of Christ on both sides of the world!

When Possible, Try To Give Away Tracts That Teach About The Gospel And The Church To Other Cultures

We have several tracts in Spanish that have been written by faithful gospel preachers. We also have tracts that have been translated into other languages. We can purchase these tracts and pass them out to our friends from other cultures. Some of your friends may accept them, while others will not. We are thankful for ministries such as House to House, Worldwide Spanish Literature Ministry, Mission Printing, and many more that have translated several tracts into other languages. Let us be good stewards of these means by which we can teach others the gospel.

Support Ministries That Advance The Teaching Of The Gospel To Other Cultures

We are blessed to have several ministries that advance the teaching of the gospel to other cultures. The ministries mentioned before, as well as Apologetics Press, World Video Bible School, the Gospel of Christ and others need our support so they can continue to produce sound material that will teach people the gospel of Jesus Christ. We need to consider supporting these ministries, as well as take advantage of the various literatures they have.

Support Sound Preaching Schools That Are Involved In Preaching The Gospel To Other Cultures

You and I know how much need we have for sound schools of preaching to be in existence. Jesus once said, "The harvest indeed is plenteous, but the laborers are few" (Mat. 9:37), therefore, this being the case, we will always stand in need of sound

preaching school who will train faithful gospel preachers, who will reach out to a lost and dying world. We have several sound schools today that are making a difference around the world. *The World Missions Program* of the Memphis School of Preaching is and will continue to be a great way to reach out to the world. In this school, we also have several Spanish-speaking students who received their training there, and who are making a difference teaching other cultures the gospel of Christ. The Brown Trail School of Preaching Spanish department will also make a difference by training gospel preachers in their own language. Graduates from these schools are teaching the gospel to as many people as possible. Let us keep them in our prayers.

If Possible, Begin A Spanish Ministry In Your Local Congregation

There are several congregations in the United States that have started a Spanish ministry in their local congregation. After my graduation from Brown Trail School of Preaching I went to work for an English-speaking congregation who had a Spanish work within their facilities. I was able to work together with the leadership as well as the members from both congregations. There were times when we had several bilingual services together. It was indeed a great experience being together to worship our heavenly Father! The congregation may consider hiring a bilingual preacher who has graduated from a sound preaching school. This way they can know for sure that the doctrine that will be taught to the

Spanish brethren will be sound. There are several preaching schools that are graduating bilingual preachers.

Recommend Sound Websites Where Other Cultures Can Learn About The Word of God

With the use of the internet, we have come to a point in which we have a lot of written material that can teach the gospel to other cultures. Let us be familiar with these websites and recommend them to our friends. My personal website is: www.regresandoalabiblia.com (backtothebible). On this website you can find a lot of Spanish material that has been written by me. There is also a Bible correspondence course that I wrote, and that you can use to teach Spanish-speaking friends the gospel of Christ. There is also the www.housetohouse.com website and www.enfoquebiblico.com These are great avenues to teach people the gospel of Christ. Let us take the time to recommend these websites. Personally, I get emails from people all over the world that have benefited from the material that I have written. Let us make good use of the technology we have to teach others the gospel of Christ.

CONCLUSION

Preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ to other cultures is a command from God for His church. This task will produce great encouragement in our lives.

Therefore, let us be doers of God's Word and not hearers only. Let us reach out to as many people as possible with the saving message of Christ. May the Lord give us the wisdom and the strength to carry out this noble task of helping others get to heaven. Always remember that God would have all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth (1 Tim. 2:4). To God be the glory in everything we do, especially in preaching the gospel to the world.

UNSUNG HEROES OF THE BIBLE: DEMETRIUS

Willie A. Alvarenga

Summer series at **Grand Bury St. Church of Christ
Cleburne, TX**

Demetrius hath the witness of all *men*, and of the truth itself: yea, we also bear witness: and thou knowest that our witness is true (3 John 12) ¹

INTRODUCTION

As we study the Bible, we cannot help but to notice how much emphasis it gives concerning the need to be imitators of good examples (e.g. 1 Corinthians 4:16; 1 Corinthians 11:1; Philippians 3:17; 1 Thessalonians 1:6; 2:14; 3 John 11; Colossians 4:5). As we can see, we are encouraged to be good examples to others. Our study at this moment will focus on a great example we have in the New Testament. Even though we do not have many verses devoted to telling us about this particular Christian, we know he was a faithful example to follow. We are talking about our brother in Christ, Demetrius. As we examine our lesson, let us consider the following: (1) The phrase of our topic under consideration, (2) The faithful man under consideration, (3) The good testimony of Demetrius,

¹ *American Standard Version*. 1995 (3 Jn 12). Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

and finally, (4) Seven practical principles on how to be a good example like him.

THE PHRASE OF OUR TOPIC UNDER CONSIDERATION

What does the phrase, “Unsung heroes of the Bible” mean? It basically means that there are several examples of faithful people of God who served Him faithfully in the past, but who do not receive much acknowledgment from our part. We have preached many sermons about the Apostles and many others, but at times, we have failed to acknowledge the faithful service of others such as Epaphroditus (Philippians 2:25-30), Antipas (Revelation 2:13), and Onesiphorus (2 Timothy 1:16-18), just to mention a few. For this reason, we need to be encouraged to speak about the good service others have provided to our heavenly Father. God, in His infinite wisdom, decided to include their names in the inspired pages of the New Testament. We must recognize that God did this for our own benefit, that is, so that we may imitate their faithful service to Him.

THE NAME DEMETRIUS

What does the Bible say about Demetrius? As we study the Bible, we realize that this name appears only three times in the New Testament. Luke tells us about a person named Demetrius in Acts 19:24, “For a certain man named Demetrius, a silversmith, who made silver shrines of Diana, brought no little business unto the craftsmen.” This same person is

mentioned again in Acts 19:38, "If therefore Demetrius, and the craftsmen that are with him, have a matter against any man, the courts are open, and there are proconsuls: Let them accuse one another." It is obvious from these two references that this man was not a Christian. The other reference to this name is found in 3 John 12, "Demetrius hath the witness of all men, and of the truth itself: yea, we also bear witness: and thou knowest that our witness is true."

One of the questions we may ask is whether these two names make reference to the same person, or to different ones. Some have suggested that both may be reference to the same person. Notice what J.R. Dummelow commented:

Both he and the mob leader lived in or near Ephesus, and there is nothing impossible in the suggestion that the agitator had become a disciple, and that both references, therefore, are to the same person. He may have been the bearer of this letter²

According to an approximate chronology of events in the book of Acts, we may suggest that the events in Acts 19 took place around A.D. 54-57. It has been argued that the letter of 3 John was penned at about A.D. 95. If we take these dates into consideration, and if we suggest that these two references are the same person, then about 38 years

² J. R. Dummelow, *Commentary on the Holy Bible* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1937), p. 1062.

have transpired since the events in Acts 19, and the writing of the letter of 3 John.

There may be a chance that the person named Demetrius Luke mentions in his book may have later become a faithful Christian in the Lord's church. Taking into consideration the dates, he may have been in his late 60's or 70's.

THE GOSPEL CAN CHANGE LIVES!

We must remember that the gospel of Christ is the power of God unto salvation (Romans 1:16), and as such, people can turn their lives around for the better. We know this was the case with **those who practiced magic** (Acts 19:18-20) "Many also of them that had believed came, confessing, and declaring their deeds. ¹⁹And not a few of them that practised magical arts brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all; and they counted the price of them, and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver. ²⁰So mightily grew the word of the Lord and prevailed", **Saul of Tarsus** (Acts 9, 22, 26), **those at Corinth** (1 Corinthians 6:9-11) "Or know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with men, ¹⁰nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. ¹¹**And such were some of you:** but ye were washed, but ye were sanctified, but ye were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the Spirit of our God," and many others.

But as far as Demetrius is concerned, and his possible connection to the one mentioned in Acts 19, we can only speculate as to who this person really was. We can only hope that the one mentioned in the book of Acts was the same the Apostle John mentioned in his letter. If this was the case, then, what a great joy and victory for the cause of Christ this was!

DEMETRIUS: A MAN OF GREAT TESTIMONY

In the New Testament we have approximately 7, 957 verses. Of all these verses, only one was dedicated to mentioning Demetrius. Yes, only one verse, but a powerful one! When we examine and practice the content of this particular verse, it will help us to become faithful servants of the Lord. This faithfulness will take us into eternity with God. With this in mind, let us consider what the inspired Apostle John wrote about this faithful Christian.

DEMETRIUS ENJOYED A GREAT REPUTATION FROM ALL MEN

“Demetrius hath the witness of all men, and of the truth itself: yea, we also bear witness: and Thou knowest that our witness is true” (3 John 12).

What a great statement this is! The faithful Demetrius enjoyed the blessing of being able to be well spoken of by others. He was a diligent Christian who, even though he lived in the world, he did not live according to the world (John 15:19; 17:14).

If ye were of the world, the world would love its own: but because ye are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you (John 15:19).

I have given them thy word; and the world hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world (John 17:14).

The phrase "*of all men*" implies that he had a good reputation not only among Christians, but also with the people of the world. With regards to the people outside of Christ, the Bible encourages us to be a good example to them. Please consider the following verses:

Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost its savor, wherewith shall it be salted? It is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out and trodden under foot of men. Ye are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a lamp, and put it under the bushel, but on the stand; and it shineth unto all that are in the house. Even so let your light shine before men; that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven (Matthew 5:13-16, ASV 1901).

Walk in wisdom toward *those who are outside* (Colossians 4:5, NKJV).

Wives, likewise, be submissive to your own husbands, that even if some do not obey the word, they, without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives, when they observe your chaste conduct accompanied by fear (1 Peter 3:1-2, NKJV).

That you may walk properly *toward those who are outside*, and that you may lack nothing (1 Thessalonians 4:12, NKJV).

Moreover he must have a *good testimony among those who are outside*, lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil (1 Timothy 3:7, NKJV).

We are also encouraged through the Scriptures to be good examples to those of the family of God. Consider the following verses:

And ye became imitators of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit; so that *ye became an ensample to all that believe* in Macedonia and in Achaia. For from you hath sounded forth the word of the Lord, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but in every

place your faith to God-ward is gone forth; so that we need not to speak anything (1 Thessalonians 1:6-8).

Let no man despise thy youth; but *be thou an ensample to them that believe*, in word, in manner of life, in love, in faith, in purity (1 Timothy 4:12).

In all things showing thyself an ensample of good works; in thy doctrine showing uncorruptness, gravity, sound speech, that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of us (Titus 2:6-7).

It is imperative that you and I strive to be good examples to others so God may be glorified and those outside of Christ may be encouraged to obey the gospel as they consider our lights shining. There is no doubt that Demetrius was able to bring people to Christ through his excellent example. People were able to see Christ in him! Let us remember the words penned by Luke in Acts 2:47, "*Praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved*" (Acts 2:47). What a positive impact we can have on others through our faithful example!

Now, according to the context of this letter and the good reputation Demetrius enjoyed, we can safely conclude that this Christian man (1) Walked in the

truth of God's Word, (2) He was a faithful worker in the kingdom of God, (3) He was a helper of those who needed help, (4) He was a fellow-worker for the truth, (5) He was an imitator of good examples, and (6) He was a good example to others. Even though most of these things are said of Gaius, as stated before, we can safely conclude that Demetrius practiced these things as well.

WALKING IN GOD'S TRUTH

With this in mind, let me encourage all of us to walk in the truth of God's Word just like John, Gaius and Demetrius did. The Bible teaches us to be obedient to God's Word. Let me encourage us to take heed to the following verses: "Hold the pattern of sound words which thou hast heard from me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus" (2 Timothy 1:13), "But abide thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them" (2 Timothy 3:14), "If you love me, ye will keep my commandments" (John 14:15). If we follow these verses we will be walking in the truth of God's Word. Let us remember that we are to be doers of God's Word and not hearers only (James 1:22-25). We can be sure that Demetrius did indeed follow and obeyed God's Word.

FAITHFUL WORKERS IN THE KINGDOM OF GOD

We also need to strive to be faithful workers in the kingdom of God as Gaius and Demetrius were.

The Scriptures place a great emphasis upon a diligent service in the kingdom. Let us hear what God has to say on this:

Not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord (Romans 12:11).

Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord (1 Corinthians 15:58).

Finally then, brethren, we urge and exhort in the Lord Jesus that you should abound more and more, just as you received from us how you ought to walk and to please God (1 Thessalonians 4:1).

The kingdom of God needs more faithful workers like Gaius, Demetrius and all the ones who have served the Lord in His kingdom throughout the ages.

I am confident that Demetrius, like Gaius, showed love for everyone. They were willing to extend a helping hand to everyone. The Church of our Lord needs more faithful brethren who are willing to love one another as Jesus loved us (John 13:34-35). We need brothers and sisters who practice unfeigned love (Romans 12:9). The Apostle Paul

exhorted the saints at Philippi to practice brotherly love when he penned the following words,

Therefore if there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interest, but also for the interest of others (Philippians 2:1-4).

These exhortations are exemplified in the same chapter with the life of Jesus (Philippians 2:5-11), Timothy (2:19-24), and Epaphroditus (2:25-30). These faithful men showed the kind of love that needs to prevail within the church of Christ. I am confident that Demetrius followed the same example.

GOOD REPUTATION BEFORE THE TRUTH AND FAITHFUL BRETHREN

It is great to know that Demetrius enjoyed great reputation, not only from everyone, but also from the truth itself, and the Apostle John. The faithful Demetrius walked according to the commandments of God. We know this to be the case because the inspired Apostle John tells us so. This man of God was a true example of what the Word of

God can do in our lives! When you walk in God's truth, people will notice that. I am reminded of Acts 4:13, "Now when they beheld the boldness of Peter and John, and had perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; *and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus.*" The Apostle Paul also tells us something we can relate to what Luke wrote, "Ye are our epistle, written in our hearts, *known and read of all men*" (2 Corinthians 3:2). Has the world noticed that we have been with Jesus? What are people reading through our lives? When we let the Word of God work in our lives, this will help us to live a life like the one Demetrius lived.

The Apostle John also bore witness of Demetrius. It is a great blessing to have faithful brethren who are well known among our brotherhood and who can speak well of us. If you are a faithful Christian, brethren who are well known, will never hesitate to write a letter of recommendation for you. I am confident that if Demetrius needed one, the Apostle John would never have said no to this request. We often tell our students to strive to be diligent in their Christian conduct while they study at school, this way, whenever they need a letter of recommendation, if they were a good example, then we would be glad to write one for them. **We all need to make every effort** to be faithful in our conduct.

DEMETRIUS: NOT A DIOTREPHE

One last thing we can say about Demetrius for sure is that he was not a Diotrephes in his Christian conduct. We can safely conclude that: (1) He did not love to have the preeminence among our brethren, (2) he was not a hindrance to the work of God, and (3) he did not speak evil against the brethren. Sadly to say, today we have some in the church who like to imitate the example of Diotrephes, instead of Demetrius. I have known several brethren who have done this. We must remember that those who imitate that which is good are of God (3 John 11). May the God of heaven and earth help us to be more like Demetrius, and not like Diotrephes!

SEVEN PRACTICAL PRINCIPLES THAT CAN HELP US TO BE MORE LIKE DEMETRIUS

What are some of the things that we can practice in our lives to be more like Demetrius? What can we as Christians do to enjoy a great reputation among our brethren and those outside the body of Christ? Let me suggest a few things we can practice in our daily living, things that will help us tremendously to accomplish a good reputation. Please know that God has given us all things that pertain to life and godliness. These things are found in His Word (2 Peter 1:3).

1. Remember who we are!

The Bible teaches us that we are the salt of the earth and the light of the world (Matthew 5:13-16). Through our lights, we guide people to Christ. We are also Christians, followers of Jesus Christ (Acts 11:26; 26:28; 1 Peter 4:16), and as such, we follow His example (1 Peter 2:21-22; 1 Corinthians 11:1). Remember that the word "Christian" basically means, "Christ-like." If we make every effort to remember who we are, then we will always be a good example to others.

2. We must grow in the knowledge of God's Word

The knowledge of God's Word can help us to be ready for every good work (2 Timothy 3:16-17). This knowledge will inform us as to what we must do in order to enjoy a great reputation before God, our brethren, and those outside the church. God encourages us to grow in the knowledge of His Word (2 Peter 3:18) because He knows that if we do not do this, we will be destroyed (Hosea 4:6; Isaiah 5:13). Only God can tell us what to do to live a faithful life in Christ (Psalm 119:11). I am confident that Demetrius was a diligent student of God's Word. Are we diligent students of the Bible?

3. Pray for wisdom

Wisdom helps us to rightly divide the Word of truth (2 Timothy 2:15). God can give us wisdom if we ask Him (James 1:5-6). The practice of wisdom in our

lives will help us to develop a great reputation among people (James 3:13; Colossians 4:5). The practice of God's Word in our lives will help us to be wise people. Notice the great lesson we learned from Deuteronomy 4:6, "Keep therefore and do them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples, that shall hear all these statutes, and say, surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people." We are confident that Demetrius was a wise Christian, and so must we!

4. Imitate the life of faithful Christians

We have seen in this lesson how the Bible exhorts us to be imitators of good examples (1 Corinthians 4:6; 11:1; Philippians 3:17; 3 John 11). The Bible is replete with great people we can imitate (e.g. Jesus, Paul, Timothy, Epaphroditus, Jeremiah, Ezra, Job, Gaius, Demetrius, etc.). Do we take time to consider the examples we have in the Bible? Do we prayerfully consider living according to their pattern? I really hope we do!

5. Stay away from bad examples

The Apostle Paul gives us instructions with regards to this point. Notice what he wrote to the Corinthians, "Be not deceived: Evil companionships corrupt good morals" (1 Corinthians 15:33). He also wrote, "know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?" (1 Corinthians 5:6). The writer of Proverbs also gives us instructions with regards to this, "Walk with wise men, and thou shalt be wise;

but the companion of fools shall smart for it" (Proverbs 13:20). Let us stay away from anything that can have a negative impact in our lives.

6. Strive to live a holy life in Christ

A life of holiness can help us tremendously to be a great example to others. With regards to this, the Word of God has a lot to say concerning a holy life. There are plenty of exhortations where we are encouraged to stay away from sin. Let us examine the following verses: "But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof" (Romans 13:14), "But I say, walk by the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh" (Galatians 5:16), "but like as he who called you is holy, be ye yourselves also holy in all manner of living; because it is written, Ye shall be holy; for I am holy" (1 Peter 1:15-16), "Beloved, I beseech you as sojourners and pilgrims, to abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul" (1 Peter 2:11), "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the vain glory of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever" (1 John 2:15-17). These are some of the exhortations that can help us to live a faithful life in Christ. Anyone who follows these will make it to heaven (Hebrews 12:14; Matthew 5:8).

7. Be a doer of God's Word

There is no way to accomplish a good example in life unless we practice what the Word of God teaches. Let us remember that our heavenly Father will only bless those who practice His Word (James 1:22-25; Luke 11:28). And so, with this in mind, let me encourage us to prayerfully consider all the things we have learned in this lesson. This is the only way to experience a change of life for the better. We must remember that God gave us His Word, not only for our information, but also for our transformation.

CONCLUSION

What a great study this has been! It is always a great blessing to study the life of those faithful brothers and sisters in Christ who served the Lord in His kingdom. Demetrius is a great example to follow with regards to a good example. We thank God for giving us a pattern to follow. The question is: Will we imitate the example of those who lived a faithful life in Christ? Will we also be a good example to others? I pray that we will always live as the salt of the earth and the light of the world (Matthew 5:13-16). By doing this, our heavenly Father, will be glorified!

THE CHRISTIAN'S RESPONSE TO SLANDER

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“Having a good conscience; that, wherein ye are spoken against, they may be put to shame who revile your good manner of life in Christ.”³--1 Peter 3:16

INTRODUCTION

In the passage of 1 Peter 3:16 Peter speaks about the reality of Christians suffering for their good manner of life in Christ. This is emphasized not only in this passage, but also throughout the entire letter of first Peter. In this brief study, it is my desire to provide several principles that will help us tremendously to have a proper response to slander. I will, therefore, briefly analyze the word slander and then practical principles on how to respond to it will be provided. As we examine this brief study, let us keep in mind the words of James 1:22, “But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deluding your own selves.” Remember that the only way to benefit greatly from God’s Word is to put it to practice in our daily lives (Luke 11:28).

³ *American Standard Version*. 1995 (1 Pe 3:16). Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

DEFINITION OF TERM

The word “**slander**” comes from the Greek word *epereazo* which has several meanings: to insult, to treat abusively, to use despitefully, to revile, in a forensic sense, to accuse falsely, to threaten (Thayer, 1908). The Strong concordance defines this word as to insult, to use despitefully, and to falsely accuse. The words “falsely accuse” are very strong in the Greek, namely, “to spitefully abuse, to insult, to traduce.”⁴ This particular Greek word only appears three times in the New Testament (e.g. Matthew 5:44; Luke 6:28; 1 Peter 3:16). Let us read these Bible references where the word appears. I will cite the King James Version:

But I say unto you, love your enemies, bless them that curse you, and pray for them which **despitefully use you**, and persecute you (Matthew 5:44, emphasis added)

Bless them that curse you, and pray for them which **despitefully use you** (Luke 6:28, emphasis added).

Having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that **falsely**

⁴ Wuest, K. S. (1997). *Wuest's word studies from the Greek New Testament: For the English reader* (1 Pe 3:16). Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

accuse your good conversation in Christ
(1 Peter 3:16).⁵

Other translations of the Bible use words such as revile (ASV, NKJV, ESV), falsely accuse (KJV), slander (NIV).

THE GREEK GRAMMAR

The grammar of this verb is found in the present, active participle, which denotes a continuous action. These Christians were being slandered, and falsely accused continually by their adversaries.

HOW TO RESPOND TO SLANDER

How can faithful Christians respond when they are being slandered all the time? Does the Bible provide any helpful assistance on what we can do? Let me suggest that you prayerfully consider the following ways on how you and I can respond when we are falsely accused.

KEEP IN MIND THAT FAITHFUL CHRISTIANS WILL SUFFER

The Apostle Peter in this first letter emphasizes the truth that faithful Christian will suffer in this world considerably. If we study this first letter carefully, we will arrive at the conclusion that the

⁵ *The Holy Bible: King James Version*. 2009 (Electronic Edition of the 1900 Authorized Version). Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

central theme of this letter is suffering which faithful Christians will experience, and how they should respond to it.

There is no doubt that all faithful Christians around the world will experience suffering during our time on earth. The Apostle Peter tells Christians that Satan walks about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour (1 Peter 5:8). This enemy of ours will try his best to discourage us from living the Christian life, and from entering heaven some day. Remember that he will hinder our way to heaven (cf. 1 Thessalonians 2:18).

The Apostle Paul also warned Christians that if they lived a faithful life in Christ, they were going to suffer tribulations (2 Timothy 3:12; cf. Philippians 1:29; Acts 14:22; James 1:2). Jesus also warned His disciples about the reality of suffering for His cause (John 16:33). Most of us have experienced difficult times just for trying to live a faithful life in Christ. Personally, several false teachers with regards to the doctrine of marriage, divorce and remarriage have falsely accused me of teaching false doctrine. These people argue in this way because I do not teach what they believe. The Brown Trail School of Preaching has been falsely accused of using instrumental music in our building. I, also, was falsely accused of having divorced my wife; something obviously not true!

It is imperative that we as Christians continue steadfast in the Lord so *that we may not cast away our boldness, which hath great recompense of reward*

(Hebrews 10:35). We need to keep in mind that a Crown of life awaits those who remain faithful to the Lord, even in the midst of trials (cf. James 1:12; Revelation 2:10; 2 Timothy 4:6-8).

FOLLOW THE ADVICES THE INSPIRED APOSTLE PETER PROVIDED

In his first letter, the Apostle Peter provides several advices that can help us to have a positive response when we are being slandered. Therefore, I will allow Peter to instruct us on how we can respond to slander. Once again, let me encourage you to please consider each of these advices:

1. Remember that you are not alone (1 Peter 1:3-5).

³Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to his great mercy begat us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴unto an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, ⁵**who by the power of God are guarded through faith unto a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time** (Emphasis added).

2. Remember that being slandered is part of the proving of your faith (1 Peter 1:6-7).

⁶Wherein ye greatly rejoice, **though now for a little while, if need be, ye have**

been put to grief in manifold trials,
⁷that the proof of your faith, *being* more precious than gold that perisheth though it is proved by fire, may be found unto praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

- 3. Remember to continue living a holy life in Christ, even when you are being slandered or persecuted (1 Peter 1:14-15).**

¹⁴As children of obedience, not fashioning yourselves according to your former lusts in *the time of* your ignorance: ¹⁵but like as he who called you is holy, be ye yourselves also holy in all manner of living; ¹⁶because it is written, ye shall be holy; for I am holy.

- 4. Remember to put away sin from your life; otherwise, you will provide an opportunity for the adversary to accuse you falsely (1 Peter 2:1-2).**

Putting away therefore all wickedness, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings, ²as newborn babes, long for the spiritual milk which is without guile, that ye may grow thereby unto salvation.

- 5. Remember to live a faithful life before those who may falsely accuse you (1 Peter 2:11-12, 15).**

¹¹Beloved, I beseech you as sojourners and pilgrims, to abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul; ¹²having your behavior seemly among the Gentiles; that, **wherein they speak against you as evil-doers, they may by your good works, which they behold, glorify God in the day of visitation.**

¹⁵For so is the will of God, that by well-doing ye should put to silence the ignorance of foolish men.

6. ***Remember that God is pleased when we suffer with patience, and by so doing, we follow the steps of Jesus (1 Peter 1:20-23).***

²⁰For what glory is it, if, when ye sin, and are buffeted *for it*, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer *for it*, ye shall take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. ²¹For hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, that ye should follow his steps: ²²who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: ²³who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered threatened not; but committed *himself* to him that judgeth righteously.

7. ***Remember not to render evil for evil (1 Peter 3:8-13).***

⁸Finally, *be* ye all likeminded, compassionate, loving as brethren,

tenderhearted, humbleminded: **9not rendering evil for evil, or reviling for reviling**; but contrariwise blessing; for hereunto were ye called, that ye should inherit a blessing. ¹⁰For, He that would love life, And see good days, Let him refrain his tongue from evil, And his lips that they speak no guile: ¹¹And let him turn away from evil, and do good; Let him seek peace, and pursue it. ¹²For the eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, And his ears unto their supplication: But the face of the Lord is upon them that do evil. ¹³And who is he that will harm you, if ye be zealous of that which is good?

8. Remember to do your best to have a good conscience at all times (1 Peter 3:16).

¹⁶having a good conscience; that, wherein ye are spoken against, they may be put to shame who revile your good manner of life in Christ.

9. Remember to rejoice when you suffer for the Lord (1 Peter 4:12-14).

¹²Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial among you, which cometh upon you to prove you, as though a strange thing happened unto you: ¹³but insomuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings, rejoice;

that at the revelation of his glory also ye may rejoice with exceeding joy. ¹⁴If ye are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed *are ye*; because the *Spirit* of glory and the Spirit of God resteth upon you.

- 10. Remember not to suffer as an evil doer, since by doing this, you will provide an opportunity for your enemies to falsely accuse you (1 Peter 4:15-16).**

¹⁵For let none of you suffer as a murderer, or a thief, or an evil-doer, or as a meddler in other men's matters: ¹⁶but if *a man suffer* as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God in this name.

- 11. Remember to continue practicing that which is good, even when you are falsely accused or persecuted (1 Peter 4:19).**

¹⁹Wherefore let them also that suffer according to the will of God commit their souls in well-doing unto a faithful Creator.

- 12. Remember that you are not the only one that suffers in this world (1 Peter 5:8-9).**

⁸Be sober, be watchful: your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour, ⁹whom withstand stedfast in your faith,

knowing that the same sufferings are accomplished in your brethren who are in the world.

13. Remember to give God the glory even when you are experiencing difficult times in your life (1 Peter 5:11).

¹⁰And the God of all grace, who called you unto his eternal glory in Christ, after that ye have suffered a little while, shall himself perfect, establish, strengthen you. ¹¹To him be the dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

EXAMPLES OF THOSE IN THE BIBLE WHO WRE SLANDERED AND HOW THEY REPONDED TO IT

The Bible provides several examples of faithful people of God who were accused falsely. Let us consider only three examples. At the same time, let us carefully consider how they responded to those who slandered them.

Joseph (Genesis 39:1-40).

Potiphar's wife accused Joseph of sexually harassing her. Let us read the entire story to see how things happened:

Joseph's Prosperity

And Joseph was brought down to Egypt; and Potiphar, an officer of

Pharaoh's, the captain of the guard, an Egyptian, bought him of the hand of the Ishmaelites, that had brought him down thither. ²And Jehovah was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous man; and he was in the house of his master the Egyptian. ³And his master saw that Jehovah was with him, and that Jehovah made all that he did to prosper in his hand. ⁴And Joseph found favor in his sight, and he ministered unto him: and he made him overseer over his house, and all that he had he put into his hand. ⁵And it came to pass from the time that he made him overseer in his house, and over all that he had, that Jehovah blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake; and the blessing of Jehovah was upon all that he had, in the house and in the field. ⁶And he left all that he had in Joseph's hand; and he knew not aught *that was* with him, save the bread which he did eat. And Joseph was comely, and well-favored.

Joseph's Temptation

⁷And it came to pass after these things, that his master's wife cast her eyes upon Joseph; and she said, Lie with me. ⁸But he refused, and said unto his master's wife, Behold, my master knoweth not what is with me in the house, and he hath put all that he hath

into my hand: ⁹he is not greater in this house than I; neither hath he kept back anything from me but thee, because thou art his wife: how then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God? ¹⁰And it came to pass, as she spake to Joseph day by day, that he hearkened not unto her, to lie by her, *or* to be with her. ¹¹And it came to pass about this time, that he went into the house to do his work; and there was none of the men of the house there within. ¹²And she caught him by his garment, saying, Lie with me: and he left his garment in her hand, and fled, and got him out.

Joseph is Falsely Accused

¹³And it came to pass, when she saw that he had left his garment in her hand, and was fled forth, ¹⁴that she called unto the men of her house, and spake unto them, saying, See, he hath brought in a Hebrew unto us to mock us: he came in unto me to lie with me, and I cried with a loud voice: ¹⁵and it came to pass, when he heard that I lifted up my voice and cried, that he left his garment by me, and fled, and got him out. ¹⁶And she laid up his garment by her, until his master came home. ¹⁷And she spake unto him according to these words, saying, The Hebrew servant, whom

thou hast brought unto us, came in unto me to mock me: ¹⁸and it came to pass, as I lifted up my voice and cried, that he left his garment by me, and fled out.

Joseph is Punished Unjustly

¹⁹And it came to pass, when his master heard the words of his wife, which she spake unto him, saying, After this manner did thy servant to me; that his wrath was kindled. ²⁰And Joseph's master took him, and put him into the prison, the place where the king's prisoners were bound: and he was there in the prison. ²¹But Jehovah was with Joseph, and showed kindness unto him, and gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison. ²²And the keeper of the prison committed to Joseph's hand all the prisoners that were in the prison; and whatsoever they did there, he was the doer of it. ²³The keeper of the prison looked not to anything that was under his hand, because Jehovah was with him; and that which he did, Jehovah made it prosper. ⁶

Throughout the development of this story we see how Joseph remained faithful to his God. This faithfulness brought him suffering since Potiphar's

⁶ *American Standard Version*. 1995 (Ge 39:1–23). Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

wife falsely accused him of trying to force her to have sexual activity with her. It is interesting to see how God will always bless His people when they diligently strive to serve Him faithfully. Notice what the text reveals concerning God's mercy towards the faithful Joseph: "But Jehovah was with Joseph, and showed kindness unto him, and gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison" (Genesis 39:21). People may accuse us falsely, but God will always be there for us (cf. Hebrews 13:5).

Daniel (Daniel 6:1-28).

In this chapter we learned how Daniel lived a faithful life before God that even his enemies were not able to find fault in him. His enemies, therefore, sought a way to accuse him, but were not successful. Why? The text reveals the answer: "...but they could find no occasion nor fault, forasmuch as he was faithful, neither was there any error or fault found in him."

These adversaries devised a plan to falsely accused Daniel. Let us read the rest of the story to see what these men did, and what God did.

The Accusers and their Wicked Plan Against Daniel

⁵Then said these men, We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find it against him concerning the law of his God.

⁶Then these presidents and satraps assembled together to the king, and said

thus unto him, King Darius, live for ever. ⁷All the presidents of the kingdom, the deputies and the satraps, the counsellors and the governors, have consulted together to establish a royal statute, and to make a strong interdict, that whosoever shall ask a petition of any god or man for thirty days, save of thee, O king, he shall be cast into the den of lions. ⁸Now, O king, establish the interdict, and sign the writing, that it be not changed, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which altereth not. ⁹Wherefore king Darius signed the writing and the interdict.

Daniel's Courage and Faithfulness

¹⁰And when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house (now his windows were open in his chamber toward Jerusalem) and he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime.

The Accusation Against Daniel

¹¹Then these men assembled together, and found Daniel making petition and supplication before his God. ¹²Then they came near, and spake before the king concerning the king's

interdict: Hast thou not signed an interdict, that every man that shall make petition unto any god or man within thirty days, save unto thee, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions? The king answered and said, The thing is true, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which altereth not. ¹³Then answered they and said before the king, That Daniel, who is of the children of the captivity of Judah, regardeth not thee, O king, nor the interdict that thou hast signed, but maketh his petition three times a day. ¹⁴Then the king, when he heard these words, was sore displeased, and set his heart on Daniel to deliver him; and he labored till the going down of the sun to rescue him. ¹⁵Then these men assembled together unto the king, and said unto the king, Know, O king, that it is a law of the Medes and Persians, that no interdict nor statute which the king establisheth may be changed.

Daniel's Unjust Tribulation and the King's Confidence

¹⁶Then the king commanded, and they brought Daniel, and cast him into the den of lions. Now the king spake and said unto Daniel, Thy God whom thou servest continually, he will deliver thee.

¹⁷And a stone was brought, and laid upon the mouth of the den; and the king sealed it with his own signet, and with the signet of his lords; that nothing might be changed concerning Daniel.

¹⁸Then the king went to his palace, and passed the night fasting; neither were instruments of music brought before him: and his sleep fled from him.

Daniel's Deliverance Due to His Faithfulness

¹⁹Then the king arose very early in the morning, and went in haste unto the den of lions. ²⁰And when he came near unto the den to Daniel, he cried with a lamentable voice; the king spake and said to Daniel, O Daniel, servant of the living God, is thy God, whom thou servest continually, able to deliver thee from the lions? ²¹Then said Daniel unto the king, O king, live for ever. ²²My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths, and they have not hurt me; forasmuch as before him innocency was found in me; and also before thee, O king, have I done no hurt. ²³Then was the king exceeding glad, and commanded that they should take Daniel up out of the den. So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no manner of hurt was found upon him, because he

had trusted in his God.

The Accusers Punishment

²⁴And the king commanded, and they brought those men that had accused Daniel, and they cast them into the den of lions, them, their children, and their wives; and the lions had the mastery of them, and brake all their bones in pieces, before they came to the bottom of the den.

The King's Noble Decree

²⁵Then king Darius wrote unto all the peoples, nations, and languages, that dwell in all the earth: Peace be multiplied unto you. ²⁶I make a decree, that in all the dominion of my kingdom men tremble and fear before the God of Daniel; for he is the living God, and stedfast for ever, And his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed; and his dominion shall be even unto the end. ²⁷He delivereth and rescueth, and he worketh signs and wonders in heaven and in earth, who hath delivered Daniel from the power of the lions. ²⁸So this Daniel prospered in the reign of Darius, and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian. ⁷

⁷ *American Standard Version*. 1995 (Da 6:5–28).
Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

This story has the purpose of revealing 7 great lessons:

1. It is possible to live a faithful life according to God's commandments
2. Evil people will try to accuse you falsely
3. Evil people will not be able to find anything credible by which to falsely accuse you
4. If you live a faithful life before God, He will never leave you
5. Those who falsely accuse you will be punished by God
6. Man's faithfulness can provide a way for God to be glorified
7. Faithfulness will always prevail

Jesus Christ (Mark 14:53-65).

In this passage of Scripture we read about how the Jews were trying to falsely accuse Jesus of wrong doing, but were not able to do so. Let us read the story to see how things happened:

⁵³And they led Jesus away to the high priest: and there come together with him all the chief priests and the elders and the scribes. ⁵⁴And Peter had followed him afar off, even within, into the court of the high priest; and he was sitting with the officers, and warming himself in the light *of the fire*. ⁵⁵Now the chief priests and the whole council

sought witness against Jesus to put him to death; and found it not. ⁵⁶For many bare false witness against him, and their witness agreed not together. ⁵⁷And there stood up certain, and bare false witness against him, saying, ⁵⁸We heard him say, I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and in three days I will build another made without hands. ⁵⁹And not even so did their witness agree together. ⁶⁰And the high priest stood up in the midst, and asked Jesus, saying, Answerest thou nothing? what is it which these witness against thee? ⁶¹But he held his peace, and answered nothing. Again the high priest asked him, and saith unto him, Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed? ⁶²And Jesus said, I am: and ye shall see the Son of man sitting at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven. ⁶³And the high priest rent his clothes, and saith, What further need have we of witnesses? ⁶⁴Ye have heard the blasphemy: what think ye? And they all condemned him to be worthy of death. ⁶⁵And some began to spit on him, and to cover his face, and to buffet him, and to say unto him, Prophecy: and the officers received him with blows of their hands. ⁸

⁸ *American Standard Version*. 1995 (Mk 14:53–65).
Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

The chief priests and the whole council were looking for ways to falsely accuse Jesus, but were not successful. If you live a faithful life, people will not be able to find something credible by which to accuse you legally.

In the three stories we have examined we see how the attitude of these men of God always reflected their faithfulness to God. There is a lot we can learn from these men! May the Lord help us to imitate their great example.

CONCLUSION

In this brief lesson we have examined the topic, "The Christian's Response to Slander." We have learned about the reality of suffering and slandering. We can safely conclude that slander is part of the Christian's suffering. Therefore, it is imperative that we prayerfully consider how we can respond to this type of persecution from our adversaries. If you have not experienced false accusations, sooner or later you will. When the time comes, let me encourage you to carefully practice the wise principles we have examined in this lesson.

May we never allow those who slander us to discourage us from living the kind of life God would have us to live. Remember that if we remain faithful unto death, a beautiful crown of life awaits us (Revelation 2:10; James 1:12; 2 Timothy 4:7-8).

May the Lord give us the wisdom and encouragement to continue serving Him faithfully!

Additional Passages on the Subject at Hand

With his mouth the godless man destroyeth his neighbor; But through knowledge shall the righteous be delivered (Proverbs 11:9).

He that hideth hatred is of lying lips; And he that uttereth a slander is a fool (Proverbs 10:18).

And I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. ³⁷For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned (Matthew 12:36-37).

Speak not one against another, brethren. He that speaketh against a brother, or judgeth his brother, speaketh against the law, and judgeth the law: but if thou judgest the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge (James 4:11).

Whoso privily slandereth his neighbor, him will I destroy: Him that hath a high look and a proud heart will I not suffer (Psalm 101:5).

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MARRIAGE: HUSBANDS

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INTRODUCTION

Marriage is under attack today. This is no surprise to those who continually keep their eyes open to reality. The Bible teaches that the world is under the wicked one (1 John 5:19). The Scriptures also tell us that the land has been filled with sin against the Holy One of Israel (Jeremiah 51:5). There is no doubt in our minds that Satan is trying to destroy the family. He is trying his best because he knows that if he can destroy the family, he will hurt the church and society will be in submission to his will. This enemy is so powerful that he has been able

to destroy many families in this world. For this reason, I am indebted to you for choosing a theme for this lectureship which is so needed today. If we are to survive the attacks of this enemy of ours, we must stay close to our Heavenly Father and His Word (James 4:7-8). We must continue to stay informed as to what God would have us to do as a family.

A great topic has been assigned to me concerning the responsibilities of husbands. I hope and pray that the things that I will present today will be of great spiritual benefit to all of us. The Bible teaches that as long as we continue to practice what God teaches in His Word, we will be a blessed people (Deuteronomy 4:6; James 1:22-25; Luke 11:28). As we begin our study of this lesson, let me encourage each of us to search the Scriptures daily to see whether these things that I will present to you are so (Acts 17:11). Let me also encourage each of us to prove all things, and hold fast that which is good (1 Thessalonians 5:21). May God help us to carefully consider what He has said in His Word concerning the role of husbands in marriage!

The purpose of this lesson is to emphasize some of the great responsibilities that husbands have toward their wives. There is no way that I will be able to cover every detail concerning all of the responsibilities a husband has; nevertheless, we will consider those things that I believe are of great importance to the subject at hand.

With this in mind, let us spend some time studying what God says in His word concerning the

great responsibilities that husbands have toward their wives.

HUSBANDS: CONSIDER THE BIBLE AS YOUR PATTERN TO FOLLOW

The Bible teaches that all things that pertain to life and godliness are found in God's Word. Notice what the apostle Peter penned, *"Seeing that his divine power hath granted unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that called us by his own glory and virtue"* (2 Peter 1:3). God's inspired Book teaches us how to direct our lives in the right direction. This is why the psalmist said, *"Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and light unto my path"* (Psalm 119:105). Also Proverbs 6:23 says, *"For the commandment is a lamp; and the law is light; and reproofs of instruction are the way of life."* The inspired Word of God can help every Christian to be furnished completely unto every good work (2 Timothy 3:16-17; cf. James 1:25). These are the reasons why every husband must carefully consider the Word of God as he fulfills his responsibilities according to the pattern that our Creator has given us through His Word (2 Timothy 1:13). One of the reasons why all marriages fail is because they have not taken the time to consider what God teaches through His Word. God says, *"Hear instruction, and be wise, and refuse it not"* (Proverbs 8:33). Any marriage who refuses to listen to the Word of God will find their marriage built on the sand, which, according to God's Word, when difficult times come, they will be destroyed. Please take the time to read and study what the Lord Jesus Christ taught in Matthew 7:25-27. Therefore, let us pay close

attention to the Scriptures and learn what God would have us to learn. Let us remember what the Lord said in Luke 11:28, *“But he said, yea rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it.”*

HUSBANDS: LOVE YOUR WIVES ACCORDING TO WHAT THE WORD OF GOD TEACHES

Sadly to say, many husbands have failed to love their wives according to God’s pattern. Many think and feel that they are doing so, but in reality, they are not. We must not follow our way of thinking, but what the Lord says through His Word. The prophet Jeremiah once said, *“O Jehovah, **I know that the way of man is not in himself**; it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps”* (Jeremiah 10:23, emp. added). Also consider what Proverbs 14:12 teaches, *“There is a way which seemeth right unto a man; but the end thereof are the ways of death.”* Every godly husband will carefully consider the Word of God with relation to how he must love his wife. The Scriptures are filled with many passages that show how husbands must love their wives. Let me encourage you to consider the following:

“Live joyfully with the wife whom thou lovest all the days of thy life of vanity, which he hath given thee under the sun, all thy days of vanity: for that is thy portion in life and in thy labor wherein thou laborest under the sun” (Ecclesiastes 9:9, imp. added).

“Let thy fountain be blessed; **and rejoice in the wife of thy youth**” (Proverbs 5:18, imp. added)

“Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself up for it” (Ephesians 5:25).

“Even so ought husbands also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his own wife loveth himself: for no man ever hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as Christ also the church; because we are members of his body” (Ephesians 5:28-29, emp. added).

“Nevertheless do ye also severally love each one his own wife even as himself; and let the wife see that she fear her husband” (Ephesians 5:33, imp. added).

As we can see, God, through His Word, has given us all the counsel we need concerning how husbands must love their wives. Notice that in Ephesians 5:25, Paul instructed husbands to love their wives as Christ also loved the church. A careful study of Christ’s love for the church will reveal the intensity by which husbands must love their wives. We must remember all of the things Christ endured for the church. A faithful husband will be willing to give his life for his wife. Sadly to say, this is not the case in many marriages. Many husbands do not love their wives as Christ love the church. It is imperative that we go back to the Bible and practice the kind of love that God would have us to practice towards our wives.

A careful analysis of the Greek grammar of the word “love” in Ephesians 5:25 will reveal two very important details each husband must have in mind: 1. Husbands are commanded to love their wives; for the word “love” is found in the imperative mood, which denotes a command to follow, 2. Husbands must love their wives at all times; for the word “love” is found in the present tense, which denotes a continuous action. Therefore, based on this grammatical analysis, we can come to the conclusion that not to love our wives will result in a clear violation of God’s Word, and therefore, we sin by doing so. Not only do we become guilty of sin, but also our prayers will be hindered, according to what the apostle Peter taught in 1 Peter 3:7. Notice what he wrote, *“Ye husbands, in like manner, dwell with your wives according to knowledge, giving honor unto the woman, as unto the weaker vessel, as being also joint-heirs of the grace of life; to the end that your prayers be not hindered.”*

The apostle Paul, writing to the Corinthian brethren about the excellency of love, pointed out the kind of love that must be practiced by faithful Christians. Please notice what he wrote,

“Love suffereth long, and is kind; love envieth not; love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not its own, is not provoked, taketh not account of evil; rejoiceth not in unrighteousness, but rejoiceth with the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Love never faileth...” (1 Corinthians 13:4-8).

Is this the kind of love that is being practiced by us today? I hope and pray that the answer to this question is an emphatic yes. Also, as we consider the command to love our wives, we must realize that all of the passages that we find about love within the New Testament must be practiced by all of us. Let us remember that our wives are also our sisters in Christ. For example, Jesus said in John 13:34-35 that we have a new commandment, and this is to love one another as He has loved us. If you notice, the same word for love that we find in this passage of Scripture is the same one that we find in Ephesians 5:25. Friends, we must carefully consider what the Lord has said through His Word concerning love. The blessings of practicing this kind of love towards our wives will be of great value. Notice the things that will happen when we practice the love towards our wives that God would have us to practice: 1. Our wives will be treated with honor (1 Peter 3:7), 2. Our prayers will not be hindered (1 Peter 3:7), 3. Our marriage will be strengthened, 4. Our wives will respect and love us (Ephesians 5:33), 5. We will show the Lord that we love Him (John 14:15), 6. God will be honored by our good works we do towards our wives (Matthew 5:16), 7. God will be pleased because we will be doers of His Word and not hearers only (James 1:22-25). Brethren, many will be the blessings that will come our way when we do what the Lord tells us through His Word.

It is imperative that we understand HOW to love our wives. Sometimes we think that by buying material things to them is how we show them that we love them. Friends, this is not the case. We must learn

to know what our wives want and need. Most of the time, we give them what we want, and not what they want or need. Consider the following survey that was conducted some years ago.

HUSBANDS: CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING SURVEY⁹

Wives were asked this question: If your husband would agree to give you ANYTHING you would ask of him, what ONE thing would you ask for? Here are some answers these women gave:

"I wish he would give me more time."

"I wish he would be more understanding"

"I wish he would have a stronger leadership"

"I wish he would show more affection in public"

"I wish he could just teach me like he teaches others" (a preacher's wife).

"I wish he wouldn't think he has all the answers."

"I wish that he doesn't always have to give an answer"

"I wish he would pass the salt to me first" (they had been married thirty-four years)

"I would like for him to fix the car lights"

"I wish he would give me a weekly allowance and not have to give an account for what I do with it."

"I wish he would listen to me more instead of making me feel like I'm talking to a hollow tree."

"I wish for him to like me fat and gray."

"I wish he would care more about my feelings when those feelings are not the same as his own."

⁹ The author of this survey is unknown to my knowledge.

"I wish he would pay more compliments and notice me more."

"Be more forgiving" (They had been married thirty-eight years).

"I wish he would need me more."

I don't know about you, but in this survey, I do not see women asking for dresses, cars, houses or jewelry. These women asked for something different, something you and I can give them. I would like to challenge all of us as husbands to learn more about HOW we can truly love our wives. Let us be humble enough to admit our ignorance and let us learn from our wives what they need. This is where communication comes pretty handy. Husbands who have not learned how to love their wives have contributed to the destruction of their marriages. May this not be the case with us!

HUSBANDS: CONSIDER WHAT YOU CAN DO TO SHOW YOUR WIFE YOU LOVE HER

Let me suggest to you a few things we can do to show our wives that we love them. I am not an expert at this, but as a gospel preacher, I have had the opportunity to counsel several marriages that were about to move into a divorce. Thanks to God, these marriages were willing to correct all of those things that were hurting their marriage. The following things are some of what I have suggested to them. These things can be practiced by all of us. And, by doing so, we can show our wives that we truly love them.

1. Take God's Word seriously concerning your responsibility as a husband
2. Be patient to your wife for she is not perfect
3. Pray for your wife at all times
4. Help your wife get to heaven
5. Continue to love your wife as you did when you were courting her
6. Protect your wife from in-laws
7. Be the head and the spiritual guide the home needs
8. Appreciate everything your wife does in the home
9. Be humble enough to admit your mistakes
10. Never embarrass your wife in public
11. Always be faithful to your wife
12. Do not let your wife do everything in the home
13. Provide for the needs of your wife

I can assure you that any husband that considers these practical principles and applies them to his marriage will strengthen his marriage relationship and his wife will be a great supporter of his.

A WORD OF ADVICE TO GOSPEL PREACHERS: DO NOT NEGLECT YOUR FAMILY

We as gospel preachers have a great responsibility to preach the gospel to the whole world. We also have a million things to do within the work of the church: home Bible studies, counseling, gospel meetings, lectureships, visitation, elders meetings, and activities with the young people, the weekly bulletin, teaching Bible classes, preaching on a weekly basis, evangelism, preparing Bible classes,

sermons, manuscripts for lectureships such as this one, etc. These are but a few of the things that a gospel preacher does in the kingdom. As gospel preachers we need to do all of these things diligently. Nevertheless, I would like to give a word of advice to my fellow workers in the kingdom: **Do not neglect your family.** I know of some preachers who are so busy in the work of the Lord that they have come to the point in which they have neglected their families. I know of some preachers who have gone through a divorce because they neglected their families. Another preacher lost his wife to another man because he was so busy with Bible studies and activities at the church that he did not have time for his wife. Another brother in Christ who wanted to study at the School of Preaching visited my office one day. He began to cry before me as he explained to me how his wife would not support him in his decision to become a gospel preacher. His wife said that she will not be married to a gospel preacher. He explained that his wife is the daughter of a gospel preacher and as she was growing up, she did not recall any moment in her life when her dad spent some time with her. She said that his father was out in meetings all of the time that he never had time for his family. This gospel preacher is well known among the Spanish-speaking brethren. But, sadly to say, he has lost his family because of a lack of balance in his life as a gospel preacher. One of the things that I recall as a student at the Brown Trail School of Preaching was the amount of advice that I received from instructors such as George Bailey, Avon Malone, Hardeman Nichols and others. These men always encouraged

me to not neglect my family. Every opportunity they had, they would always impress upon our minds the need to make time to be with our families, take them out on vacation, spend some quality time with them, so that when our children grow old, they will recall those great memories in which their father spent time with them. In my life as a gospel preacher, I always try to remember and practice the advice these great preachers gave me, as well as what the Bible teaches.

Husbands, let us take seriously our responsibility of taking care of our families. There is no reward in winning the whole world for Christ and in the end, lose our families. Our families need our time and love. Satan will be successful at destroying our families if we do not take seriously our duty of caring for our families. God still says in His Word, *“But if any provideth not for his own, and specially his own household, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an unbeliever”* (1 Timothy 5:8). God continues to say in His Word, *“Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them”* (Colossians 3:19). He also says, *“And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but nurture them in the chastening and admonition of the Lord”* (Ephesians 6:4). Husbands, are we listening to what God is telling us?

CONCLUSION

Being a husband entails a great responsibility. As head of the home, let us follow what God instructs us through His Word. It is God’s desire that families spend eternity in heaven. Let us work diligently to make His desire a reality. Let us, as husbands, love our wives according to the love that God teaches in

His Word. Let us also be the spiritual leaders the home desperately needs. Only by doing this, we will reap great blessings in the end. May God help us to practice all of the things we have considered in this great lesson. May God help us to be the kind of husbands God would have us to be!

QUESTIONS FROM THE LESSON

1. What two things does the word love in Ephesians 5:25 reveal from the Greek grammatical stand point?
2. According to 1 Peter 3:7, what will happen if husbands do not love their wives?
3. List five things husbands can do to show their wives they love them
4. What will be the serious consequence of not providing for our own home according to 1 Timothy 5:8?
5. How are husbands to live with their wives according to Ecclesiastes 9:9?
6. What seven things will happen if husbands show love to their wives?
7. How are husbands to love their wives according to Ephesians 5:25?
8. According to Ephesians 6:4, what one thing do fathers need to avoid?
9. How can God's Word help husbands according to 2 Timothy 3:17?
10. What do Christians need to do in order to survive the attacks of our enemy?

**RESTORATION:
CHRISTIAN OR CAMPBELITE
Willie A. Alvarenga**

**Brown Trail School of Preaching Alumni lectures
Bedford, TX**

INTRODUCTION

Christian or Campbellite? Oh, what a question this is! Brethren and friends, any honest and diligent student of the Word would never answer "Campbellite" to this question. Why? The answer is simple: The Bible nowhere authorizes this title to be used in reference to those who follow Jesus Christ.

The Bible teaches that we are to speak as the oracles of God (1 Peter 4:11), we are also commanded to speak sound doctrine (Titus 2:1), and we are also told to hold on to the pattern of sound words (2 Timothy 1:13). Therefore, using correct reasoning, we could not use the title "Campbellites" to refer to Christians because the Word of God does not provide authority for this action. We are reminded by the words of the apostle Paul,

"And whatever you do in word or deed,
do all in the name of the Lord Jesus,
giving thanks to God the Father through
Him" (Colossians 3:17, NKJV).

If we want to be true to the authority of the

Scriptures, we must continue to reject any artificial titles which give men the glory and not our Lord Jesus Christ. The title "Campbellite" denotes a follower of Thomas or Alexander Campbell, men who during the late 1800s called people back to the pure Christianity of the Bible. These men had great intentions and wanted to help people live a life free of man-made religions. Their plea was to call people back to the Bible. However, just because they did this, does not mean that we are their disciples, and be called "Campbellites". Sadly to say, many today are calling members of the church of Christ "Campbellites". Notice the following statements from people who have no respect whatsoever for the authority of the Scriptures.

**THE ACCUSATION:
SOME PEOPLE REFER TO MEMBERS OF THE
CHURCH OF CHRIST AS "CAMPBELLITES"**

The following information was taken from Brother Curtis Cates' lecture back in 2006 at the Spiritual Sword Lectures:

The attempt to belittle the restoration plea is not just recent. C.R. Nichol fifty years ago wrote of a sectarian preacher who, in a debate with brother E.A. Elam (which debate brother Nichol heard at eleven years of age), called brother Elam and his brethren "Campbellites." Mr. Ogle charged,

These people whom Mr. Elam represents, with himself, make great claims to being the church Christ established, whereas the facts are that as a church they are some eighteen hundred years too young to be that church. Mr. Alexander Campbell is the ecclesiastical father of the church of which they are members, and it still has on its swaddling clothes. They have as their slogan the words of a Mr. Thomas Campbell, the father of their religious sect (Nichol, 768-769).¹⁰

Notice the following information from a Baptist preacher:

In his 101 questions for Campbellites, pastor **A.A. Davis** of the First Baptist Church of Nowata, OK., asked the question: What are Campbellites? His answer was: These are known as "The Church of Christ," or "The Disciples of Christ," which believe that Water Baptism is essential to salvation in Jesus Christ.¹¹

A Baptist publication called *Calvary Contender* (June 15, 1999) chastised the magazine *Christianity Today* for

¹⁰ Cates, A. Curtis, "The Church of Christ Did Not Begin with the Restoration Movement" *Spiritual Sword Lectures* October 15-19, 2006 (Sain Publications: Pulaski, TN), p. 107

¹¹ <http://www.biblebelievers.com/Davis1.html>

accepting an ad from Harding University of Searcy, AR. They argued that Harding is a “Campbellite” church of Christ school. They went on to say that the church of Christ is considered a cult in some regards because it allegedly teaches a “works salvation”.¹²

Notice what the Wikipedia Encyclopedia has to say concerning the title “Campbellite”:

Campbellite refers to any of the religious groups historically descended from the [Restoration Movement](#), a religious reform movement in the early 19th century in the [United States](#). The major groups are: The churches of Christ, the Christian church (Disciples of Christ), the Independent Christian churches/churches of Christ, the churches of Christ non-institutional.¹³

Brother Wayne Jackson, in his article entitled, “Alexander Campbell and Christ’s church” wrote the following,

Robert Owen, the English “Free-thinker” who came to America to establish a movement of “social reform,” was, according to A.B. Barret, the first man to employ the epithet, “Campbellite” (*The Shattered Chain*, 32).

¹² <http://www.christiancourier.com/articles/822-alexander-campbell-and-christs-church>

¹³ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Campbellite>

Those who so enjoy utilizing this misnomer are indebted to infidelity for it.¹⁴

Not many years ago, students from the Brown Trail School of Preaching, were involved in a door-knocking campaign. As they were visiting the community where they were evangelizing, someone came to the door and accused them of being Campbellites.

Also, a graduate from the Brown Trail School of Preaching had a discussion with a preacher about the title "Campbellite". This preacher argued that we need to be called "Campbellites" due to the fact that Alexander Campbell had so much influence upon the churches of Christ and was the one who started the church. Brethren, this is the kind of mentality that prevails in the minds of many people, even preachers of today. We need to go back to the Bible and call things by Bible names. We need to go back to the Bible and get our facts straight.

The list continues on and on about how some people believe that we, members of the body of Christ, are called "Campbellites" and not Christians only. One thing that I would like to make clear is the fact that just because some publication, magazine, encyclopedia or man says that we are "Campbellites" does not make it so. Just because I say that a cow has five legs does not make it so. Anyone who accuses

¹⁴ <http://www.christiancourier.com/articles/822-alexander-campbell-and-christs-church>

members of the body of Christ of being “Campbellites” need to go back to the Bible and learn what God calls those who follow Christ.

WHY DO PEOPLE REFER TO US AS “CAMPBELLITES”?

Let me share with you some reasons why I believe people call us by the name of “Campbellites”

1. They have no respect for the authority of the Scriptures (Colossians 3:17; 2 Timothy 1:13; 1 Peter 4:11).
2. They have decided to accept what others say about this matter and not what the Bible teaches (Jeremiah 6:16).
3. Some of our members are quoting more what Alexander Campbell said than what the Bible teaches (1 Peter 4:11; Titus 2:1).
4. Some people just cannot accept that we are Christians only. They refuse to accept the evidence that is before them.
5. Some people just want to ridicule members of the body of Christ (Acts 2:13).
6. Others simply do not have knowledge of what the Scriptures teach about who a Christian is.

I am sure we can list more reasons why some people call us “Campbellites”; nevertheless, I believe these reflect what people have in their minds. It is my prayer that they will consider the evidence that is found within the pages of the New Testament.

In the rest of this lesson I would like to offer several reasons why we are not “Campbellites” but Christians only. I hope that this information would clarify any doubts that people may have in their minds. One thing I can tell you for sure is that if a person is honest to the evidence, such person will accept it; but, if they are not, then, they will refuse to reason correctly about the evidence under consideration.

**WE ARE CHRISTIANS:
REASONS WHY WE ARE CHRISTIANS AND
NOT “CAMPBELLITES”**

It is my prayer that all of those who will read this information will accept it with an open heart. I trust that you will have an honest attitude concerning the evidence that is about to be presented. I ask that you please consider this information with an open Bible.

We are Christians not “Campbellites” because we follow Jesus Christ and not Alexander or Thomas Campbell

Yes friends, we are followers of Jesus Christ and not Alexander or Thomas Campbell. The name “Christian” comes from the Greek word *CRISTIANOS*. This word denotes one who follows Christ, not Alexander or Thomas Campbell. Just because Alexander or Thomas Campbell taught some things that we believe are right does not mean that we are their disciples. Everything we believe and teach, we do, not because Alexander Campbell taught it, but because God said it in His Word. Everything that

Alexander Campbell taught from the Bible was there even before he was born.

Every faithful Christian will follow the doctrine of Christ and the apostles, and not the doctrines of men, which are condemned in the Scriptures (Matthew 15:7-9; 2 John 9-11). Every faithful member of the body of Christ will follow His teaching and not the human creeds which abound in our days.

We follow Jesus Christ and not Alexander Campbell because He is the only way to salvation (Acts 4:12; John 10:9; 14:6). The apostle Peter made it very clear that we are to follow Christ because He is the only one that can save us. Neither Alexander Campbell nor other man can give us the salvation that we need.

We are Christians not “Campbellites” because this is what the Bible calls us

When one studies the New Testament, especially the book of Acts, one will realize that the Bible describes those who follow Christ as Christians, and not “Campbellites”. The name “Christian” is found 3 times in the New Testament. Notice the following passages of Scripture:

“And when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. So it was that for a whole year they assembled with the church and taught a great many

people. **And the disciples were first called Christians** in Antioch” (Acts 11:26, emp. added)

Notice the second passage that tells us how the followers of Christ were called,

“Then Agrippa said to Paul, ‘You almost persuade me **to become a Christian**’” (Acts 26:28, emp. added)

The third passage to be considered was written by the apostle Peter and shows how the followers of Christ are described:

“Yet if anyone suffers **as a Christian**, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter” (1 Peter 4:16, emp. added)

As we can see, the Bible uses the name Christian to describe the followers of Christ. The Bible nowhere uses the names Baptist, Campbellites, Lutherans or any other man-made names that we hear today. We are called Christians because this is what God says in His Word. It is our desire indeed to always follow what the Bible teaches, and not what men, in their false doctrines, teach.

We are Christians not “Campbellites” because Jesus Christ established the church of Christ, and not Alexander or Thomas Campbell

We are members of the church of Christ, that is, the body of Christ because Jesus Christ established the one true church about 2,000 years ago (Matthew 16:18). This divine institution was not established by Alexander or Thomas Campbell but Christ. Just because someone says that Alexander Campbell established the church of Christ does not make it right. These men were not in existence when the one true church was established on Pentecost day (Acts 2). Therefore, how can we be “Campbellites” if we are members of the body of Christ of which we read in the pages of the New Testament? It simply cannot be the case that we are “Campbellites”. If they were the founders of the one true church, then we would have the right to be called “Campbellites” and not Christians. But, since this is not the case, then we are forced to come to the conclusion that we are Christians, followers and disciples of Jesus Christ.

‘We are Christians not “Campbellites” because we have been baptized into Christ and not into Alexander or Thomas Campbell

In the first chapter of first Corinthians we read about the division that was prevailing in the church of Corinth. These Christians were saying that they were followers of Cephas, Paul, and Apollos. The apostle Paul clarifies to them the following points: 1. Christ was not divided, 2. Paul was not crucified for them, 3. they were not baptized into the name of Paul. Notice the last point. These Christians were not baptized into the name of Paul, but of Christ. The Bible teaches that when you obey the gospel, you are added or

baptized into the body of Christ (Acts 2:47; Galatians 3:27; I Corinthians 12:13). The Bible nowhere teaches that those who obey the gospel are added or baptized to a man, but to Christ's body. The Bible nowhere speaks about Alexander or Thomas Campbell, but it does speak about Jesus Christ. Notice that Paul, Cephas, and Apollos were in existence when Paul wrote first Corinthians; however, the apostle Paul nowhere teaches that we are authorized to argue that we are added to their bodies, but the body of Christ. Therefore, we are Christians, not "Campbellites" because we have been added to the body of Christ through obedience to His gospel.

Sadly to say, many religious people of our day have not understood what Paul taught in first Corinthians chapter one. They use names such as "Baptist", "Lutherans", and even "Campbellites". These titles are not authorized in the pages of the New Testament, our pattern to follow. As members of the body of Christ, we must reject any man-made doctrines and titles that go contrary to what the Bible teaches.

CONCLUSION

As I close this lesson, it is my prayer that you will consider this information with an honest heart. May we accept what the Bible teaches in all respects and not what man says. The Bible is clear about who we are. We are Christians only, members of the one true church we read about in the pages of the New Testament. May we never forget this great truth! As

faithful gospel preachers, let us proclaim the Word of God without any addition or subtraction. To God be the glory!

Did Alexander Campbell Establish the Church of Christ?

by Bill J. Humble
via The Preceptor, Vol. 1, No. 8, June 1952.

A Preceptor reader from Texas has submitted a list of questions which request a statement of what Alexander Campbell actually did. Since members of the church are often asked such questions as "The church of Christ began with Alexander Campbell, didn't it?" and "Wasn't Campbell the founder of your denomination?", it is of paramount importance that every member of the church understand exactly what Campbell did and what he did not do. The questions asked were:

Was Campbell a Baptist?

At one period in Campbell's career he was affiliated with the Baptist denomination and even earlier he was a Presbyterian. After he and his father, Thomas Campbell, had both renounced the Presbyterian church, they began to study the question of baptism and were persuaded by their own investigations that immersion alone constituted Scriptural baptism. After they and several others had been immersed by Elder Luce of the Baptist Church (June 12, 1812), the Baptists of western Pennsylvania were jubilant at the "conversion" of these former

Presbyterians and invited the Brush Run church, which the Campbells had organized, to join the Redstone Baptist Association.

After lengthy discussions the Campbells affiliated with the Redstone Association but only with a written understanding that they would be allowed to teach whatever they "learned from the Holy Scriptures, regardless of any human creed." Alexander Campbell remained a nominal Baptist for seventeen years (1813 - 1830), during which an ever increasing number of Baptists realized that he was "among them," but not "of them." Within three years following the admission of the Brush Run church to the Redstone Association, Campbell delivered an address before the annual meeting of that association, the famous "Sermon on the Law," in which he expressed sentiments which were hardly compatible with orthodox Baptist theology. When he debated Maccalla in 1823, Campbell maintained that baptism was essential to salvation: and though Campbell was supposedly defending the Baptist cause, baptism for the remission of sins was unacceptable and heretical to Baptists as to Presbyterians.

During Campbell's seventeen years as a nominal Baptist his prestige and influence increased enormously in spite of his heterodox views. The process of separation was slow and often painful; but by 1830 the "Christians" or "Disciples" had been ousted from the Baptist denomination, and the Baptists counted their losses in the tens of thousands. Campbell was no longer a Baptist, even in name.

Did Alexander Campbell Establish the Church Of Christ?

The answer to this question is a most emphatic NO! Before one can be said to be the founder of any institution, it is essential that the institution in question never have existed prior to the period of its alleged founder. The church of Christ did exist long before the time of Alexander Campbell. Its establishment occurred in Jerusalem on that memorable Pentecost morning; its early history forms the theme of the Book of Acts; its needs for instruction were satisfied by the Epistles of the New Testament.

Campbell's enemies utilized every means at their command to criticize, ridicule, and undermine, his work. One of their favorite tactics was to accuse Campbell of being the founder of a new religious denomination; for they believed that if he could be branded a factionist, the founder of a new sect, his plea for religious unity would appear absurd to the religious community.

As often as Campbell encountered this charge that he had founded a new denomination, he carefully pointed to the true character of his work and disclaimed all pretenses at being the founder of a new sect. For example, when Campbell visited New Orleans, the Commercial Bulletin announced his visit to the city and referred to him as the "founder" of a religious denomination. Campbell immediately addressed a letter to the editors of the paper; and after thanking them for the complementary notice of his visit, he continued:

"You have done me, gentlemen, too much honor in saying that I am the 'founder' of the denomination, quite numerous and respectable in many portions of the West, technically known as 'Christians,' but more commonly as 'Campbellites.'

"I have always repudiated all human heads and human names for the people of the Lord, and shall feel very thankful if you will correct the erroneous impression which your article may have made in thus representing me as the founder of a religious denomination." (Richardson, *Memoirs of Campbell*, II, 441)

Neither the facts of history nor the statement of Campbell himself give any support to the charge that he founded a new denomination. It follows, therefore, that when someone asks a Christian, "Didn't Alexander Campbell found your denomination?" he reveals either an ignorance of the basic facts involved or a malicious design. If it be a case of insufficient information, he can be persuaded that the church of Christ is not a denomination and that Campbell was not its founder. If the question proceeds from malicious intent, the questioner illustrates again the power of religious prejudice!

Did Alexander Campbell Restore the Original Church of Christ?

It would be incorrect to imply that Campbell alone

succeeded in restoring the primitive church of Christ, but it is accurate to state that Campbell was one leader in a great movement whose goal was the restoration of the New Testament church. It will be observed that two things are implied when one uses the term "restoration."

1. It is implied that the church of Christ did not originate with Campbell or even during the period of his life; rather it originated and flourished before Alexander Campbell lived.
2. Campbell believed in returning to the original standard, for this is the meaning of the term "restore." When one restores something which has existed earlier, he does not create or originate; he attempts to reproduce an earlier work.

"A restoration of the ancient order of things, it appears, is all that is contemplated by the wise disciples of the Lord; as it is agreed that this is all that is wanting to the perfection, happiness and glory of the Christian community ... Now, in attempting to accomplish this, it must be observed, that it belongs to every individual and to every congregation of individuals to discard from their faith and their practice everything that is not found written in the New Testament of the Lord and Savior, and to believe and practice whatever is there enjoined. This done, and everything is done which ought to be done" (Christian Baptist, March 7, 1825).

Is Alexander Campbell The Founder Of The Church of Christ?

Taken from: Lay Lake Church of Christ Bulletin,
Volume 5, Number 10, David A. Bass

From time to time members of the church of Christ are inaccurately referred to as "Campbellites." The implication is that the church of Christ was founded (started) by Alexander Campbell rather than being the Church of which we read of in the N. T. Most who use it today are only "parroting" what they have heard others say. Because of this misconception, I think it good to consider the question, "Did Alexander Campbell found the church of Christ?" It can be clearly & conclusively shown from history & from Scripture that Alexander Campbell was not the founder of the church of Christ.

Secular history shows that efforts to restore undenominational Christianity had begun long before Alexander Campbell started his work. In the beginning of the 19th century there arose a group of men desiring to return to the apostolic order of things. These men saw what early 'reformers' (Martin Luther, John Calvin, etc.) did not see – the importance of 'restoring' things as they were in the first century rather than 'reforming' the apostate Catholic Church. These men expressed great dissatisfaction with protestant denominationalism with its various creeds, names, doctrines & practices. They held that man's eternal salvation depended upon his full acceptance of things as they were in New Testament times rather than a choice between Catholicism & Protestantism.

It is very important to realize that several of these men lived before Alexander Campbell by several years: For example: James O'Kelley (Methodist) who came to America 14 years before Alexander Campbell. In 1794 James O'Kelley & a group of his followers decided to lay aside all human creeds & return to the Bible (Alexander Campbell would have been 6 years old at that time, still living in Scotland). Barton W. Stone (Presbyterian) was in America long before the arrival of Campbell (Stone was preaching the restoration gospel 5 years before Alexander Campbell arrived in the states). Alexander's own father, Thomas Campbell (Presbyterian), was in America two years before his son preaching many of the Restoration principles. These men (& others that could be mentioned) were in America working to restore primitive Christianity long before Mr. Campbell began his work.

It can be proven historically that churches of Christ existed long before Alexander Campbell time. If we can show that the church of Christ existed prior to beginning of Mr. Campbell's time then we have proven that he did not start it. Notice some examples: The Rock Springs church (near Celina, TN) was started in 1804 – 5 years before Alexander Campbell came to America. In my files I have the picture of a tombstone in the Cane Ridge cemetery, near Paris, Kentucky. It reads: "William Rogers, Born in Campbell Co, VA., July 7, 1784, moved with his father to Cane Ridge Bourbon Co. Apr. 1798, United with the church of Christ at Cane Ridge in 1807, Died Feb. 15, 1862 in the 78th year of his age." I

have another picture in my files of a state historical marker in Revere, Massachusetts, (suburb of Boston). It reads: "Church of Christ — 1710 Meetinghouse of the church of Christ in Rumney Marsh, erected in 1710. Thomas Cheever, the first settled minister, died December 27, 1749, aged 91 years."

This was 78 years before Alexander Campbell was even born! But we can go back even further & find congregations of the Lord's church in England in the 17th century. A Dr. Robinson (Overdale College, Birmingham, England) found an old record book dating 1669, containing the minutes of church business meetings for the Lord's church meeting in the Furness Distict of Lancashire (North West England). From these minutes we learn that they called themselves church of Christ, practiced baptism by immersion, took the Lord's Supper every Sunday, & had elders & deacons. At least 8 different congregations are mentioned in these minutes. So here we have a detailed record of the church of Christ existing over 100 years before the birth of Alexander Campbell. Very clearly, history does not substantiate the charge that Alexander Campbell started the church of Christ.

THE LORD'S CONTROVERSY WITH HIS PEOPLE

Willie A. Alvarenga

**Fort Worth Lectures
Brown Trail church of Christ
Bedford, TX**

INTRODUCTION

I am so blessed to have the opportunity to be part of this fine lectureship. I commend the elders for allowing this lectureship to continue for so many years, and also Brother Maxie Boren for the great work he puts into directing this great work. We have been so blessed throughout the years with these powerful lectureships. I am very indebted to Brown Trail church of Christ and the school of preaching for the great opportunity that I had to come here and study God's word to become a gospel preacher. May the blessings of God be upon all the faithful that labor in His Kingdom. I also want to say thank you to all of the speakers that will instruct us throughout this week for the great work they have done in preparing their manuscripts. May we learn as much as we can from these faithful men of God.

A great topic has been assigned to me from the Minor Prophets. These Minor Prophets have so much to teach God's people today. Paul was absolutely right when he said that the things that were written in

the Old Testament Scriptures were written for our learning (Rom. 15:4). There is so much we can learn from the Old Testament writings. It is my prayer that all of us will take the time to study these wonderful Scriptures, so that we may learn God's will for us, and how He expects us to obey Him.

My topic for today is called, "The Lord's controversy with His people". Yes, the Lord has a controversy with His people as we shall see later in this lesson. This has been the case for many centuries. Let me start this lesson by providing helpful information about the book of Hosea.

THE AUTHOR

Hosea is the author of this Minor Prophet Book. It is known as a Minor Prophet not because it is less important, but because of its content is not as extended as the Major Prophets are (e.g. Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, etc.). We don't have much information about the life of Hosea, but only what is available within the book. His father's name was Beeri (1:1), and of him we know very little. Hosea's name means "salvation". Names like Joshua and Jesus are derived from this same word. As far as his early life is concerned, we have no information available to us. It is believed that his home town was in Samaria. Some have suggested that Hosea was a priest because of his high emphasis towards the duties and responsibilities of the priesthood. Hosea and Jeremiah are usually known as "the weeping prophets." But, this particular prophet has been

called “the prophet of divine love.”

THE DATE

As far as we know, Hosea prophesied during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah (1:1). The first chapter also tells us that Jeroboam II was reigning. This period of Bible history was about 786-726 B.C. This prophet was contemporary with Amos, who prophesied to Judah, while Hosea to the Northern Kingdom of Israel (Amos 1:1). In order to get a pretty good idea of the times in which Hosea prophesied, it is recommended to read I Kings 14 through 17, and also II Chronicles 26 through 29. These chapters can help us understand the period of Bible history that took place during the prophecies of Hosea.

A Brief Outline of the Bookⁱ

The following is an outline of the book of Hosea:

- I. Hosea and Gomer; Jehovah and Israel (chapters 1-3).**
 - A. Hosea and Gomer (1:2-9; 3:1-3).
 - B. Jehovah and Israel (1:10-2:23; 3:4-5).
- II. The Prophetic Discourses (chapters 4-14).**
 - A. The nation’s guilt (chapter 4)
 - B. Universal corruption and the inevitable judgment (chapters 5-8).

- C. Exile and destruction; punishment for religious and moral apostasy (chapters 9-11).
- D. Jehovah's love versus Israel's ingratitude and faithlessness (chapters 11-13).
- E. The restoration of the divine favor. Glorious promise. (In the end Israel cries unto Jehovah, and He hears their cry and responds by an outpouring of rich blessings upon them.) (Chapter 14.)

HOSEA'S MARRIAGE

The prophet Hosea was directed by the Lord to marry a woman of harlotry. Many things have been suggested concerning this command by the Lord to Hosea. Notice what Homer Hailey said concerning this matter:

Hosea was directed to marry "a woman of whoredom"; that is, a daughter of the age, one brought up under the influence of idolatry and in whose character would have been planted the seeds of immorality. She was not unchaste at the time of the marriage but was a maiden of such background that in later conduct the fruit of idolatry was fully borne.ⁱⁱ

Others have suggested this narrative to be a parable. As far as we know, there is no evidence that this is the case. It is believe by many that this

narrative was a factual one. Some believe that this command has a moral problem with God having Hosea marry a “wife of harlotry.” Something that needs to be noticed here is the fact that the text says “wife of harlotry” and not a “harlot”, or “a whore”. Brother Heath Stapleton has suggested that the phrase “wife of harlotry” may be a reference to a woman living in a paganistic society of that day.ⁱⁱⁱ One thing that I would like to stress is the fact that the Lord knows exactly what His intentions are when He commands us to do something. He will never go against His moral standards. He will never ask us to do something that will go against His own will. So, with this in mind, it is my belief that Gomer was not a prostitute at the time of her marriage to Hosea, but that she later, after marriage, became unfaithful to her husband, just like Israel became unfaithful to God. Let us remember that the marriage of Hosea and Gomer parallels the marriage relationship of God to Israel, wherein Israel became unfaithful to God Jehovah. One of the great lessons we can learn from Hosea is how faithful and obedient he was to the command of the Lord. Even though this command seemed to be so difficult, Hosea complied with the command from the Lord. This is the kind of obedience God expects from all of us.

THE PEOPLE IN HOSEA’S TIME

Throughout the Old Testament Scriptures we observe how the people of God became unfaithful on countless occasions. Time after time people decided to forsake the Lord to follow other gods but the One

True God. We also learn how God's mercy and kindness was available to His people so they could return to Him and be saved from harm. God foretells the restoration of Israel in this same book (1:10-11; 11-14). God called them back so He could show His mercy to them (2:14-23). God's mercy was available to them; but, not only this, also His judgment and punishment were ready to be served to those who decided to forsake Him. This Minor Prophet Book clearly shows the character of the people during the time of Hosea. As far as the religious background of the book is concerned, notice what Homer Hailey commented:

By this time the excess in religion and government had become more marked than in the time of Amos. Hose summed up the indictments against Israel in the one word "whoredom." Israel had done worse than adultery; as a harlot she had prostituted herself before the baalim of the land for hire (2:12-13). The people were without knowledge (4:6; 5:4), and as a result they were ignorant of God and His laws (8:12). Nominally they paid homage to Jehovah, but in reality they honored the baalim. This sin brought Hosea's most severe rebukes (4:11-13; 8:4; 9:10; 10:1-3; 13:1, 2). The people were victims of two systems of false religion: the calf worship introduced by Jeroboam I, and Baal worship stressed by Ahab and Jezebel. Each was completely foreign to

the revealed religion of the Lord Jehovah. Each was the fruit of apostasy.^{iv}

Also, notice what Brother Andrew Connally said about this period of history:

One word sums up the teaching of Hosea—'whoredom.' Sixteen times the word is found in this book. Hosea lived in the very darkest days of Israel's history. Her times were turbulent; her history had become black with sin. From the day of Jeroboam, the king of Israel, 'who taught Israel to sin,' the nation went into a decline and finally an eclipse. Idolatry proliferated. Like an adulterous woman wedded to her lovers, so Israel turned to her lovers and forgot the bridegroom of her youth.^v

We could say that this was a dark period in the history of Israel. They had become so entangled with sin that their only destiny was destruction, if repentance did not take place. They were so entangled with idolatry that returning to their God was almost impossible (5:4; Jer. 6:16). May God help us to pay close attention to this matter so that we do not become like Israel in this respect, otherwise, eternal punishment will await those who disobey.

HOSEA'S MISSION

Hosea's mission was to bring the people back to God. It was the purpose of this prophet to

encourage each and every one of the people to forsake the evil ways so they could serve the One and True God. The word “return” is found 15 times throughout the book. This word denotes God’s willingness to forgive them, but they rejected His overtures. He wanted the people to know about coming judgment if they refused to repent and turn from their evil ways (Hosea 9:7; cf. Lk. 13:3, 5). Hosea wanted to convey to the people that the Lord was a merciful God, and that He was willing to receive them back if they repented and obeyed His will. This is the same message for us today. God is basically telling the whole world that if they repent from their evil ways, He will save them (II Pet. 3:9; Ezek. 33:11; I Tim. 2:4). God’s mercy and loving kindness is available to those who are willing to submit to His will. Are we willing to submit to God’s Will?

OVERVIEW OF THE FIRST FIVE CHAPTERS

CHAPTER ONE: ISRAEL HAS BECOME UNFAITHFUL

In this chapter we learn how God directed Hosea to marry a wife of harlotry (v. 1), and also to take children of harlotry. The latter part of this verse may indicate that the last two children of Gomer were not Hosea’s children. Verse 3 says that Gomer bore Hosea a child. This phrase is not found in the other references of the children of Gomer. Based on this, some have come to the conclusion that the last two children are not Hosea’s children, but children of harlotry, that is, children that Gomer bore from someone else at the time she was being unfaithful to

her husband.

In this chapter we also learn about the names of the children of Gomer. These names denote prophetic utterance from Jehovah to Israel. One of them was called Jezreel, which means "God scatters", or "God sows". The basic meaning of this is that God will bring judgment upon the house of Jehu, king of Israel. The second child is a daughter whose name was "Lo-Ruhamah" which means "No mercy". Her name describes the attitude of God towards Israel. He will not have mercy upon the house of Israel for their continuous sin, and unfaithfulness towards Him. The other child was a son, whose name was "Lo-Ammi" which means "Not my people". This indicates God's attitude towards Israel. They were no longer God's people. This was the case because of their unfaithfulness. As long as His people remain in sin, God will not claim them as His own. Are we God's people? Sometimes I wonder what name God is using to describe each of us. When God is not with us, serious consequences will come. His protection will not be with us. His blessings are promised only to those who submit to His will (Ps. 34:19; Heb. 13:5; II Pet. 2:9; Jn. 16:33). Are we being faithful to our Creator?

CHAPTER TWO: COME BACK OR I WILL PUNISH YOU

In this chapter we learn about how God brings a charge against Israel and how they were commanded to put away their harlotries, that is, their practices of idolatry. God commanded them to

become faithful to Him. Not doing this will bring serious consequences. The Lord will not have mercy upon Israel if they don't forsake their evil ways. Punishment for their idolatry was certain (2:13). But, at the same time, God let's them know that if they put away their gods, He will once again have mercy upon Israel, and will bless them. This message is for us today. We need to put away sinful practices so God's judgment may not be upon us. Is God saying the same thing about us today? What does He think about America?

CHAPTER THREE: INSTRUCTION TO BE FAITHFUL

In this chapter we learn how Hosea is commanded to go once again and take a woman who is loved by a lover and is committing adultery (3:1). Some have suggested that this is a different woman; nevertheless, context does not support this conclusion. It is believed by many that this woman is reference to Gomer, who once again, had become unfaithful to Hosea. Israel is being described once again. They've continued to become unfaithful to God. Israel's honor, glory and respect were directed to other gods instead of the One and True God. Today, people are doing the same thing. Their honor, respect, time, faithfulness and devotion are for other things, instead of God. This is sad brethren!

In this chapter Hosea buys Gomer back, which becomes a type of Christ redeeming the church from sin (1 Corinthians 6:19-20). Gomer is instructed to not have another man, but your real husband. This is the

same instruction that Israel receives. They are not to have other gods before the One and True God. May we always remain faithful to God, and not be guilty of adultery (Jas. 4:4).

CHAPTER FOUR: THE LORD'S CONTROVERSY WITH HIS PEOPLE

In this chapter we learn how God has a charge, a controversy with His people. They had become so entangled with sin that they had no truth, mercy, knowledge of God in the land. This attitude had taken them so far from faithfulness that "righteousness stands at a distance" (Is. 59:14). This chapter pretty much describes the condition of the people in Hosea's time. This chapter also describes the condition of America and the whole world today— all given to sin! One passage that describes their condition is 4:18 "Their drink is rebellion, they commit harlotry continually. Her rulers dearly love dishonor." Notice the word "continually". The intentions of their hearts were continually towards evil practices (Gen. 6:5; Hos. 3:8). I believe that this is the very case today. People have no respect whatsoever for our Heavenly Father.

CHAPTER FIVE: IMPENDING JUDGEMENT IS CERTAIN

This chapter continues to show how the people of God had departed from the way of life, to the way of death. Hosea tells us that this people "do not direct their deeds toward turning to their God, for the

spirit of harlotry is in their midst, and they do not know the Lord" (5:4). God tells them that they will seek Him but will not find Him (5:6). Impending judgment was certain for the priests, the house of Israel, the house of the kings and also for all those who disobey the Lord. Friends, impending judgment will come some day to all those who choose to follow the world instead of God.

THE LORD'S CONTROVERSY WITH HIS PEOPLE

We have taken a brief look into the introduction of the book, and a brief overview of the first five chapters of Hosea. Now, let us bring our attention to the first verses of chapter four. This chapter describes the Lord's controversy with His people Israel, and also Judah (12:2). Many times God had a controversy with His people because of their sins (Is. 3:13; Jer. 2:9; 25:31). In this chapter, God will enumerate some of the sins of which Israel was guilty, and for which impending judgment and punishment would come. As we consider this charge, let us keep in mind that the Lord may have the same controversy with His people today, and not only with His people but with the whole world.

THE CHARGE DESCRIBED

Hosea, speaking with authority, which the phrase "Hear the word of the Lord" conveys, exhorts the people of Israel to listen to the charge that the Lord Jehovah has against Israel. They are to pay close attention to what the Lord says for the land had been

filled with sin against the Holy One of Israel (Jer. 51:5). The charge from the Lord against Israel describes the violation of five of the Ten Commandments that they had received from the Lord (Ex. 20). It is interesting to note that God gives them an opportunity to know what their sins are before He brings punishment upon each one of them. He wants them to have an opportunity to forsake the evil ways and turn to Him. Now, let us notice the charges that the Lord brings against Israel.

FIRST CHARGE: THERE WAS NO TRUTH

The word “truth” comes from a Hebrew word which denotes faithfulness, right, sure, verity. This word appears 127 times in the Old Testament. This word also denotes to “remain in one place”. This is what Israel needed to do— to remain faithful to God in one place, instead of going about worshiping other gods. God says there is no truth and faithfulness in the land. There was no honesty with the people of Israel. Everyone dealt treacherously with one another. This was the case with the kings and the priests of the land who lacked truth in their actions. The priests taught the people of Israel with falsehood so that they would sin against God. Even the people requested that false teaching be taught to them, instead of the truth of God (Is. 30:8-11).

SECOND CHARGE: THERE WAS NO MERCY

The word “mercy” comes from a Hebrew word which means loving-kindness; steadfast love; grace;

mercy; faithfulness; goodness; devotion. This word appears 240 times in the Old Testament writings. Mercy had vanished away from the daily living of Israel's nation. There was no devotion to the will of God in their hearts. There was no mercy towards one another. The Lord demands that His people practice mercy. Notice what Micah said:

He has shown you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humble with your God? (Mic. 6:8).

They had no mercy for each other. They had come to the point in which "They all lie in wait for blood and every man hunted his brother with a net" (Mic. 7:2). This was a terrible scene that the Lord was contemplating.

THIRD CHARGE: THERE WAS NO KNOWLEDGE OF GOD

This was a terrible thing. Lack of knowledge will lead people to sin against God, and also to destruction (4:6; Ps. 119:9-11). The people of Israel were so blessed with having the knowledge of God available to them; nevertheless, they had willfully despised the knowledge of God. They were more interested in learning about other gods, than the Creator of heaven and earth (Gen. 1:1). Their heart was dedicated to learning the ways of the pagan, instead of the ways of the Lord. They had no concern about what God desired from them! The people of Israel had become "wise at doing evil, but

to do good they have no knowledge" (Jer. 4:22). Their intention was to abide in foolishness, instead of righteousness (Jer. 4:22).

FOURTH CHARGE: THERE WAS SWEARING AND LYING

As we can see, there was no truth in these people. Swearing was a common practice back in those days as it is today. People had come to the point in which they had no shame for this practice. Notice what Isaiah said,

...who swear by the name of the Lord,
and make mention of the God of Israel,
but not in truth or in righteousness" (Is.
48:1).

It has been suggested that people were swearing to justify lying and cheating. The word "swearing" could also be translated "cursing". People were so given to this practice that the prophet says that only these sins prevail among that society. As far as lying is concerned, they were practicing sins that were abomination to the Lord (Prov. 12:22).

FIFTH CHARGE: THERE WAS KILLING

Israel had come to the point in which killing was a common practice for them. This period of Bible history describes how Israel had six kings and four of them were murdered while in office (I Kings 14-18). They were violating the commandments of God by doing so. They had no respect for the life of their fellowmen (Lev. 19:18). The prophet Hosea describes

this as “with bloodshed upon bloodshed” (4:2). All they had in their mind was to take peoples lives away from them. What a sad picture this is!

SIXTH CHARGE: THERE WAS STEALING

God condemns stealing, but since they had no respect for the Law of God (Is. 30:9), this practice became a common practice among the people. They were taking things that did not belong to them. By killing people they were taking away their opportunity to live.

SEVENTH CHARGE: THERE WAS THE COMMITTING OF ADULTERY.

The practice of adultery was not only spiritual but also physical. They had directed their love towards other gods, instead of Jehovah. The practice of idolatry was considered spiritual adultery under the Old Covenant. The Lord’s brother, James, wrote the following,

Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God (Jas. 4:4).

The people of Israel had become friends with the idols, and by doing so, they had become the enemies of God. Now, there was not only spiritual adultery but also physical adultery. Notice what the prophet Jeremiah said “They were like well-fed lusty stallions; every one neighed after his neighbor’s wife” (Jer. 5:8;

13:27; cf. Ex. 20:14).

An excellent commentary to this kind of life is found in Isaiah 59:2-8. Please take the time to read this passage of Scriptures.

These and other charges the Lord had against Israel and Judah. The phrase "They break all restraint" could include many other sins that were being practice by this sinful people. The rest of this chapter describes the Lord's impending judgment to come against this rebellious people. God will not look the other way, but will punish any sinful behavior from His people.

WHAT ABOUT THE CHURCH AND AMERICA?

What about the church and America? Are we guilty of the same sins that the people of Israel and Judah were guilty of? Are we being faithful to God? Does God have a controversy against His people and against America? Well, I believe we have many Christians who are living their Christian lives like the people of Israel. Many are guilty of lack of knowledge, no truth, no mercy, lying, killing, stealing, committing adultery, and violating the Laws of God. As far as America is concerned, we may be a prosperous nation; nevertheless, there is no knowledge of God in the land. People are not interested in knowing about God. As far as lying and cheating is concerned, just notice how many people cheat in their income taxes, welfare, etc. As far as killing is concerned, just pay attention at the number of babies that have been murdered because the laws

of the land authorize abortion. As far as adultery is concerned, divorces are rampant in our nation. There is no respect for the laws of God concerning marriage.

GOD'S PUNISHMENT WILL COME

Yes, God's punishment will come if erring Christians and the whole world do not repent from their evil practices. The Bible speaks about the coming judgment (Heb. 9:27; II Cor. 5:10). The Righteous Judge will punish every sinful practice that is taking place in this world. May God help us to learn from the mistakes of the past, and be diligent to present ourselves approved unto God (II Tim. 2:15). God deserves our faithfulness. Therefore, brethren and friends let us respect, honor and obey the Creator of heaven and earth. Let us remember that He wants us to spend eternity with Him. May we never forget his judgment and his loving-kindness!

A BRIEF STUDY ON CONTENTMENT

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INTRODUCTION

What a great opportunity we have to assemble at this location to dedicate our precious time to the study of God's Word! Personally, it is a great joy for me to be able to stand before you to preach a portion of God's Word. As a Christian, I have a great responsibility to be thankful to you for being here (cf. 1 Thess 5:18). I, also, want to thank the elders of the Shenandoah congregation for supporting this great work you do with the annual lectureship. It is my prayer that our heavenly Father will continue to bless this effort that brings so many blessings to those who attend. It is also my prayer that the things I will share with you today will bring great spiritual benefit to our lives.

I really appreciate the topic of **contentment** that has been assigned to me. This is one in which all of us need to take much time to consider what the Word of God teaches concerning it. We have many Christians today who are not content with the way they are living their lives. At the same time, we have faithful brethren who are satisfied with the way they live their lives in Christ. In this short lesson, I want to encourage all of us to learn to be content no matter

what our physical or financial circumstances may be. I want us to consider the biblical teaching of contentment, which our Heavenly Father wants us to learn. Many problems can come our way if we do not learn to be content in life the way God expects us to be. Therefore, let us examine in our lesson the following points: The WHAT of contentment, the WHY of contentment, and finally, the HOW of contentment.

WHY AN IMPORTANT SUBJECT

Why is the subject of Christian contentment an important one? Any topic we find in the Bible that has the ability of affecting our Christian lives is one of utmost importance. The subject of contentment is one of them. Whether we like it or not, this subject is a matter of life and death. Whatever our attitude is towards contentment will determine where you and I will spend eternity. For instance, if I do not follow the teaching of the Bible concerning this subject, I will find myself disobeying the will of God. My disobedience to God's will, can keep me away from entering Heaven some day (cf. Mt. 7:21-23; Heb 5:8-9). As we will consider later on in this lesson, a life of discontentment can affect my Christian living to the point that I no longer care for the spiritual things of God, but only those of this world.

THE WHAT OF CONTENTMENT

As we examine our first point, we must ask ourselves this question: What is contentment? A

careful analysis of the term used in the Scriptures will help us to understand what this word really means. In order to understand what contentment is, we must go to those passages that make use of the word, and then, we must examine the word within its context. Also, we must consider what Bible dictionaries have to say about it. According to *W.E. Vine*, the word contentment means: "to be sufficient, to be possessed of sufficient strength, to be strong, to be enough for a thing." *Vine* goes on to add that this word, when it is used in the middle voice, it denotes the act of being satisfied, or contented with.

It is interesting to know that this word under consideration is found in several passages of Scripture in the New Testament. Let me encourage you to examine some of them with me. In the context of those who came to be baptized of John the baptizer, there were some soldiers who wanted to know what they could do to be right with God. Let us consider the answer John responded to them in Luke 3:14, "And soldiers also asked him, saying, and we, what must we do? And he said unto them, extort from no man by violence, neither accuse anyone wrongfully; **and be content with your wages**" (Emphasis added). John the baptizer utilizes this word in the sense of being satisfied with their wages. This also gives the idea of not complaining or murmuring about the amount of money they were being paid. This is exactly what you and I must do in order to accomplish contentment in our lives. We have several people today who are not happy with their wages. When this is the case, some of them proceed to

complain and to use wrong attitude towards their bosses. When I used to work in the secular world my boss always gave me a raise without me having to ask for it. As a Christian, I always tried to be content with whatever paid I was getting. Obviously, this kind of attitude resulted in blessings that I was able to enjoy at that time. Some of my coworkers were always complaining about the money they were getting. They were never content with the amount given to them. *William Shakespeare* once said, "He is well paid, who is well satisfied." This is something we can all learn from the pen of an uninspired writer (cf. 1 Thess 5:21).

When you are content, God will take care of you! Have you ever taken the time to examine the parable of the laborers in the vineyard of Mat 19:30-20:16? These men worked different hours for the same amount of money. When paying time came, the householder gave them the same amount of money. Those who worked more, complained about this. What was their problem? They were not content with the wages they received but, instead of being happy for the other ones who received the same amount, they murmured, and were discontent. I believe many today can relate to the problem of murmuring and not being satisfied with what they have. Let us be careful not to be guilty of the same mistake!

The other context in which we find the word contentment is found in 1 Tim. 6:7-8. Notice what the inspired Apostle Paul penned here, "For we brought nothing into the world, for neither can we carry anything out; but having food and covering **we shall**

be therewith content” (Emphasis added). In this passage of Scripture we learn about the need of being satisfied with just having those things that are needed. When a Christian fails to realize what this passage teaches, then he or she will move to a life of discontentment. What this means is that they will complain all the time for the things they do not have. This is dangerous because for this kind of attitude, many have forsaken the Lord and His cause. When we are not satisfied with what we have, then we will work for the things we desire even to the point of breaking the Law of God. How many Christians today work so much that they even forsake the assembling of the saints, because they have to be at work? Brethren, this is a big problem the church is facing today. Discontentment is keeping Christians away from doing God’s will. It is imperative that we remember the words of the writer of Hebrews. Let us consider these inspired words, “Be ye free from the love of money; **content with such things as ye have:** for himself hath said, I will in no wise fail thee, neither will I in any wise forsake thee” (Heb. 13:5, emphasis added). We, as Christians, must strive to be free from the love of money. We must give every effort not to fall into the sin of materialism. Don’t get me wrong; I am not saying that being rich is wrong. You and I know that money is necessary for many things in life; nevertheless, when we love and put our emphasis on money only, we lose our sight of what our spiritual purpose in life is. We must take heed to the words the Apostle Paul wrote to the young evangelist Timothy, “But they that are minded to be rich fall into a temptation and a snare and many

foolish and hurtful lusts, such as drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil: which some reaching after have been led astray from the faith, and have pierced themselves through with many sorrows. But thou O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness" (1 Tim. 6:9-11). Concerning our attitude towards money, I believe this is the best inspired advice you and I can have to make sure we are doing God's will. Brethren who have forgotten this advice have experienced what Paul refers to "having pierced themselves through with many sorrows." In other words, whoever follows the ways of the world with respect to this, will reap great spiritual loss.

The next key passage and context where contentment appears is one in which we see the Apostle Paul providing a great explanation of what contentment is. Let us examine for a few minutes the inspired words Paul penned to the saints at Philippi, "But I rejoice in the Lord greatly, that now at length ye have revived your thought for me; wherein ye did indeed take thought, but ye lacked opportunity. Not that I speak in respect of want: **for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therein to be content.** I know how to be abased, and I know also how to abound: in everything and in all things have I learned the secret both to be filled and to be hungry, both to abound and to be in want. I can do all things in him that strengtheneth me" (Phil. 4:10-13, emphasis added). There are several things that we can glean from this passage of Scripture. First, we learn how the Apostle

Paul had learned to be satisfied no matter what his surrounding circumstances were. In his explanation of this passage of Scripture, especially the word "content," Leslie G. Thomas, made the following observation:

"The Greek word is autarkes, and its basic meaning is self-sufficiency. The individual who possesses this trait of character has the resources which makes help from others unnecessary, or, which is the same thing, he is independent of external circumstances. Or, to be a little more explicit, the term "content," as used here by the apostle Paul, implies a state of mind in which one is appeased to the point where he is not disquieted or disturbed by a desire for that which he does not have, however much he might need or like to have it." (Thomas 148-49).

From other Scriptures we learn that Paul had gone through a lot of difficult times. In 2 Corinthians 11, we read how the Apostle Paul suffered many things for the cause of Christ. In the list of difficulties, he also mentions the fact that he had experienced times of hunger, and thirst (v. 27). There were times when Paul had nothing to eat, or drink. Even in the midst of these difficult times, Paul had learned to be content in whatever state he was. There may be a time when we as Christians may suffer for the cause of Christ, and lose every material possession we have; there may be times when our houses may be burnt

down; there may be times when we may lose our jobs; There may be times when there will be nothing to eat. But, no matter what our circumstances may be, God always provides for His children. He provided for Paul, and He will certainly do the same with us! I am reminded of a story where a Christian family went on vacation for a few days. After they came back, they found out that someone had broken into their home, and stolen every valuable possession they had. The mother had a business of sewing and making clothes for a company. Well, according to the story, those who broke into their apartment stole every sewing machine they had. They also took all the jewelry they had stored in their closet. This was a difficult time for this family. Whatever money the father brought to the house was not sufficient for a family of seven. There was crying and desperation in the midst of this difficult time. According to the narrative, as the family gathered together in the living room, the father stood up and quoted the words of Job, "naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: Jehovah gave, and Jehovah hath taken away; blessed be the name of Jehovah" (Job 1:21). After he said these words, the father went to God in prayer, along with the entire family, and, as far as I know, the family was able to carry on with their lives. They accepted their circumstance, and allowed God to assist them through His providence. Friends, God did not forsake them, but through His providence, He made sure they had those things needed to survive. Brethren, this is the God that we serve when we are content with what we have! Remember, He will never

leave us nor forsake us (Heb. 13:5; Mat. 28:20; Psa. 55:22; Phil. 4:6; Psa. 121:1-2).

Even though the Apostle Paul suffered many things in life, one thing we can learn from him is that he was a happy person no matter what his difficult situation may have been. Writing to the saints at Rome, Paul said, "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed to us-ward" (Rom. 8:18). Friends, we must keep our eyes on heaven, and not on the things of this earth. Let us remember the words of Paul, which he wrote to the saints at Colossae, "If then ye were raised together with Christ, **seek the things that are above**, where Christ is, seated on the right hand of God. **Set your mind on the things that are above, not on the things that are upon the earth**; For ye died, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall be manifested, then shall ye also with him be manifested in glory" (Col. 3:1-4, Emphasis added). Now that we are in Christ, we must focus on spiritual things, and not the ones of this world. If we focus on the things of the world, we will never learn to be content, but will live a life of discontentment. One example of a Christian who failed to set his mind on heavenly things was Demas. This Christian failed to apply the principle of contentment in his life, and for this mistake, he ended up forsaking the Lord, the Apostle Paul, and not only that, but he also loved this present world, practicing something the Lord hates (2 Tim. 4:10; James 4:4; 1 John 2:15-17). We will end up doing the same, if we forget to set our minds on things

above. Friends, we may lose our salvation if we are not careful to learn from the mistakes of others.

Having considered what contentment is, let me take a few minutes to explain what contentment is not from a different perspective. I believe this is important due to the fact that we have many Christians practicing contentment in a negative way.

WHAT CONTENTMENT IS NOT

Let us remember once again what *W.E. Vine* defined as contentment: to be sufficient, to be possessed of sufficient strength, to be strong, to be enough for a thing. If we are not careful, the practical aspect of this definition may be applied incorrectly. A person may argue that he or she is sufficient for a thing to the point in which such persons believe that they do not need God at all. You and I know that such people do exist in this world. They are so deceived with their riches that they have come to a spiritual state in which they believe they don't need anything or anyone to help them get to heaven. For the most part, this may be the case with non-Christian people; nevertheless, we also have some Christians who have adopted this kind of mentality that when they are blessed with some wealth, they tend to forget about God, and the great things He has done for us. We need to be very careful that we do not fall into this sinful thinking. Let us remember the words of the Apostle Paul, who writing to the Corinthian Brethren, said, "And such confidence have we through Christ to God-ward: not that we are sufficient of ourselves, to account anything as from ourselves; but our

sufficiency is from God" (2 Cor. 3:4-5). We would also do well to remember the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, who in the context of the True Vine, said, "I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same beareth much fruit: **for apart from me ye can do nothing**" (John 15:5, Emphasis added). These passages are very strong to convey the idea that we need God at all times. Personally, in the past, I have been guilty of transgressing the Law of God. For instance, when I had enough money in the bank, there were times when I did not think about God, as I should have. But, when the money was gone, then I remembered that I turned to God in prayer to ask Him to help me in times of need. You and I know that such attitude is not the one that pleases our Heavenly Father. As a Christian grows spiritually, he or she learns the value of thanking God for everything no matter what his financial status may be (cf. Eph. 5:20; 1 Thess. 5:18). We must do this whenever we are in need, as well as when we have everything we need. God must be thanked, honored and remember at all times!

Interestingly, we must also remember that contentment is not being satisfied with whatever spiritual state you find yourself in at this time. I have heard some Christians argue that they would not care to grow more in the knowledge of God's Word as we are commanded to do, just because they already know some (cf. 2 Pet. 3:18). They argued that they are happy in whatever spiritual state they are at this time. They are content with just knowing a little of God's Word. Friends, this is not what the Bible teaches. The

Word of God puts a great emphasis upon the need to grow spiritually at all times. Passages such as 2 Pet. 3:18; 2 Tim. 2:15, 2 Pet. 1:5-11, and others exhort us to give the more diligence to the spiritual growth that God desires from all of us. We cannot be content with knowing just a little bit of God's Word. We must emphasize spiritual growth at all times. There are joys and blessings in knowing more and more of God's Holy Word! (Jeremiah 15:16; Hosea 4:6). Therefore, let us not be content with whatever spiritual state we are, but let us move into perfection and give God the honor he deserves through a life of faithfulness to His Word. Having considered what contentment is not; now let me explain the practical aspect of this lesson: the HOW of contentment. Let us learn what you and I can do to experience a life of contentment in Christ.

THE HOW OF CONTENTMENT

How can we as Christian develop an attitude of contentment? What are some of the principles we must have in mind in order to accomplish contentment in our lives? Let me suggest a few things we can do to achieve a life of contentment, which will please our Heavenly Father.

We Must Learn To Trust In God's Providence

Yes my brethren, we must learn to trust in the great providence of God. The Bible teaches that God will provide for His people. We have already examined passages such as Heb 13:5; Mat 28:20, and others where we learn that God will never leave us alone, nor forsake us. We must learn to be content in whatever situation we may find ourselves in. Trusting

in the providence of God will help us to not live a life of discontentment. We must have faith in the promises of God. You and I can see throughout the Bible how God always took care of His people. He will also do the same with us if we keep His commandments and trust in His promises. Let us remember the words of Paul as he wrote to the saints at Philippi, "And my God shall supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:19). We would also do well to remember the words of Jesus Christ, as He explained this very point in His great Sermon on the Mount,

Therefore I say unto you, be not anxious for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than the food, and the body than the raiment? Behold the birds of the heaven, that they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; and your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are not ye of much more value than they? And which of you by being anxious can add one cubit unto the measure of his life? And why are ye anxious concerning raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But if God doth do clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe

you, O ye of little faith? Be not therefore anxious, saying, what shall we eat? Or, What shall we drink? Or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? For after all these things do the Gentiles seek; for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first his kingdom, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Mat 6:25-33).

We Must Learn To Be Happy Even When We Do Not Have Those Things We Desire

As we have considered in this lesson, the Apostle Paul learned to live a life of contentment, even when things did not go well. Notice again the words of Philippians 4:11, "Not that I speak in respect of want; for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therein to be content." This is exactly what you and I need to do. We must learn to be happy, even when we do not have those things we wish we had. There will be many times when we will not be able to have those things we desire. When this is the case, we must learn to be happy no matter what. Let us remember that Paul was in prison at the time he wrote the letter of Philippians. Even from prison, he says, "Rejoice in the Lord always: again I will say, rejoice" (Phil 4:4). In this passage we see Paul's happiness even in prison. Brethren, we need to learn to live this kind of life! If you have noticed, I have repeated the word "learn" many times. Friends, a life of contentment is something we **learn**, and not something we receive at

birth. Let us notice what Brother Robert Taylor Jr. commented on the text of Philippians 4:11-12,

Being in personal need did not prompt this apostolic statement. Paul was no complainer. Grumbling over personal deprivations within his own life was not the Pauline approach to his lifestyle. He had learned self-mastery. He had pursued and attained a contented spirit, that very virtue which is so evasive to so many of us. **Note that it was not a gift to Paul at birth; it was not a miraculous gift conferred when he received the Holy Spirit baptism with accompanying apostolic powers. It was a learned or mastered virtue. It did not come in a moment, an hour, a day, a week, a month, or even in a year.** He had been developing this unique and rarely attained virtue for a lifetime. Contentment was his with little or with much. He knew how to be put down; he knew how to abound. Everywhere and in all things he was instructed (initiated) into the evasive mystery of true contentment. He employed the imagery of ancient people who were initiated into the mystery of some movement. Those outside it did not have the instruction. Paul was content with a full stomach or an empty one; he knew how to abound with a degree of affluence; he knew how to suffer need in periods of

human deprivation (Taylor, 163-64, emphasis added).

Learning contentment requires an effort from our part. Any faithful Christian who desires to live a life of contentment must strive to master this kind of virtue; otherwise, he or she will never experience it. In view of this, Brother Wendell Winkler adds the following comment to the attitude Paul had while being content, "Paul had learned that contentment and happiness are not dependent on external circumstances, but on inner qualities of the heart, and upon a right relationship with the Lord" (Winkler, 38). Brethren, we must strive to have a right relationship with God, since this will help us to be content every day no matter what comes our way!

We Must Learn Not To Follow The Ways Of The World

Christians must remember that we live in the world, but we are not of the world. This means that we must keep ourselves away from imitating the way the people of the world live. We must then, take heed to the inspired words the Apostle John penned in 1 John 2:15-17, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the vain glory of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever." Certainly, we will also do well to follow the

inspired advice Paul gave to the saints at Rome, "And be not fashioned according to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, and ye may prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God" (Rom 12:2). Most people in the world are not happy with the material possessions they have in life. Most of the time they complain about those things they are not able to have. It is said that many years ago, John D. Rockefeller, one of the richest men of his day, and who had a net worth of \$100 million, was once asked, "How much wealth does it take to be happy?" He answered, "Another million dollars." Friends, this is the way people who are not in Christ live. Christians do not live this kind of life! Faithful Christians do not follow the ways of the world, but the will of God. This is what keeps us happy with the things we have in this life!

We Must Learn That Material Possessions Will Come To An End Some Day

There is no single passage in the entire Bible that teaches that our material possessions will go into eternity with us. This is something we must learn now, if we want to live a life of contentment. Let us remember the words of Paul, "**For we brought nothing into this world, for neither can we carry anything out;** but having food and covering we shall be therewith content" (1 Tim 6:7-8, emphasis added). Remember, everything will be destroyed at the second coming of Christ (cf. 2 Pet 3:9-13). Just think about this: what will happen to your \$50,000 bank account if Christ was to come today? Will you be able

to take this money with you? The answer to this last question is an emphatic NO! Therefore, we must focus on spiritual things, instead of the things of this world. We, as faithful Christians, must practice the wise advice Christ gives us in the Sermon on the Mount, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon the earth, where moth and rust consume, and where thieves break through and steal: but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth consume, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: for where thy treasure is, there will thy heart be also" (Matt 6:19-20).

We Must Ask God To Keep Us Away From A Life Of Discontentment

We are instructed to pray to God at all times (cf. 1 Thess 5:17; Col 4:2; Rom 12:12). In our prayers, we must ask God to keep us away from living a life of discontentment. Please remember the words of the model prayer Jesus taught in Matthew 6:13, "And bring us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one." We must ask God to deliver us from the sin of discontentment. Every faithful Christian needs to carefully consider the words found in Proverbs 30:7-9,

Two things have I asked of thee; Deny me them not before I die: Remove far from me falsehood and lies; Give me neither poverty nor riches; Feed me with the food that is needful for me: Lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, who is Jehovah? Or lest I be poor, and

steal, and use profanely the name of my God.

Let me encourage everyone to utter these words in our daily prayers! I can assure you that directing a prayer to God in this manner will help you to enjoy a life of contentment.

We Must Remember The Terrible Consequences Of Living A Life Of Discontentment

We have several parables in the New Testament that speak about the terrible consequences of trying to live a life of discontentment. For example, the foolish rich man of Luke 12:13-21 teaches us about the eternal consequences of putting our eyes on the material things of this world to the point of completely forgetting about God. Friends, a life of discontentment will take you this far! We also have the parable of the rich man ruler, who, after being told what he needed to do to inherit eternal life, he chose his material possessions instead of the will of God (cf. Mark 10:17-31). Sadly to say, many Christians today are imitating these kind of examples, where they actually choose material possessions, instead of God's will. We must stay away from this kind of life!

CONCLUSION

As I bring this lesson to an end, we must remember that the information we have examined thus far, can help us to understand what the Holy Scriptures teach concerning the subject of Christian

contentment. Let me encourage all of us to dedicate much time to the study of this great subject. I can assure you, it will change your life for the better! You will be a faithful and mature Christian who always trusts in God's providence.

After reading this lesson, let me invite you to read the words of James, who wrote, "But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deluding your own selves" (James 1:22). If we practice what the Bible teaches, then we will do those things God expects us to do, and, at the same time, God will bless us (cf. James 1:25). A life of contentment will help us to grow spiritually; will help us to be happy Christians no matter what comes our way, and, will also help us to make it to Heaven! May God bless us to that end!

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AN ANGRY AND WRATHFUL MAN STIRRETH UP STRIFE

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Proverbs 15:18; 29:22

INTRODUCTION

It is indeed an honor to be part of this fine lectureship. I commend the elders and the congregation for allowing this lectureship to continue for so many years. It is my conviction that thousands of people have been edified through the years with the lessons that have been presented by faithful gospel preachers. It is my prayer that God may continue to bless these efforts so that thousands of people may continue to learn more about God's Word. It is my prayer that the things that I will say today may be of great encouragement to all of us. To God be the glory!

Great lessons have been presented, and will continue to be presented during this lectureship. I commend the elders and Brother Rodriguez for selecting a topic that is much needed today. Church conflict avails much today in many congregations of the Lord's church. Lessons like these ones will help the brethren learn how to deal with these problems.

It is my conviction that we, as members of the Lord's body, must strive to avoid conflict at all cost. Let us remember that Satan is trying to destroy the church for which our Savior died. The Bible describes Satan as our enemy (Matt. 13:39), the wicked one (1 John 5:19), the roaring lion (1 Pet. 5:8). He will try his best to use even Christians to accomplish his goal. Therefore, we must remain awake and consider lectureships like this one, something the church needs today.

A great and much needed topic has been assigned to me. Lord willing, we will discuss for a few minutes on the topic **"An angry and wrathful man stirreth up strife"**, from Proverbs 15:18 and 29:22. This topic is very important for the following reasons: 1) It is a Bible topic, and 2) it is a topic that we need so much today. The church for which Jesus died on the cross has suffered so much because of the attitude of so many Christians who are not paying attention to what the Bible teaches on this very important subject. Brethren, our attitude can either encourage, or it can destroy people's lives. Therefore, let us pay close attention to what the will of the Lord is on this very important topic.

ANGER AND WRATH—ITS MEANINGS

Let me take a few moments to define certain terms related to our lesson. This will help us to have a pretty good idea of what we're talking about.

According to The American Heritage Dictionary, "anger" is defined as a feeling of extreme

displeasure, hostility, indignation, or exasperation toward someone or something; rage. Some synonyms are anger, fury, rage, ire, wrath, resentment, indignation. According to Holman's Bible Dictionary, anger is defined as a feeling of being very annoyed and wanting to fight back at a person or thing that hurts one or is against one; rage. As we can see, these attitudes can lead us to some serious problems that may generate church conflict.

As far as "wrath" is concerned, The American Heritage Dictionary defines it as a violent, resentful anger; rage; fury. It is a manifestation of anger.

These definitions help us to understand what we are dealing with. These attitudes, when not controlled by Christians, can bring serious conflict to the church of Jesus Christ. Therefore, let us consider some helpful points about this very important subject. And once again, it is my prayer that the things that I will say today, be of great encouragement to all of us. May we learn as much as we can!

ANGER—THE POSITIVE SIDE OF IT

Yes, there is a positive side to anger. Anger is a natural feeling of human beings. God has created men with this kind of feeling.

God commands us to be angry in a positive way

As we read the Scriptures, we realize that God commands us to be angry. For example, the apostle Paul, writing to the saints at Ephesus, wrote "Be angry, and do not sin: do not let the sun go down on your wrath" (Eph. 4:26, NKJV). If being angry at all was sinful, then we would not find Scriptures like this

one. Of course, God has given us an explanation of how far we can go with anger—"do not let the sun go down on your wrath". The feeling of being anger must be controlled by Christians at all times.

Let me suggest a few examples of positive anger that may be felt by Christians today.

1. ***We should be angry when we see how others (Christians and non-Christians) have no respect for Bible authority.*** We are commanded to have respect for Bible authority (Col. 3:17); nevertheless, it is sad to see how many Christians around this world have no respect for the authority of the Scriptures. Many today are introducing changes to the church that are not authorized by God. Many Christians do not get angry when their preacher teaches false doctrine about salvation, instrumental music in worship, and many other subjects which pervert the doctrine of Christ. We should have a feeling of indignation when things like these take place. Change agents are causing much grief in the church today. These are people who have no respect whatsoever for the authority of the Scriptures. When we observe this kind of attitude, we must have indignation. Sadly to say, many Christians today feel nothing when false teachers take over the church. Most Christians do not get angry when the authority of the Scripture is being ignored by so many. A positive feeling of anger can

help us to deal with this kind of problems. Feeling anger when this takes place will lead us to do something about it. It will help us to deal with this kind of problems. The apostle Paul was extremely angry when false teachers spread their erroneous doctrines. This helped him to deal with this kind of people. But, his dealings with false teachers were done according to the will of God, and not according to his way of thinking. The apostle Paul never fought physically those false teachers who perverted the gospel of Jesus Christ. We must not allowed anger to take control of us to the point in which we violate the will of God.

2. ***We should get angry when we see how Christians have no respect and reverence for God.*** God's word commands us to love Him with all of our hearts, mind, soul and strength (Mk. 12:30); nevertheless, many Christians today have no love for God; much less reverence for Him. People love to attack God at all times. It seems like the whole world is trying to get rid of God, instead of coming to Him and accepting His will. We can see how people in the media attack God and His word. This is sad brethren, and ought not to be the case. It is sad to observe how so many Christians see these things happen, and feel nothing about

it. Sometimes they act as if they agreed with them.

3. ***We should get angry when we see how Christians are indifferent to the work of the Lord.*** God's word commands us to work diligently in His kingdom (1 Cor. 15:58). God has done so much for us. It is a sinful action from our part not to be thankful with the Lord for all that He has done for us. We must get involve in the Lord's work. Remember, He deserves the best from all of us. It is a matter of indignation to see how Christians are so indifferent to the work of the Lord. It is so sad how Christians do not get involved in the work of evangelism. This is a lack of love from their part towards the work of the Lord.

4. ***We should be angry at sin*** (Psa. 97:10; 101:3; 119:128). The Bible commands us to hate sinful practices. Let us remember that our Savior died on the cross because of sin (Rom. 5:8). How can we continue to live in sin when we have died to sin? (Rom. 6:1-2). We must feel indignation towards sin and stay away as much as possible. Let us remember that without sanctification, no one will see God (Heb. 12:14; Matt. 5:8). A feeling of anger towards sin will help us to love holiness, and hate sinfulness. Sadly to say, many Christians enjoy sin, instead of hating it. Many today talk about sin like if

there is nothing wrong with it. Many laugh at sin, when in reality; they should feel anger towards it. Some times I wonder if we have forgotten what God thinks about sin (Hab. 1:13; Psa. 5:5; 1 Pet. 1:15-16).

As we can see, we as Christians have the right to get angry or feel indignation when such things take place in the church. Nevertheless, we should never let the sun go down upon our anger. When this happens, we let the wrong attitude enter our hearts, and this may, and will cause, harm to the cause of Christ. We should, and must have control over our anger. Not to do so will bring about conflict in the church. This will ultimately result in the church getting hurt. But, anger, when felt properly, can help us to solve problems in the church.

ANGER AND WRATH—THE NEGATIVE SIDE OF IT

We have considered the positive side of anger; now let us considered the negative side of it. There is a negative side to anger as the following examples will show. The Bible provides plenty of examples of those who gave in to anger in a negative way. How do we know when anger is considered a negative one? Well, one thing we must understand is that when anger leads us to violate God's word; then we have practiced something that God does not approve of. The following passages helps us to understand that there is a kind of anger that God wants us to avoid (Psa. 37:8; Prov. 14:17; 15:1; 15:18; 29:8, 22). Let us considered a few examples:

1. **Moses**—this man of God gave in to anger when he struck the rock at Kadesh instead of speaking to the rock (Num. 20:1-13). Moses violated the command from God by allowing anger to take control of his life. This anger took him as far as ignoring the will of God. So, as we can see, anger can take us as far as practicing the sin of disobedience to the will of God.
2. **Cain**—this man came as far as taking the life of his own brother. This took place because Cain allowed his anger to take control of his life (Gen. 4). Anger, if not managed, can take us as far as taking the life of someone. This can be done, either physically or spiritually. We may come to the point in which we may hate our brethren if we are not careful. Doing this may lead us to be guilty of spiritual murder (1 John 3:15).
3. **The apostle Peter**—this man of God allowed anger to take him to the point of cutting Malchus' right ear, when Jesus was being taken by the guards before His crucifixion (John 18:10). Many Christians who have not controlled anger have come to the point in which they use physical force to get revenged. Even though Peter had every reason in the world to protect Jesus; nevertheless, his action was not justified in the sight of God. We cannot get angry in this manner and call it a righteous anger.
4. **James and John**—these disciples of Jesus allowed anger to take control of their lives to

the point that when Jesus was rejected by the Samaritans, they ask Jesus weather they could pray to God so that fire may come down from heaven and kill the Samaritans (Lk. 9:51-56). Their anger was so terrible that they came to the point in which they were blinded, and all they could think of was to take people's lives away from them.

There are so many examples in the Bible of negative anger, which must be avoided by Christians today. May God give us the strength and the wisdom to be able to control anger when this attitude comes to our hearts in a negative way. Let us remember that anger becomes sin when this attitude brings us to violate God's word.

ANGER AND WRATH—ATTITUDES THAT TRULY HURT THE CHURCH

Anger, when not controlled by Christians, will bring about conflict in the church. Sadly to say, we have many Christians today who have allowed anger and wrath to take control of their lives to the point that they hurt one another. These attitudes, when not handled properly by Christians will cause the cause of Christ to be hurt. There are many examples of daily Christian living that we can make reference to, to see and understand how these attitudes bring about conflict in the church. For example, I am reminded of a Christian who always wanted things to go according to his will. Well, one time, the men of the congregation made a decision that he did not agreed with. After the decision was made, this

Christian man got so angry that he started saying awful things to the rest of the men, and also came to the point in which he ask one of the man to step outside of the church building to fight.

In another similar situation, one of the men from the congregation was teaching a Bible class. He made a comment that was not taken well by this other member. Well, the brother who was teaching the class was invited to go outside of the church building to fight. This brother had a real problem with anger. How many times has this happen at men's meetings, elders meetings, etc.? Nothing good can come out of anger and wrath when not controlled by Christians. Notice what God has said about this:

"A fool's wrath is known at once, but a prudent man covers shame" (Prov. 12:16)

Also notice what Proverbs 14:17 and 14:29 teaches,

"A quick-tempered man acts foolishly, and a man of wicked intentions is hated",
"He who is slow to wrath has great understanding, but he who is impulsive exalts folly."

May we never allow anger and wrath to cause us to violate the word of God. Why do these attitudes hurt the church? Well, let me suggest a few reasons why:

1. ***We become a bad example to others, especially visitors.*** Let us remember that we are to be

the light of the world (Matt. 5:16). We cannot be the light of the world when we display an attitude that goes contrary to the will of God. A bad example from Christians who cannot control anger may cause a person to stumble. We may also cause a visitor to stop coming to church services and hear the word of God being proclaimed. No one wants to visit a congregation where the saints are always fighting and speaking evil one against the other. The growth of the church will be affected when these attitudes prevail in the church. I am reminded of a situation in which some members of a congregation were fighting in the midst of church services. They were exchanging words among each other. Later, I heard that some of the members had brought visitors that day to worship services. The members struggle to convince the visitors to come, and in the day they came, all of this took place. I was told that the visitors had said that they will not return to this congregation anymore. As you can see, this kind of behavior brought serious consequences to the congregation. These brethren became a bad example to the visitors of that occasion. This attitude has occurred in many congregations. May God help us to not be a stumbling block to others.

2. ***We forget our responsibility to love one another.*** Jesus has commanded us to love one another (John 13:34-35; Rom. 12:9). We cannot

love one another when we are challenging one another to fight. We cannot love one another when we allow anger to cause us to speak evil against our brother or our sister in Christ. I am reminded of an experience I had with another preacher who wanted to physically fight me because he did not want to accept his wrong doings. I spoke to him about his false teachings, but refuse to accept responsibility. The good thing about this is that it was over the phone; otherwise, I would have been hurt pretty bad! This was, and still is a preacher who teaches false doctrine, and likes to get his way all the time. As far as I know, he has challenged to fight many members of the congregation where he preaches. Brethren, this ought not to be the case! We need to remind ourselves of what God's will is concerning brotherly love.

3. ***It keeps us away from forgiving one another.***

There are many Christians who are harboring anger and wrath in their hearts, and this is keeping them from forgiving those who sin against them. There are many members of the church who will not speak to one another in church services because they are angry to one another. It is amazing to see how many Christians have allowed anger to penetrate their hearts to the point that they will not forgive. Jesus teaches us that we must forgive one another (Mk. 11:25-26; Col. 3:13; Eph. 4:32).

Not to do so will make us guilty of not obeying the will of God.

4. ***Anger destroys the peace that needs to prevail in the church.*** There cannot be peace when anger is present in our lives. We cannot work together for the cause of Christ when anger has taken control of our lives. Anger keeps the peace away from the church. Therefore, we must do away with anger from our lives, that is, if we want peace to prevail. Congregations where anger prevails cannot live in peace with each other. Members will always be fighting each other. This is not the will of God for the church. God's word commands us to be at peace with one another (Eph. 4:3; Rom. 14:19). If anger is not control, peace will never be a part of our lives. Brother Gus Nichols once said: "Christians are peace makers, not peace breakers."

5. ***Anger hurts our lives physically and spiritually.*** Nothing good can come out when we let anger take control of our lives. The sorrows that come when anger controls us are far too dangerous. We cannot live at peace with each other and with ourselves. One Chinese proverb said: "If you are patient in one moment of anger, you will escape a hundred days of sorrow." Alfred Montapert said: "Every time you get angry, you poison your own system." Ralph Waldo Emerson said: "For every minute you remain angry, you

give up sixty seconds of peace of mind.” Each of these quotes teaches us a great lesson about anger. Some have suggested that when you get angry, the following happens: Your adrenaline surges, your heart beats faster, your palms sweat, your face flushes, your stomach pumps great gushes of ACID, you have trouble sleeping, you get depressed, moody, and introverted. All of these things affect your physical body. Let us remember that we must take care of our bodies (1 Cor. 6:19-20). Also, one experienced counselor stated that 50% of the people who came in for counseling had problems with dealing with their anger. Anger can shatter communication and tear apart relationships and ruins both the joy and health of many.

It is imperative that we acknowledge that this kind of attitude hurts the church for which Jesus gave His life (Acts 20:28; Matt. 20:28). This kind of attitude keeps the church from growing spiritually the way God would have it to growth. We need to remind ourselves that our responsibility consists in striving to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Eph. 4:3). We must “pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another” (Rom. 14:19). This is something we need to remember all the time.

ANGER AND WRATH—WE CAN BE MORE THAN CONQUERORS

We have considered a few principles about our

topic. Now, I would like to spend some time talking about how you and I can overcome these attitudes which hurt the church, and perpetuate conflict in the lives of so many Christians. It is my prayer that you and I realize how dangerous these attitudes can be when not control by Christians. I would like to look at some principles from Ephesians chapter 4, regarding how we can be more than conquerors over anger and wrath. Let me remind you that victory belongs to us (1 Cor. 15:57; 2 Cor. 2:14). We can be more than conquerors over anger and wrath; attitudes that can lead us to become disobedient to our heavenly Father. God has given us everything that it takes to be victorious (2 Pet. 1:3; 2 Tim. 3:17). God's word can help us to defeat attitudes that can lead us to eternal punishment. But, before we discuss these ways of how to overcome anger, let me encourage you to not turn to the world for the answer. The world will suggest to you things that go contrary to God's will. For example, notice what the world is telling you to do when you get angry:

1. "Don't get mad, GET EVEN!, revenge is sweet, so they say"
2. Tell people off! Bang the wall! Go into the closet; close the door, scream to the top of your lungs!
3. "Let it out," they say, "and it will go away."

As we can see, this is not what God would have us to do. Therefore, may I encourage you to reject what the world says you must do about how to deal with anger. Now, let us consider what you and I can do to overcome anger.

Principles to overcome anger and wrath from Ephesians 4

1. We must be gentle, longsuffering, and loving towards one another (4:1-2).
2. We must endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (4:3).
3. We must put away sin from our lives (4:17-19).
4. We must imitate Jesus Christ (4:20-21).
5. We must put away the old man, and put on the new man (4:22-24; 2 Cor. 5:17).
6. We must put away lying from our lives (4:25).
7. We must not let the devil in when we get angry (4:26-27).
8. We must not let corrupt speech come out of our mouths (4:29; Prov. 15:1).
9. We must put away every negative attitude from our lives (4:31).
10. We must be kind to one another and forgiving each other (4:32).

These are some of the things that we may consider to overcome anger and wrath. Let me suggest a few more that we may consider.

1. We need to be obedient to what God says about anger (James 1:20-21; Eph. 4:26; Col. 3:8).
2. We need to acknowledge that these kinds of attitudes hurt the church for which Jesus died (Prov. 14:17; James 1:19-20).
3. We need to remember the kind of attitude that God wants us to have (Matt. 5:16; Col. 3:13; Eph. 4:32; John 13:34-35; Heb. 12:14).

4. We must remember that anger and wrath, when not control, can lead us to eternal punishment (Gal. 5:20).
5. We must acknowledge that anger and wrath will hinder our prayers (1 Tim. 2:8; Mk. 11:25-26).
6. We must remember that only a wise man turns away anger and wrath (Prov. 29:8).
7. We must remember that we must pursue peace with all men (Heb. 12:14).
8. We must think, before we act.
9. We must realize that when we are slow to anger, this will appease strife (Prov. 15:1, 18).
10. Let us pray to God continually that God may help us!

CONCLUSION

It is my prayer that this lesson was helpful to each of us. I realize that we cannot do justice to this topic in the time we had; nevertheless, may we consider the information that was presented in this lesson. Let us pray to our heavenly Father that He may give us the wisdom and the understanding to do His will on this subject of anger and wrath. Let us strive to the best of our ability to do as much as we can to let peace prevail in the church. May negative attitudes be rejected by the children of God who have a deep desire to be in heaven some day.

ARE WE JUSTIFIED BY THE LAW OF MOSES?

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INTRODUCTION:

1. The question under consideration is one that has been asked for centuries.
2. Sadly to say, there are many who still have not understood the biblical answer to this very important question.
 - a. This has been the case with some of our brethren, as well as denominations around the world.
3. It is the purpose of this lesson to discuss vital information pertaining to the correct answer to the question under consideration.
4. In this lesson I would like to discuss the following points:
 - a. The context of the book of Romans in relation to the Law of Moses and the doctrine of justification.

- b. Reasons why the Law of Moses cannot justify men.
 - c. The serious consequences of trying to seek justification through the Law of Moses.
 - d. Finally, the location and manner of justification.
- 5. As I present this lesson, let me encourage each of you to please carefully consider the following passages: Acts 17:11; 1 Thessalonians 5:21 & 1 John 4:1.
 - a. Let me remind you that we can understand God's Word in relation to the matter under discussion (cf. John 7:17; Ephesians 3:4).
- 6. Also let me encourage you to please make plans to practice those things we need to do in order to please our heavenly Father (cf. James 1:22; John 14:15).
- 7. Therefore, having considered these things, let us examine the evidence that proves that we are not justified through the Law of Moses.

I. THE CONTEXT OF THE BOOK OF ROMANS IN RELATION TO THE LAW OF MOSES AND THE DOCTRINE OF JUSTIFICATION.

A. *What is the central theme of the book of Romans?*

1. A diligent study of this book will reveal that the central theme of Romans is: **The Gospel is God's Power to the salvation of men.**
2. Also, we can rightly conclude that the book of Romans stresses the doctrine that justification is obtained by means of an obedient faith in Christ (cf. Romans 1:5; 16:26; 3:23).

B. *Paul, in the book of Romans, as well as in Galatians, dealt with the problem of justification through the works of the Law of Moses.*

1. There were some Jews in the first century who believed and taught that man is justified by keeping the Law of Moses (cf. Acts 15).
2. Paul very succinctly taught that justification came only by an obedient faith in Christ. Several passages will be cited later on to prove this point.

C. ***Let us consider a brief overview of the first 7 chapters of Romans:***

1. ***In chapter one*** Paul establishes the fact that Gentiles are lost in sin and

- stand in need of justification (esp. vss. 18-32).
2. ***In chapter two*** he establishes that Jews are lost in sin and stand in need of justification.
 3. ***In chapter three*** Paul establishes that Gentiles and Jews are lost in sin and need to be justified of their sins through faith in Jesus Christ.
 4. ***In chapter four*** the apostle presents a powerful argument (Abraham) to refute to the Jews that justification is obtained by an obedient faith and not by the works of the Law of Moses.
 5. ***In chapter five*** as well as chapter 8, the apostle teaches about the great blessings those who are in Christ enjoy, because they have obeyed the gospel of Christ.
 6. ***In chapter six*** Paul speaks about the reality of the sin problem and how the grace of God, which those who have obeyed the gospel enjoy, is able to help them overcome sin.
 7. ***In chapter seven*** the apostle teaches about how we are no longer living under the old law, but the Law of Christ.
 8. ***In summary***, the entire letter to the Romans, as well as Galatians, teaches

that salvation, justification, and redemption come through an obedient faith in Christ, and not through the works of the law of Moses.

- D. Let me encourage each of us to carefully study these two great letters. Do not be intimidated by those who teach that Romans cannot be understood. God has given us His Word, and such CAN be understood (cf. Ephesians 3:4).

II. REASONS WHY THE LAW OF MOSES CANNOT JUSTIFY MEN.

- A. Let us consider a few reasons why the law of Moses cannot justify man:

- 1. **Reason # 1: *The apostles' doctrine clearly taught that man cannot be justified through the Law of Moses.***

- a. Paul established this point when he was preaching at Antioch of Pisidia (Acts 13:39).
- b. Paul also made the same argument when he wrote to the saints at Rome (cf. Romans 3:20, 28), and when he rebuked Peter (cf. Galatians 2:16).
- c. The apostle Peter also made this point at the Jerusalem

council. Please read Acts 15:8-11 concerning this point.

2. Reason # 2: *Men today are not under the law of Moses, but the Law of Christ.*

- a. A change of law was prophesied under the Old Testament (cf. Jeremiah 31:31-34).
- b. In the Old Testament Moses said that we would listen to a new Prophet that was to come, Jesus Christ (Deuteronomy 18:15-18; cf. Acts 3:22-26).
- c. God himself taught us that we needed to listen to Jesus (cf. Matthew 17:5), not Elijah or Moses. This, obviously, does not mean that we do not appreciate the work these two men did in the Old Testament.
- d. The truth that we no longer live under the Old Testament law was emphasized by the apostle Paul (cf. Romans 7:1-6; Galatians 4:4-5; Ephesians 2:13-16; Colossians 2:14 and Hebrews 8:7-13).
- e. Jesus himself also made the argument that we are under

His New Law, not the law of Moses (cf. Matthew 5:21-22, 27-28, 33-34, 38-39; 26:28).

- f. Justification cannot be obtained through the Law of Moses but only through Jesus Christ (cf. Galatians 2:16).
- g. Notice what Brother Wayne Jackson commented concerning this point under consideration, “This ‘justification’ status, Paul says, cannot be achieved by means of the Mosaic law. And why not? Because the Old Testament had only the offerings of animals, which could never, on an ultimate basis, remedy sin (Heb. 10:1-4). If salvation could have been accessed, strictly on the basis of Moses’ law, then Jesus died needlessly (Gal. 2:21). Christ had to function as the Lamb of God for the potential benefit of humanity in every historical period (Gal. 4:4; Heb. 9:15).¹⁵

¹⁵ Jackson, Wayne, *The Acts of the Apostles from Jerusalem to Rome*, 2nd Ed. (Stockton, California: Christian Courier Publications, p. 158-159

3. As we can see, there is plenty of evidence that proves we are not under the Law of Moses, but under the Law of Christ.
4. *Notice what Brother Alan E. Highers commented about the difference between the Old and the New Testament:*
 - a. "There is a difference between the law and the gospel. The gospel is the power of God unto salvation (Rom. 1:16), but those who would be justified by the law are fallen from grace (Gal. 5:4). Therefore, the animal sacrifices, Sabbath observance, instrumental music and other practices under the law do not constitute the pattern for us today"¹⁶
5. Sadly to say, there are many who still believe that they are obligated to keep the Law of Moses. The internal evidence from Scripture we have

¹⁶ Alan E. Highers, *The New Testament is the Pattern for Men Today*, p. 296 (*Rightly Dividing the Word: Volume I—General Hermeneutics, The Fourth Annual Shenandoah Lectures*, editor Terry M. Hightower, 1990)

considered clearly teaches that this cannot be the case.

- B. Let us keep in mind that we must rightly divide the word of truth (2 Timothy 2:15).

III. THE SERIOUS CONSEQUENCES OF SEEKING JUSTIFICATION THROUGH THE LAW OF MOSES.

- A. **What are the terrible consequences of seeking justification through the law of Moses?** Let us consider the teaching of the Bible as we seek to answer this question:

- 1. *Consequence # 1: You are guilty of teaching something that goes contrary to the Word of God.***

- a. The Bible nowhere teaches that justification comes through the law of Moses.
- b. We have a great responsibility of teaching only that which God authorizes in His Word (cf. 1 Peter 4:11; Titus 2:1; Colossians 3:17).
 - i. To teach something the Bible does not teach is to be guilty of perverting the Scriptures. This is exactly what some Jews

were doing! An anathema awaits those who pervert the gospel of Christ (see Galatians 1:6-9).

- c. Let us not be guilty of teaching false doctrine!

2. ***Consequence # 2: You would have committed spiritual adultery.***

- a. The Bible teaches that if you try to keep the law of Moses, you are guilty of spiritual adultery (cf. Romans 7). Paul argued that we are married to Christ, and not to Moses (vs. 4).
- b. Spiritual adultery takes place when we forsake God to go after others things that go contrary to His will (cf. James 4:4).

3. ***Consequence # 3: Christ would have died in vain if justification comes through the law of Moses.***

- a. This is what you and I would be teaching if we argued that justification is through the Law of Moses and not through Christ's Law.

- b. This is the argument that Paul conveyed to the Galatians (cf. Galatians 2:20-21).
- c. Christ's death had the purpose of establishing a New Covenant so that man can be justified through His Law, and not the Law of Moses. To say that man can obtain justification through the Law of Moses is to say that what Christ did on the cross was in vain. This certainly cannot be the case.

4. ***Consequence #4: Man would have to keep the whole law of Moses.***

- a. This is what Paul conveyed to the Galatians:
- b. "For as many as are of the works of the law are under a curse: for it is written, **cursed is every one who continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law, to do them**" (Galatians 3:10, emp. added).

5. ***Consequence # 5: Salvation is lost.***

- a. There is no salvation whatsoever to those who are

trying to be justified through the law of Moses:

- b. "Ye are severed from Christ, ye who would be justified by the law; **ye are fallen away from grace** (Galatians 5:4, emp. added).
- c. *Notice what B.W. Johnson said concerning this point in his People's New Testament Explanatory Notes, "Their circumcision, under the circumstances, would be the sign of their submission to the law of Moses. They, Gentile Christians, could not thus become Jews and remain Christians. It would be a proof of trust in Moses rather than Christ, in the law rather than in the gospel" (p. 179).*
- d. You can be the best person in the entire world, but if you seek to be justified through the Law of Moses, you have lost everything.

B. Friends, these are serious and terrible consequences that come our way when we try to seek justification through the Law of Moses; the Bible is clear on this

point. Let us listen to God, and do what He says, not what we think!

IV. THE LOCATION AND MANNER OF TRUE JUSTIFICATION.

A. Let us consider what the Bible teaches in regards to where justification of our sins is found, and the manner by which such is obtained.

B. Let us consider where justification of our sins is found:

1. "**And by him** every one that believeth is justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the Law of Moses" (Acts 13:39, emp. added).
2. "**In whom** we have our redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace" (Ephesians 1:7, emp. added).
3. "yet knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law **but through faith in Jesus Christ**, even we believed on Christ Jesus that we might be justified by faith in Christ, and not by the works of the law: because by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified" (Galatians 2:16, emp. added).

4. "Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption **that is in Christ Jesus**" (Romans 3:24, emp. added).
5. "Being therefore justified by faith, we have peace with **God through our Lord Jesus Christ; through whom** also we have had our access by faith into this grace wherein we stand; and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God" (Romans 5:1-2, emp. added).
6. "On the morrow he seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, **behold, the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world!**" (John 1:29, emp. added).
7. "**Who gave himself for our sins**, that he might deliver us out of this present evil world, according to the will of our God and Father" (Galatians 1:4, emp. added).
8. "My little children, these things write I unto you that ye may not sin. And if any man sin, **we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and he is the propitiation for our sins;** and not for ours only, but also for the whole world" (1 John 2:1-2, emp. added).
9. "**Knowing that ye were redeemed,** not with corruptible things, with

silver or gold, from your vain manner of life handed down from your fathers; **but with the precious blood**, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot, **even the blood of Christ**: who was foreknown indeed before the foundation of the world, but was manifested at the end of the times for your sake" (1 Peter 1:18-20, emp. added).

- C. As we can see, there is no doubt in our minds that the location for our justification is found in Christ Jesus.
 - a. This is the location where all the spiritual blessings are found (Ephesians 1:3).

D. Now, let us now consider the manner by which justification is obtained:

- 1. Man must be where all the spiritual blessings are.
- 2. **How can man enter into the blessing of justification?** Judaizing teachers said: man must obey the gospel, be circumcised, and keep the Law of Moses (cf. Acts 15:1-5). God says...
 - a. Man must hear the gospel of Christ (cf. Romans 10:17; 1

Corinthians 15:1-4; Romans 1:16).

- b. Man must believe in the Son of God (Mark 16:16; John 3:16). Must have an obedient faith.
- c. Man must repent of his sins (Acts 2:38; 17:30).
- d. Man must confess Christ as the Son of God (Acts 8:37; Romans 10:9-10).
- e. Man must be baptized for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38; 22:16).
- f. Man must live a faithful life in Christ (Philippians 2:12; cf. Revelation 2:10).

3. When the person is baptized...

- a. He is baptized into Christ Jesus (cf. Romans 6:4; Galatians 3:27).
- b. Let us remember that **“in Christ”** is where we find justification (cf. Romans 3:24; Ephesians 1:7), reconciliation (cf. Ephesians 2:13-16), eternal life (cf. 1 John 5:11; John 11:25), and many more blessings (cf. Ephesians 1:3).

4. We hope and pray that many will come to the knowledge of the truth concerning how justification is obtained. It is our fervent prayer that you, who have not obeyed the gospel of Christ yet, will do it today.

CONCLUSION:

1. Are we justified by the works of the law? The answer is an emphatic NO according to the scriptural evidence that has been submitted in this lesson.
2. We hope and pray that people will reason correctly about this matter of great importance.
3. May the Lord help us as we continue to teach people to rightly divide His Word of truth (cf. 2 Timothy 2:15).
4. May we always appreciate the great blessing of justification that we are able to obtain through our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!

BACK TO THE BIBLE CONCERNING OUR KNOWLEDGE OF GOD'S WORD

Willie A. Alvarenga

**Gospel meeting at Oakridge Church of Christ
Honey Grove, TX**

INTRODUCTION

It is indeed a great honor to be part of this gospel meeting. I thank my heavenly Father for the opportunity to preach His Word. I also thank the elders for allowing this unprofitable servant to come and proclaim the Word of God to you. May God be with us as we study from His Word!

As we begin this gospel meeting, I want to lay out before you my responsibility as a gospel preacher. I promise to speak only the Word of God; for this is what the Bible instructs me in I Peter 4:11 "If any man speaks, let him speak according to the oracles of God". It is my conviction that we, as gospel preachers, must speak only what God has told us to preach (I Kings 22:14; Jonah 3:2). We have a responsibility to speak only that which is in harmony with sound doctrine (II Timothy 1:13; Titus 2:1).

But, at the same time, you, as members of the body of Christ, and as visitors, also have a great responsibility to search the Scriptures daily to make sure that what you are hearing from me is the Word of God (Acts 17:11). You need to take the time to

prove all things, and hold fast that which is good (I Thessalonians 5:21). We live in difficult times today; and therefore, we must try the spirits to see whether they are from God (I John 4:1). I will try to emphasize these great truths throughout the following days. I want people to have confidence in the preaching of God's Word and not on my opinions, or what I think or like. I am pretty sure that none of you came this day to hear what I like, but to hear what God says. And, once again, I promise to tell you a "Thus saith the Lord".

Our central theme for this meeting is: "Back To The Bible". Yes, brethren, it is imperative that we, as children of God, go back to the Bible and do things the way God would have us to do. I am convinced that today, more than ever, the people of God, and the entire world, need to go back to the Word of God. This is the only way to survive and not be lost.

Therefore, we will emphasize the need to go back to the Bible in all of the different areas that we will discuss in this gospel meeting. It is my prayer that those of you who have not been living the Christian life the way God would have it, to please repent from this evil action, and return to God to be saved. Also, if you have not obeyed the gospel of Christ, we encourage you to do so, before it is eternally too late (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9; Mark 16:16).

On our first lesson entitled: "**Back to the Bible concerning our knowledge of God's Word**", let me discuss with you, a few principles that I believe we

need to keep in mind. Concerning this topic, I want to present to you the following points:

1. Our present reality concerning our knowledge of God's Word.
2. Why knowledge of God's Word is so important.
3. Principles that can help us to increase our knowledge of God's Word.

These three points will help us to take seriously the study of God's Word. May we go back to the Bible, and be known once again as people of the Book. I believe we have the potential to accomplish this.

Let us notice our first point:

OUR PRESENT REALITY CONCERNING OUR KNOWLEDGE OF GOD'S WORD

There is a famine in the land concerning the knowledge of God's Word. Today many Christians are not interested in the study of God's Word. Many of them are not interested in memorizing Bible verses; many are not interested in reading the Bible; many are not interested in teaching the Scriptures to their children; many have not taken the time to be familiar with the Bible. I believe that many Christians have come to a point in which they are not able to teach the Word of God to other Christians, or to the lost of this world. Many Christians have come to a point in which they cannot defend the Word of God against those who teach error. Many have not taken the time

to strengthen their faith so that they can be firmly planted in the Word of God. I believe that this is a sad reality we are living today.

We must do whatever it takes to make sure that this does not happen to us. God will not be pleased with those who have no desire to grow in knowledge of His Word.

WHY IS OUR KNOWLEDGE OF GOD'S WORD IMPORTANT?

Please consider some of the reasons why the knowledge of God's Word is so important. I also ask you to please share this information with your friends and family. All of us need to be aware of the importance of knowing the Word of God.

Reasons why knowing God's Word is important:

1. God expects us to grow in the knowledge of His Word (II Peter 3:18; II Timothy 2:15)

It is important for us to acknowledge the fact that God would have us to grow in the knowledge of His Word. A careful examination of 2 Peter 3:18 concerning the verb "grow" reveals some interesting truths. One of these truths is the fact that this word is found in the imperative mood. This means that God requires, commands us to grow in the knowledge of His Word. Also, the other truth that we learn from this passage is the fact that this word is found in the present tense.

This means that God expects us to continually grow in knowledge. This is an ongoing process in which we, as Christians, must be involved.

Also, in 2 Timothy 2:15, the word “give diligence” denotes the act of striving to do what God would have us to do. We as Christians must have an attitude of diligence concerning the study of God’s Word.

Not to obey what God says will result in an attitude that is not well pleasing in the sight of God. If He expects us to grow in knowledge, then, it is our responsibility to do just that. The question is: Are you obeying this command of growing in the knowledge of His Word? It is my prayer that we are!

2. Knowledge of God’s Word helps us to not be destroyed (Hosea 4:6, 14; Isaiah 5:13)

This is one important reason why you and I must strive to grow in the knowledge of God’s Word. This knowledge will help us to be prepared to defeat our enemy. Satan wants to destroy us (1 Peter 5:8; Matthew 13:39). He wants us to be ignorant in the knowledge of God’s Word. He knows that if we are not knowledgeable in the Scriptures, this will make his job a whole lot easier, that is, as far as destroying us is concerned.

The prophet Hosea said it clearly: A lack of

knowledge of God's Word will cause us to be destroyed. Sadly to say, many Christians have become a casualty in the Lord's army. The reason for this: Lack of knowledge and preparation from God's Word. Also, the prophet Isaiah said that a lack of knowledge will result in captivity. How many Christians do we know that are no longer faithful to God? I know several people that once were faithful, but now are members of the denominations. The reason for this: Lack of knowledge from God's Word. Brethren, this may happen to you, and may happen to me. If we are not careful, we may end up being a slave of error and of Satan (I Corinthians 10:12).

3. *Knowledge of God's Word helps us to not sin against God (Psalm 119:11).*

One of the strongest weapons that a Christian has is the Word of God. Our Father describes His Word as:

 The sword of the Spirit (Ephesians 6:17; Hebrew 4:12)

 Fire & Hammer (Jeremiah 22:29)

God's Word has the power of helping us not to sin against God. This is what David said in Psalm 119:11. Therefore, if this is the case, then, it follows that every Christian who wants to defeat sin must keep the Word of God in his heart. This is the only way to be more than conquerors over sin and Satan.

How did Jesus defeat Satan when he was tempted at the wilderness? A careful reading of Matthew 4:1-12 reveals that God's Word has the power to defeat Satan. Jesus made reference to the Scriptures in order for Him to be more than conqueror over Satan. Brethren, we can do the same. We can make reference to the Bible in our daily living, and by doing so we can overcome every single temptation that comes our way.

The reason why many Christians are falling in sin is because they are not taking the time to keep the Word of God in their hearts. May I encourage each and every one of us to study and keep the Holy Scriptures in our hearts? Brethren, this is the only way to survive the attacks of Satan.

4. *Knowledge of God's Word helps us to be saved (James 1:21; II Timothy 3:15).*

We must be knowledgeable in the Scriptures because this knowledge, when put into practice, can help us to be saved. God's Word has the power of being able to save us. This is what James, the brother of Jesus, said: "Received with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls" (James 1:21). If this is the case, if God's Word can save us, then it follows that we must strive to the best of our ability to know God's Word. The study of the Scriptures can help us to be wise unto salvation. Only God's Word can show us the way to salvation. Men cannot do this (Jeremiah 10:23; Proverbs 14:12; 16:25).

Therefore, let us consider this important reason of why we must grow in the knowledge of God's Word. Do you want to be saved? If your answer is yes, then, please consider every possible way of how you can know God's Word. Let us also share His Word with others so that they also may have an opportunity to be saved.

5. *Knowledge of God's Word helps us to be ready to give an answer and refute error (1 Peter 3:15).*

This is another important reason why we must grow in the knowledge of God's Word. Error abounds in this world. We have to fight against the forces of Satan. These evil forces can be seen in the following: Atheism, Gnosticism, Materialism, Unbelief, Humanism, false doctrines, change agents, perversion of the plan of salvation, church, worship, etc. We as Christians must be prepared to give an answer concerning what God thinks in His Word. Are we prepared to deal with Atheists and Humanists? Are we prepared to give an answer of the hope that is within us? (1 Peter 3:15). Are we prepared to answer the arguments that are being made against the essentiality of baptism? Are we prepared to teach people about the one true church? Are we prepared to teach people about the New Testament worship?

Brethren, we must take seriously the study of God's Word. God expects us to be ready to give

an answer. May God help us to study His Word in such a way that we grow in the knowledge of it.

Having consider reasons why we must grow in the knowledge of God's Word; let us now consider some advices of what you and I can do to accomplish the task of knowing God's Word to the fullest.

THINGS WE CAN DO TO GROW IN THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD'S WORD

- 1. *We must have the proper attitude towards the Scriptures (Psalm 119:97; Job 23:12; Jeremiah 15:16; I Peter 2:1-2).***

What is your attitude concerning the study of God's Word? Is the study of the Bible a priority in your life? Brethren, we must have the proper attitude towards the Scriptures. We must love and cherish the Word of God in our lives. If this attitude abides in our hearts, we will be able to make the time to study and learn from God's Word.

- 2. *We must take time to read the Bible (I Timothy 4:13).***

How often do you read the Bible? When was the last time you picked up your Bible and spend some time reading it? The Bible commands us to read the Scriptures (I Timothy 4:13). Let us spend some time with God, studying His Word. But, at the same time, don't just read the Bible, but also

make plans to be a doer of the Word and not a hearer only (James 1:22). Notice the following poem:

“READING THE BIBLE”¹⁷

It is **ONE** thing to “read the Bible through;”
ANOTHER thing to read to **LEARN** and **DO!**
SOME read it as their duty”—once a week,
But no instructions from the Bible seek.

One reads to “bring himself into repute”
By showing others how he “can dispute!”

While **OTHERS** read “because their neighbors do;”
To see how **LONG** ’twill take to “read it through.”

SOME read it for the wonders that are there—
How David killed a lion, and a bear.
While **OTHERS** read with uncommon care—
HOPING to find “some contradiction” there!

One reads “with father’s specks upon his head,”
And “sees” the things just as his father **SAID!**
Some read to “prove” a pre-adopted creed,
Hence understanding but **LITTLE** what they read;

For every passage in the Book they bend
To make it suit that “all important” end!
So **MANY** people in these latter days
Have read the Bible in so **MANY** ways

¹⁷ Johnny Ramsey, “*Back To Bible Preaching*” (Abilene, TX: Quality Publications, 1982) p. 16

That **FEW** can tell which “system” is the best;
For **EVERY** party contradicts the rest!
But read it **PRAYERFULLY**, and you will see
Although **MEN** contradict, God’s **WORD AGREES!**

For what the early Bible prophets wrote
We find that Christ and His apostle’s quote.
**SO TRUST NO CREED THAT TREMBLES TO
RECALL
WHAT HAS BEEN PENNED BY ONE AND
VERIFIED BY ALL!**

Let us read the Bible with the intent of learning
as much as we can. Ezra read the Scriptures (Ezra
7:10); Jesus read the Scriptures (Luke 4:16-17).
And we, as Christians, should do the same!

**3. We must take time to memorize the
Scriptures (Psalm 119:11, 16; Deuteronomy
11:18).**

How many Scriptures have you memorized so
far? Do you love the Scriptures so much to the
point that you commit them to memory? You, as a
Bible teacher, do you encourage your students to
memorize the Scriptures? We, as parents, do we
encourage our children to memorize the
Scriptures? It is my prayer that all of us take the
time to memorize the Word of God.

Memorizing God's Word

God's Word, Holy Word
we must treasure in our hearts,
for this is what the Bible
instructs us all the time.

With much prayer and meditation
we can accomplish this holy task,
of committing to memory
the oracles of God.

Our minds have the ability
to memorize the Word of God,
so put aside all of the excuses
and begin memorizing the Law of God.
Willie Alvarenga

Brethren, we need children mighty in the Scriptures. We need young people mighty in the Scriptures. This will help them to survive in a world full of error. We need more elders mighty in the Scriptures so that they can refute error when this is presented by those who have no respect for the authority of the Scriptures. We need more preachers mighty in the Scriptures so that they can fill their sermons with Bible, instead of their opinions. We need to go back to the Bible and be known, once again, as people of the Book.

4. We must spend money buying tools that will help us to understand God's Word.

How many Bible dictionaries do you have at home? How many translations of the Bible, Commentaries, Lexicons, and tools that can help you in your study of God's Word do you have at home? Brethren, we must be willing to spend money buying those tools that can help us to understand the Word of God. It is interesting how Christians do not think twice about buying a CD that contains worldly music, but will not spend a few dollars buying a Bible dictionary. How many parents buy things that will not help them grow in the knowledge of God's Word, but refuse to buy a Bible to their children when they ask for one? Brethren, this is just not right! We must be willing to spend money buying those tools that will equip us to be better prepared to face our enemy—Satan.

5. *We must pray to God for wisdom (James 1:5-6).*

When was the last time you prayed to God asking for wisdom? The Bible teaches that if we pray for wisdom, God will give it to you! We must pray to God and ask Him to create in us an attitude of humility to accept our wrong doings, and to change for the better. I believe that through prayer and the study of God's Word, we can become knowledgeable in the Scriptures. Therefore, let us take time to pray to our heavenly Father, and ask Him to help us have the right attitude towards the study of His Word.

CONCLUSION

It is my prayer that God continues to help us to grow in the knowledge of His Word. Brethren, let us go back to the Bible concerning the knowledge of God's Word. May these truths that have been emphasized in this lesson be in our hearts always! God bless you!

BACK TO THE BIBLE CONCERNING THE NEED FOR EVANGELISM

Willie Alvarenga

**Gospel meeting at Oakridge Church of Christ
Honey Grove, TX**

INTRODUCTION

Mark 16:15-16; Matthew 28:18-20; Proverbs 11:30; Daniel 12:3; Titus 2:11; I Timothy 2:4; II Peter 3:9. All of these passages emphasize the great need to take heed to one of our responsibilities called: Evangelism. Our topic for this lesson is: Back to the Bible concerning the need for evangelism. Oh how I wish that every single Christian in this world heard this lesson today! There is a great need to go back to the Bible concerning the Great Commission, which sadly to say, has become the "Great Omission" in many congregations.

Brethren, it is the purpose of this lesson to encourage us to be more evangelistic in spirit. This is the kind of Christians that God would have us to be. In this lesson, we will discuss several reasons why you and I need to go back to the Bible and preach the gospel to every creature. Consider the following reasons:

We need to go back to the Bible concerning evangelism because...

1. It is a command from God.
2. It is our responsibility to care for the souls of men.
3. It is the only way to accomplish church growth.
4. We have what it takes to do it.

It is my prayer that you will consider all of these reasons carefully. May all of us be obedient to God's desire concerning evangelism. With this in mind, let us consider the first reason why we must go back to the Bible concerning the need for evangelism:

THE DIVINE COMMAND

Yes brethren, evangelism is neither an option nor a suggestion given by God, but a command to be obeyed. This is what we learn in the pages of the New Testament. The passages already quoted establish the fact that evangelism is a work to be done by Christians. When God says something once (Mark 16:15), it is important. When God says something more than once (Mark 16:15; Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 1:8), then we must take whatever God commands seriously. He wants us to obey this command because He is interested in the souls of men. According to the Bible, God desires for all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth (I Timothy 2:4; II Peter 3:9; Ezekiel 33:11). This truth that God wants people to know is the gospel of Jesus Christ, the only power of God unto salvation (Romans 1:16; John 8:32).

It is imperative that we as Christians remember who we are. And, according to the Bible, we are fishers of men (Matthew 4:19; Mark 1:17; Luke 5:10). We have been given a command to go out and reach out to the lost. Therefore, we must get up, and start looking for souls the way Jesus did (Luke 19:10; Matthew 9:36-38). Jesus came to seek and save that which was lost. This should be our priority! Are we being obedient to this command? Remember, not to obey will bring serious consequences (Matthew 7:21; Luke 6:48).

Also, let us consider...

WE MUST CARE FOR THE SOULS OF MEN

Yes brethren, we have a great responsibility to care for the souls of men. God has commanded us to love our neighbor as ourselves (Leviticus 19:18; Mark 12:31). There is no greater manifestation of love than to share the saving message of salvation with our neighbors, family and friends. If we want to be in heaven some day, then we must wish the same for our friends and family members.

Someone said the following:

“Jesus has no hands but our hands to guide people to Him. Jesus has no feet but our feet to carry the gospel to the lost. Jesus has no mouth but our mouth to tell others what He did on the cross for all men.”

There is a great need to be more like Jesus in respect to evangelism. We must have compassion for the lost (Matthew 9:36-38). The Bible describes the terrible condition of those who have not obeyed the gospel:

They are:

1. Separated from God (Isaiah 59:1-2).
2. Slaves to sin (John 8:34).
3. Far from God (Ephesians 2:13-14)
4. Dead in trespasses and sin (Ephesians 2:1-4)
5. Headed to eternal destruction (Romans 6:23)

These are but only a few of the horrible conditions which people who have not obeyed the gospel find themselves in. What are we doing to help people change this sad condition? God has given us a responsibility to fulfill. This responsibility consists in teaching the gospel to a lost and dying world. We have the solution to the sin problem. This solution is called the gospel of Jesus Christ (Romans 1:16).

If we don't fulfill this responsibility, we will find ourselves in the same situation as the song that we sometimes sing:

“When in the better land, before the bar
we stand, how deeply grieved our souls
will be; if any lost one there should cry
in deep despair, “You never mentioned
Him to me. You never mentioned Him
to me, You helped me not the light to

see; You met me day by day and knew I was astray, yet never mentioned Him to me" (Church Gospel Songs & Hymns, p. 561).

Can you imagine so many people being lost because we did not take our responsibility to preach the gospel seriously? Brethren, let us go back to the Bible and preach the gospel the way God would have us to preach! We have a great responsibility to fulfill, let us not ignore it.

Having considered these points so far; now let us consider another reason why you and I need to go back to the Bible concerning the need for evangelism.

THE ONLY WAY TO ACCOMPLISH CHURCH GROWTH: EVANGELISM

According to the Bible, evangelism is the only way to accomplish church growth. There are many methods and ways that are being presented today in order to accomplish church growth. Most of them are not in harmony with the New Testament teaching concerning church growth. I am convinced that the best method to accomplish this is through the preaching of the gospel. We must go out and teach the lost about what Jesus did for them at the cross. We must get up from our pews and go into the community to proclaim the gospel of Christ. This is the way the early Christians did it; and this is the way we must do it today. The church needs to have a 20/20 vision. This means Acts 20:20, going from

house to house preaching the gospel.

As we consider the New Testament, we see how quickly the church of Christ grew in number. We ask the question: How did they do it? Answer: They went everywhere preaching the Word (Acts 8:4). Let us consider briefly the growth of the church of Christ in the first century:

1. 2:41 – About 3,000
2. 4:4 – 5,000 men
3. 5:14 – The number of the believers multiplied
4. 5:28 – They had filled all of Jerusalem with the gospel of Christ
5. 6:7 – The number of the disciples multiplied
6. 11:24 – Much people were added to the church
7. 12:24 – The Word of God grew and multiplied
8. 17:6 – The world was turned upside down

Why did they accomplish this? I believe they had the right attitude towards evangelism. They considered a Great Commission not a Great Omission. They had compassion for the lost souls of this world. They were convinced that people were lost without the gospel. They wanted to bear much fruit for the Lord. Notice that these brethren went everywhere preaching the Word; even in the midst of persecution. We can see a clear lesson here:

First Century (Acts 8:1-4)

First Century Christians: Persecution = Evangelism

21st Century Christians: No Persecution = No Evangelism

I am convinced that if these attitudes are not in our hearts; we will never accomplish the same results they had in the first century. Brethren, if we want to grow in number, let us do the same thing. Let us not be ashamed to preach the gospel; even in the midst of persecution. Let us prepare ourselves to go out and teach people about the gospel plan of salvation. Let us continue to invite our friends and family to hear the Word of God (Acts 10:24). It is my conviction that this is what God would have us to do.

Now, let us consider another very important point from our lesson:

WE HAVE WHAT IT TAKES TO MAKE IT

Yes brethren, we have what it takes to preach the gospel. With God's help, we can go out and proclaim the message of salvation. Notice some of the things that we have in order to accomplish this very important task.

1. We have God's help and protection (Matthew 28:20; John 16:33; Hebrews 13:5).

Preaching the gospel of Christ is not an easy task; Nevertheless, we can do it! Jesus has promised to be with us, even until the end of the world (Matthew 28:20). He was with the early Christians, and will be with us if we do His will. Satan will try to discourage

us from doing this. But, remember, God is with you (1 John 4:4; Hebrews 13:5; Psalm 34:19; 2 Peter 2:9).

2. We have God's Word with us (The Bible, the gospel).

As we go out to preach the gospel, we must realize that we have the Word of God with us. If you have a Bible, then you can teach someone about what Jesus did for them. Teaching the gospel is not difficult. If you notice, the apostle Peter, Paul and others, preached the gospel, which consists in the death, burial and resurrection of Christ (1 Corinthians 15:1-4; Romans 1:16). This is the message Peter proclaimed to thousands of people on Pentecost day (Acts 2:22-47). We can proclaim this same message today. Therefore, be familiar with the gospel message of salvation, and proclaim it to the lost with conviction and love.

3. We must realize that we have Bible tracts, literature and other means to share the gospel.

Today, more than ever, we have so many tracts and literature that we can share with people. All of this literature is available for us. We have no excuse whatsoever to not teach the gospel to the lost. Notice some of the ways we can share the gospel with the lost: We have Television (In Search of the Lord's Way, Gospel Broadcasting Network, The Truth In Love, and many more.), the Internet, Radio, and other Scriptural ways to share the good news of salvation. We can point people to Christ using these teaching

tools.

Let us take advantage of these ways to preach the gospel. I'm pretty sure that this is what God would have us to do.

CONCLUSION

In this lesson we have considered the reasons why you and I need to go back to the Bible concerning the need for evangelism. May God give us the wisdom, the desire, and the strength to accomplish this task that is before us. Remember that Jesus came to seek and save the lost. Let us do the same thing through the preaching of the gospel.

BACK TO THE BIBLE CONCERNING THE CHRISTIAN HOME

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INTRODUCTION

How many of us would like to see our children in eternal punishment? How many of us would like to see our families destroyed in eternal condemnation? Without any doubt I know that the answer to these questions is an emphatic NO. All of us want the best for our families. All of us want our families to be in heaven some day. Well, if we really care for our home, then, we must strive to go back to the Bible concerning what God teaches on the Christian home. What do we mean by a "Christian home"? When you analyze the word "**Christian**", you learn that a Christian is a person that follows Christ. We find a reference to this word three times in the New Testament (Acts 11:26; 26:28; I Peter 4:16). Therefore, a Christian home is a home that follows Christ, and His will.

Throughout the Bible we have great examples of families who did the will of God. For example, Joshua, a well known man of the Old Testament, once said: "**As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord**" (Joshua 24:15). As a head of the home, he led his family in the right direction. This is the kind of

leadership that homes need today.

Therefore, with this in mind, let us consider a few reasons why you and I need to go back to the Bible concerning the Christian home. Let me share with you the following points:

1. Our present and sad reality concerning some homes.
2. Why we need to go back to the Bible concerning the Christian Home.
3. Ingredients that can help us to have successful homes.

Please consider this lesson carefully, since the destiny of our families depends upon our attitude towards what God teaches in His Word of God.

A PRESENT AND SAD REALITY CONCERNING SOME HOMES TODAY

There is no doubt that we are living in difficult times today. All you have to do is watch the news and before you know it, there is information about families in crisis. Most homes have no respect whatsoever concerning the authority of the Scriptures. Most homes today are not following the will of God. I believe that our nation is the way it is right now because there is no respect for the Word of God. What is it that we are seeing today in most of our homes in America? Notice the following:

1. No respect for the Word of God.

2. Parents who don't care about their children learning the Word of God.
3. Homes where prayer is not important.
4. Homes where parents are killing their children.
5. Homes where children are killing their parents.
6. Homes where young girls get pregnant at an early age and out of wedlock.
7. Homes where immorality prevails.
8. Homes where children have no respect for their parents.
9. Homes where marriages end up in divorce.
10. Homes where husbands and wives are unfaithful one to another

Why is this taking place today? I believe the answer can be summarized in one word "Forsaken". Yes, most families have forsaken God and His Word. When a family departs from the counsel of God, trouble awaits. So, as we can see, our present reality is a sad one.

The question is: what can we do to avoid having our homes destroyed by our enemy Satan? I believe we need to seriously consider going back to the reasons why we need to go back to the Bible concerning our homes. Therefore, let us consider a few reasons why we need to go back to the Bible as a home.

REASONS WHY HOMES NEED TO GO BACK TO THE BIBLE

May I ask you to please consider the following

reasons why we need to go back to the Bible concerning our Christian homes? I believe that, if we consider these reasons, and apply them to our daily Christian living, we will be able to make it in this world full of sin.

Reasons:

1. Only the Bible can help us save our homes.

Yes brethren, only the Word of God can help us save our homes. God's Word has the power that we need to overcome Satan. Please notice the power that God's Word has:

1. God's Word has power to overcome sin (Psalm 119:9, 11). When the Word of God is hid in the heart of every member of the home, then, and only then, we can overcome the attacks of Satan. Therefore, we as a family must strive to the best of our abilities to study and live the Word of God so we can be more than conquerors over sin. When the Bible is present in the lives of our children, then they will make wise decisions. Respect for God will abound in the home.
2. God's Word has the power to make us wise people (Deuteronomy 4:6; 2 Timothy 3:15). We need more wise people in this world. People who will take the time to think twice before sinning against God. But, only God's Word has the power to make us

wise. I have seen throughout the years how many families have made it through because they kept the Word of God close to their hearts. I have known families where their sons become gospel preachers. I have known families where their daughters have married gospel preachers. I have known families where the Bible is at the center of their homes. I have known families where success is always at the center of their lives. The question is: Why? The answer is simple: They allowed the Word of God to guide their steps in life (Psalm 119:105). If we want to be wise, we must go to God's Word, and consider what she teaches about the home.

2. Only God, through His Word, can bless our homes.

Yes my friends, only God can bless our homes. But, if we depart from Him, He will not bless us; but, if we remain close to Him, He will bless us. God's protection for the home is only promised to those who obey His will. Notice the following promises:

1. Psalm 34:19 "Many are the afflictions **of the righteous**, but from all of them, God will deliver him"
2. 2 Peter 2: "The Lord knows how to deliver **the godly** from temptation..."

We must ask God to bless and protect our homes from the evil one. When was the last time you asked

God to protect and bless your children? When was the last time you asked God to bless and protect your wife or husband? We must keep in touch with God so that He may bless and protect our homes.

God has promised to help us:

1. Romans 8:31 "If God is for us, who can be against us?"
2. Hebrews 13:5 "I will never leave you nor forsake you"
3. 1 Corinthians 15:57 "But thanks be unto God who gives us the victory through Christ"
4. Philippians 4:13 "I can do all things through Christ who gives us the strength"
5. Exodus 14:14 "God will fight for us..."

Let us have confidence in God because He can bless our homes! Let us consider these reasons why we must go back to the Bible concerning the Christian home.

Now, with this in mind, let us consider some ingredients that can help us to save our homes from destruction.

INGREDIENTS NEEDED FOR A SUCCESSFUL CHRISTIAN HOME

The following ingredients must be present in our homes in order to be able to survive. Please consider having them in your home, that is, if they are not

present at this time.

Ingredients:

1. **Love** for God, one another and His Word (Mark 12:30; John 13:34-35; Romans 12:9; Philippians 2:1-4; Psalm 119:97).
2. **Respect** for God and one another.
3. **Knowledge** of God's Word in every member of the family (2 Peter 3:18; Deuteronomy 6:4-6; Proverbs 22:6).
4. **Holiness** towards God (1 Peter 1:15-16; 2:11; Hebrews 12:14; Matthew 5:8).
5. **Hate** towards sin and the world (1 John 2:15-17; James 4:4; Romans 13:14; Galatians 5:16; Romans 12:9).
6. **Communication** with God through prayer (1 Thessalonians 5:17; Colossians 4:2; Romans 12:22; Matthew 26:41).
7. **Desire** to be in heaven with God (Philippians 3:20; John 14:1-3).

These are but a few ingredients that you and I can consider from God's Word. If these ingredients are present, then, this will be a sign that we are heading in the right direction. May I encourage each present home to abide in the will of God? This is the only way to make it.

CONCLUSION

May God help us to be in heaven some day! May God help us to consider this information so that He

may bless our homes. Therefore, let us consider going back to the Bible concerning the Christian home.

BACK TO THE BIBLE CONCERNING THE IMPORTANCE OF SOUND DOCTRINE

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INTRODUCTION

Titus 2:1; II Timothy 1:13; I Peter 4:11; II John 9-11; I Timothy 4:1. All of these passages help us to understand that there is such a thing as sound doctrine, and false doctrine. Based on this, we ask the question: Does it matter what one believes so long as he or she is sincere? Does doctrine really matter as long as you are sincere? Most people are answering in the negative saying that doctrine does not matter. Nevertheless, when we consider what the Bible teaches, we realize that doctrine really matters. Why? The reason is simple: what we believe in this life will determine where we will spend eternity.

As we consider the pages of the New Testament, we realize that there is such a thing as sound doctrine, and false doctrine. The Bible tells us that there is the doctrine of God, Christ, and the doctrines of men (Matthew 15:7-9; I Corinthians 14:37).

Now, having said this, let us consider the lesson

entitled: Back to the Bible concerning the importance of Sound Doctrine. Therefore, it is the purpose of this lesson to discuss the following points:

1. What is sound doctrine
2. Reasons why sound doctrine is important
3. What the church can do to avoid falling into false doctrine

May God help us and give us the wisdom that we need to do His will. May the Lord help us to stay faithful to His teaching found in the Scriptures.

WHAT IS SOUND DOCTRINE?

The Greek Word for sound doctrine is ὑγιαίνουσα διδασκαλία. The word sound denotes that which has not been corrupted, and is healthy.¹⁸ The word doctrine or teaching refers to the teachings of God in the Bible. Therefore, when we talk about sound doctrine we are talking about that teaching which has not been perverted by the doctrines of men.

A SAD REALITY

Sadly to say, many today have departed from the sound teachings of the New Testament. Many are teaching error in the following ways:

¹⁸ Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, vol. 1, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (electronic ed. of the 2nd edition.; New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 673.

1. Instrumental music during worship assemblies
2. Dedication of Babies
3. Handclapping during singing
4. Women leading worship services (praying, teaching)
5. The Lord's Supper on Saturday instead of Sunday
6. Fellowship with denominations
7. Baptism not essential to salvation
8. Marriage, divorce and remarriage

These are some of the things that are taking place in many congregations of the Lord's church. The Bible speaks clearly concerning these perversions that are taking place nowadays.

We, as the Lord's church, have a great responsibility to remain faithful to the teachings of the New Testament concerning worship and many other aspects of the doctrine of Christ. With this in mind, let us take a look at some of the reasons why sound doctrine is important, and why you and I must remain faithful to God.

SOUND DOCTRINE IS IMPORTANT

The Word of God provides several reasons why sound doctrine is important. May we take God's Word seriously and consider very carefully these reasons.

SOUND DOCTRINE IS IMPORTANT BECAUSE IT COMES FROM GOD

Yes brethren, sound doctrine comes from God as we see in the pages of the New Testament. The Bible tells us that God's Word is inspired and therefore, we can surely come to the conclusion that sound doctrine comes from God. The following passages show us the truth about the Bible being the Word of God.

1. **2 Tim. 3:16-17** Every Scripture is inspired of God.
2. **2 Peter 1:20-21** Holy men of God spoke being moved by the Holy Spirit.
3. **2 Cor. 2:13** Words taught by the Spirit.
4. **1 Cor. 14:37** What Paul wrote were the commandments of God.
5. **John 17:17** Thy Word is Truth.
6. **Psalms 119:89** forever is Thy Word settled in Heaven.
7. **Psalms 119:160** the sum of Thy Word is Truth.
8. **Jeremiah 2:1** The Word of the Lord came to me saying.
9. **Exodus 5:1** Thus saith the Lord...

Therefore, since it is the case that the Bible came from God, and it is the Word of God, we can come to the conclusion that we do not need any other book that claims to be the inspired Word of God. The Bible of the Jehovah's Witnesses did not come from God. The book of Mormon did not come from God. Any other book that claims to be inspired must be rejected.

We do not need the Bible plus other books that claim to be the Word of God in order for us to understand the will of God. The Bible is sufficient for us, and we do not need any other books of men.

Brethren, it is imperative that we understand this truth from God. We must realize that the Bible is the Word of God. There is no error in the pages of the Bible. Therefore, sound doctrine is important because it comes from God. All teachings that are contrary to the Bible come from men, but not from God.

SOUND DOCTRINE IS IMPORTANT BECAUSE NOT OBEYING IT WILL BRING SERIOUS CONSEQUENCES

Yes brethren, not to obey the doctrine of Christ will bring serious consequences. There are many passages that establish this very truth. But, the question is: what are the serious consequences of not obeying the doctrine of Christ. Notice what the Bible says about this.

1. Not to obey sound doctrine will result in a person not having the Father or the Son (2 John 9-11).
2. Not to obey sound doctrine will result in a person worshiping God in vain (**Matthew 15:7-9**).
3. Not to obey sound doctrine will result in a person being a cursed (**Galatians 1:6-9**).
4. Not to obey sound doctrine will result in a person being lost in eternity (**Matthew 7:21-23**).

These are serious consequences that a person must consider before trying to depart from the teachings of the Bible. Brethren, our souls will be in danger if we do not obey the sound doctrine of Christ.

Do we want to experience these terrible consequences? Do we want to be lost in eternal punishment for not obeying the sound doctrine of Christ? If your answer is no to each of these questions, then I urge you to please consider not departing from the teachings of Christ. Let us be faithful to the teachings of the New Testament.

SOUND DOCTRINE IS IMPORTANT BECAUSE IT TEACHES US HOW TO REFUTE ERROR

Only sound doctrine can help us to refute error. False doctrine cannot remain standing because it is not the doctrine of God. Please consider how sound doctrine helps us to refute error:

1. Sound doctrine helps us to refute the error of salvation by faith alone (**James 2:17-26; Gal 5:6**).
2. Sound doctrine helps us to refute the error of baptism not being essential to salvation (**Mark 16:16; Acts 22:16; I Pet. 3:21**).
3. Sound doctrine helps us to refute the error that babies are born in sin (**Ez. 18:4, 20; Mark 10:14**).
4. Sound doctrine helps us to refute the error that once you are saved, you are always saved (**I Co. 9:27; Rev. 2:10; Ga. 5:4; Js 5:19-20; 2Pt 2:21-22; John 15:2, 6**).

5. Sound doctrine helps us to refute the error that worldliness is acceptable (**I John 2:15-17; He. 11:24-25; Rom. 12:2; 13:14; Ga. 5:16; I Pet. 2:11; II Co. 6:17**)
6. Sound doctrine helps us to refute the error that the Bible is not inspired (**2 Ti. 3:16; 2 P. 1:20-21**).
7. Sound doctrine helps us to refute the error that the Bible cannot be understood (**Eph. 3:4; 5:17; John 8:32**).
8. Sound doctrine helps us to refute the error that Christ is not Deity (**John 1:1, 14; 8:58; I John 5:20**).
9. Sound doctrine helps us to refute the error that the church is not important (**Acts 2:47; Colossians 1:18; Ephesians 1:22-23; 5:23; 1:4; Matthew 16:18**).
10. Sound doctrine helps us to refute the error of the use of mechanical instruments in worship (**Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16**).

Therefore, as we can see, sound doctrine can help any Christian refute error. Let us remember that we, as the people of God, must be ready always to give an answer (I Peter 3:15). **In order for us to be able to refute error with sound doctrine we must...**

1. **1 Thess. 5:17** Prove all things and hold fast to that which is good.
2. **2 Tim. 2:15** Study, handling aright the Word of truth (Gr. Orthotomeo from orthos "straight" and temno "to cut" - lit. to cut straight).
3. **2 Pet. 3:18** Grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ.

4. **Psalms 119:97** Love God's Word.
5. **1 Pet. 2:2** Desire the pure milk of the Word.
6. **James 1:5** Pray for wisdom.
7. **Acts 18:24** Be powerful in the Scriptures.
8. **James 1:22** Most important, be a doer of the Word!

Therefore, Sound doctrine is important because it helps us to refute error. Let us take the study of God's Word seriously so that we can be ready to refute error at any time.

WHAT CAN THE CHURCH DO IN ORDER TO AVOID FALLING INTO FALSE DOCTRINES?

This is a very important question that each of us needs to consider. What are some of the things that we, as members of the body of Christ, can do to avoid perverting the teachings of the New Testament? Let me suggest a few things we can do.

1. Let us have a deep respect for the authority of the Scriptures (Colossians 3:17).
2. Let us conform to the simple teachings of the New Testament on worship, salvation, etc.
3. Let us study the Bible to be able to handle aright the Word of truth (2 Timothy 2:15).
4. Let us grow in the knowledge of God's Word (2 Peter 3:18; 1 Peter 3:15).
5. Let us not be deceived by the teachings of men (Colossians 2:8; 1 John 4:1).
6. Let us teach on the importance of sound doctrine more often (Titus 2:1; 2 Timothy 1:13).

7. Let us teach on the fundamentals of the faith, so that our people may be strong in the Word of God.

May we, as the body of Christ, prayerfully consider these principles carefully; doing this will help us to not go beyond what has been written (1 Corinthians 4:6). Let us remember that only the faithful to the teachings of the New Testament will be in heaven some day. Will you be among the saved ones? I truly hope so!

CONCLUSION

In this lesson we have examined why sound doctrine is important. May God help us to go back to the Bible, and respect the teachings of God found in the Holy Scriptures. May God keep us away from drifting from the teachings that lead to salvation. May we remain faithful to the Word of God!

BACK TO THE BIBLE CONCERNING HOW TO BE SAVED FROM SIN

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INTRODUCTION

Yes brethren, the world needs to go back to the Bible concerning what a person must do to be saved from sin. The subject of salvation is a very controversial one. Why is this the case, some one may ask? Well, there is so much that is being said concerning what a person must do to be saved from sin. For example, the following error has been taught by many concerning salvation:

Denominations say that in order to be saved, one must...

1. Accept Jesus as his or her personal savior
2. You must pray Jesus into your heart
3. Faith alone will save you
4. Just confess Jesus as your savior and you will be saved
5. Accept the Lordship of Jesus and you will be saved
6. Touch the radio and pray, and you will be saved
7. Send your contribution and the Lord will give you salvation

8. There is nothing you can do to be saved from sin, Jesus did it all
9. Flip your headlights on and off to show that you are being saved
10. Just be a good person and you will be saved

These are some of the errors that have been taught concerning what a person must do to be saved. The question that we should consider is: What does the Bible teach concerning salvation from sin? With this in mind, let us examine in this lesson several points:

1. The need to go back to the Bible concerning what a person must do to be saved from sin.
2. The Bible's teaching concerning what a person must do to be saved from sin.
3. The need to obey today, not tomorrow.

Let us learn as much as we can from this lesson. This will help us to be ready to give an answer concerning the subject of salvation.

THE NEED TO GO BACK TO THE BIBLE CONCERNING WHAT A PERSON MUST DO TO BE SAVED

As we have said, there is a great need to go back to the Bible concerning the subject of salvation. There is so much error that is being taught on this. The question is: Why must we go back to the Bible concerning salvation? Let me suggest a few reasons why:

1. ***There is so much confusion concerning salvation*** — we already pointed out that there is much error being taught regarding the subject of salvation. People are confused because one preacher teaches something about salvation, and the other teaches something else. People are confused about who is right on the subject of salvation. Many people do not want to obey the gospel because they are confused. Satan knows that if he can get people to be confused about salvation, this will cause them to be lost. Satan knows that Jesus is the only door to salvation (John 10:9). Therefore, he has created “many doors / plans of salvation” to confused people. But, people need to know that God is not the author of confusion, but of peace (I Corinthians 14:33). Man is trying to confused people about salvation; but God says in His Word that you can know the truth, in order to be saved (John 8:32). What people need to do is go back to the Bible and learn what God says about salvation; not what man teaches. Man can compared what God says, with what man is teaching today. You can pick up your Bible and learn about the plan of salvation that God has stipulated in His Word. Later in this lesson we will consider what God says about salvation.
2. ***We are commanded to teach what God says and not what man says*** — we can clearly see this throughout the Scriptures. We are

commanded to teach the Word of God, not the doctrines of man. The apostle Peter said: "If any man speaks, let him speak according to the Word of God..." (1 Peter 4:11). We are commanded to preach the gospel of Christ (Mark 16:15); we are commanded to preach the Word (2 Timothy 4:2); we are commanded to speak what God says (Jonah 3:2; 1 Kings 22:14). We need to take heed to what God says in His Word. If everyone was to obey this, trust me, everyone will be teaching the truth about salvation. But, since this is not the case, we can clearly see that man has decided to teach his doctrine, but not the doctrine of Christ, concerning salvation. It is imperative that we realize the serious consequences of not teaching the Word of God in truth. Paul said: "Woe is unto me if I preach not the gospel of Christ" (1 Corinthians 9:16). Friends, woe is unto all those who are not preaching the correct plan of salvation. Such people will be lost in eternal punishment. People need to know what God says about salvation.

These are two reasons why we need to go back to the Bible and teach people what they must do to be saved from sin. Now let us consider our following point:

THE BIBLE'S TEACHING CONCERNING WHAT A PERSON MUST DO TO BE SAVED

MAN CAN UNDERSTAND GOD'S WILL

CONCERNING SALVATION

God has spoken clearly concerning salvation. As I pointed out, God is not the author of confusion (I Corinthians 14:33). He has told us exactly what a person must do to be saved. On this matter, let me suggest to you that the Bible teaches that we can know the truth concerning salvation. There are some that argue that a person cannot understand or be completely sure about his or her salvation. I am here to tell you that this is false teaching. Any diligent student of the Word can understand God's will concerning salvation. I know that there are some things difficult to understand (2 Peter 3:18). I know that there are secret things that belong to God (Deuteronomy 29:29). Nevertheless, the subject of salvation can be understood.

For example, Jesus said "You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32). This passage argues that we can know the truth. The Apostle Paul said that God's Word can be understood (Ephesians 3:4; 5:16-17). Man is able to tell the difference between Satan's plan of salvation, and God's plan of salvation. God has given us the ability to understand His Word. With this in mind, let us take a look at the Bible and learn about Jesus, and see how in Him we can find salvation.

JESUS IS THE ONLY WAY TO BE SAVED FROM SIN

The Bible teaches that salvation is found in Jesus.

The following passages help us to understand this truth.

1. John 10:9 He is the door to salvation
2. John 14:6 He is the way to salvation
3. Acts 4:12 There is no salvation outside of Christ
4. Romans 8:1 Salvation is only in Christ
5. 2 Corinthians 5:17 New life is in Christ
6. 1 John 5:11 Eternal life is in Christ
7. 2 Timothy 2:10 Salvation in Christ
8. Ephesians 1:7 Redemption is in Christ
9. Hebrews 5:9 Jesus is the author of eternal salvation
10. John 1:29 Jesus is the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world
11. 1 Peter 1:18-20 We are redeemed by His blood

All of these passages serve the purpose of conveying the truth that salvation is found only in Christ Jesus. Therefore, in order for someone to be saved, he or she must be in Christ.

GOD HAS A PLAN TO SAVE MEN FROM HIS SINS

Sadly to say, there are many today that teach error concerning salvation. There are some that argue that a person can be saved in any way he wants to. They argue that salvation is like coming to a church building, in which you can come to the building by driving through any street that you desire, and still get to your destination. I am here to tell you that this

is NOT the case. God only has one plan to save man from his sins. This plan is called "Obedience to the gospel".

The Bible teaches that the gospel is the power of God unto salvation (Romans 1:16). If anyone wants to be saved, he or she must obey the gospel of Christ. But, the question is: What is the gospel of Christ? Well, according to the Scriptures...

1. The gospel is the message that Jesus sent His disciples to preach (Mark 16:15).
2. The gospel is the power of God unto salvation (Romans 1:16).
3. The gospel consists in the death, burial and resurrection of Christ (I Corinthians 15:1-4).

This is the message God has chosen to save man from sin. This is the message that man must obey in order to be in heaven some day.

HOW WERE MEN SAVED FROM SIN IN THE FIRST CENTURY?

This is a good question that can be answer in the pages of the New Testament. You and I can go to the pages of the Bible and learn what those people in the first century did in order that they may be saved. So, as we study the New Testament, especially the book of Acts, which is known as the book of conversions, we can see what men did in order to be saved.

According to the Book of Acts:

1. The gospel was preached by the apostles and the early Christians (Acts 2:22-25, 32, 36-41)
2. Man heard the gospel of Christ (Acts 2:37)
3. Man believed in the gospel (Acts 2:37; 8:12; 18:8)
4. Man repented from his sins (Acts 2:38; 3:19; 17:30)
5. Man confessed Christ as the Son of God (Acts 8:37; Romans 10:9-10)
6. Man was baptized for the forgiveness of his sins (Acts 2:38; 22:16)
7. Man was added to the Church of Christ/the Body of Christ (Acts 2:47; Ephesians 1:22-23)
8. Man continued steadfast in the Apostle's doctrine (Acts 2:42)

There was not a single person that was instructed to pray the sinner's prayer in order that they may be saved. Every one of them was instructed to obey the gospel of Christ. They did so by hearing, believing, repenting, confessing and being baptized into Christ. This is exactly what the whole world needs to teach concerning the plan of salvation.

THERE ARE BLESSINGS WHEN YOU OBEY THE GOSPEL!

Yes my friend, there are many blessings when you obey the gospel of Christ. The Bible teaches that all spiritual blessings are in Christ (Ephesians 1:3). This is the reason why people need to obey the gospel of Christ. When you are baptized for the remission of

sins, you are also baptized in order to be in Christ (Galatians 3:27; Romans 6:4). Everyone who obeyed the gospel in the book of Acts was added to the Church, which is the body of Christ (Acts 2:47; Ephesians 1:22-23; 5:23; Colossians 1:18). With this in mind, let me show you a few of those blessings:

1. Forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38; 22:16; Ephesians 1:7; Colossians 1:14)
2. Reconciliation (Ephesians 2:13-16)
3. Justification (Romans 5:1)
4. A place where there is no condemnation (Romans 8:1)
5. A new life (2 Corinthians 5:17; Romans 6:4)
6. Hope of eternal life in heaven (Titus 1:2; 1 John 5:11; John 14:1-3)
7. A privilege to be part of the family of God (Ephesians 2:19)

These are only but a few blessings that we enjoy in Christ Jesus when we obey the gospel. Each of these blessings can be yours if you only give your life to Christ, in obedience to His gospel. Having said this, now let us encourage you to obey the gospel today, and not tomorrow, for tomorrow may not come (Proverbs 27:1; James 4:14).

YOU MUST OBEY TODAY!

The Bible teaches that obedience to the gospel, the power of God unto salvation, must be done today and not tomorrow. There are passages in the Bible that show man the need to obey today. For example, the

Apostle Paul said: "Today is the day of salvation" (2 Corinthians 6:1-2). The Hebrews writer said: "Today, if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts" (Hebrews 3:7; 4:7).

WHY MUST YOU OBEY THE GOSPEL TODAY?

The Bible gives us the answer to this question. Notice the following information that helps us to understand why we must obey today, and not tomorrow:

1. **You may depart from this life any moment** (James 4:14; Job 14:1-2; 1 Samuel 20:3; 2 Samuel 14:14). This may be your last day upon this earth. Are you ready to depart? What if you died tonight? Will you enter heaven some day? These are questions that you must ask yourself each day. Many people made plans yesterday but are no longer alive today. We must be ready at all times, for our departure may be at any moment.
2. **Jesus may come again any moment** (Matthew 24:36, 44; 1 Thessalonians 5:1-2). The Bible teaches that Christ may come at any moment. When He comes, everything will be over. All opportunities to obey the gospel will be over. Please, do not wait until this happens, and then you realized that it is too late. Obey the gospel of Christ today, before it is eternally too late.

These are two strong reasons why people need to obey the gospel today. May God help you to consider these reasons, before it is eternally too late.

CONCLUSION

In this lesson we have considered the reasons why we must go back to the Bible concerning salvation. May God help us to make the proper preparations to be ready to meet the Lord some day. Let us go back to the Bible, and teach this information to a lost and dying world. Let us be committed to the teachings of the New Testament concerning salvation. Let us help people not be confused about the subject of salvation, and let us all teach the same thing.

BACK TO THE BIBLE CONCERNING OUR FAITHFULNESS TO GOD

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Honey Grove, TX**

INTRODUCTION

Revelation 2:10; 12:11; I Corinthians 15:58; II Timothy 4:7-8; Genesis 6:22. Each of these passages teach us about faithfulness; something every Christian must strive to practice. It is my prayer that all of us will consider the need to go back to the Bible concerning our faithfulness to God. Therefore, in this lesson, we will consider very carefully the following points:

1. Our present reality concerning faithfulness to God
2. The command to be faithful
3. The why of faithfulness
4. The how of faithfulness

Let us consider what the Bible teaches on the subject of faithfulness. May we remember that without faithfulness we will not be able to enter heaven some day (Hebrews 12:14). So, with this in mind, let us consider our first point:

OUR PRESENT REALITY CONCERNING FAITHFULNESS

What is our present reality concerning the church's faithfulness to God? How faithful are we to God? How much do we strive to maintain our faithfulness to God in this world full of sin? Sadly to say, many today are not faithful to God. This horrible attitude happens in the area of worship, where many Christians forsake the attendance of church services (Hebrews 10:25; Matthew 6:33; Colossians 3:1-4). Many Christians prefer to go elsewhere, instead of coming together to worship God. On one occasion a father took his family to a baseball game. The following Sunday, the local preacher spoke to him and asked him why they were absent last Sunday. The father replied: "we went to a baseball game. But, don't worry, as we were driving down to the park, I kept telling my kids that God is important and that we must obey him". Sadly to say, this father was not being faithful to God in his example to his family.

Others are unfaithful in doctrine. Many have perverted the plan of salvation, the worship of the New Testament, and many other things that are being practice at this time by many congregations. Instead of being faithful, they have become disobedient like the people of Israel in the Old Testament.

Therefore, as we can see, many today are unfaithful to God. Why is this happening? Well, I believe that a lack of respect for the authority of the

Scriptures causes people to become unfaithful. Also, a lack of reverence to God causes people to become unfaithful. May God help us to stay away from these sinful attitudes!

THE COMMAND TO BE FAITHFUL

There are many passages in the Bible that exhorts us to be faithful in all of our ways. It is imperative that we, as the people of God, consider very carefully what God says concerning faithfulness. Many of the passages already mentioned speak to the fact that we must be faithful to God.

1. He expects us to be faithful in His doctrine (1 Corinthians 4:6; 2 John 9-11; Revelation 22:18-19; Colossians 3:17).
2. He expects us to be faithful in our worship to Him (John 4:23-24; Colossians 3:17).
3. He expects us to be faithful in our preaching of His Word (Jeremiah 23:28; 1 Peter 4:11; Titus 2:1)
4. He expects us to be faithful in holiness (1 Peter 1:15-18; Leviticus 11:44; Romans 13:14; Galatians 5:16; 1 Peter 2:11; 1 John 2:15-18; James 4:4)
5. He expects us to be faithful even in the midst of difficulties (Revelation 2:10; 3:5; Acts 8:4)

God expects His people to be faithful in all of their ways. We cannot share our faithfulness with God and Satan. Jesus said it plainly: We cannot serve God and Satan (Matthew 6:24). Therefore, the command

to be faithful can be seen clearly in the pages of the Holy Book. Are we taking heed to these exhortations?

Now, with this in mind, let us take the time to consider another very important point: The why of faithfulness.

THE "WHY" OF FAITHFULNESS

Do we have any reasons in the Bible of why we must be faithful to God? I believe we have more than plenty of reasons why we must be faithful. Let us consider a few of these reasons:

1. **We must be faithful to God because He deserves our faithfulness.** Yes, God and Jesus deserve that we be faithful to them. They have done so much for us. God created this earth in which we live. He has given us everything that we need to live. One of the greatest manifestations of God's love is His Son dying on the cross for all of us. Jesus suffered so much for you and for me. He went through many trials and suffering so that we may be able to have the hope of eternal life. Based on this, we must strive to be faithful to them. Therefore, God's faithfulness to us should cause us to be faithful to Him. Are we faithful to God?
2. **We must be faithful to God because our faithfulness helps us to bring others to Christ.**

Yes, our great example in faithfulness will help us to bring more people to our Savior, Jesus Christ. When people see Christ in our lives, they will want to be like Jesus. But, when we are not faithful to God; this will cause us to become a stumbling block to others. I know many non-Christians who will not obey the gospel of Christ because of Christian who are not faithful to God. They have become a bad example to others. Brethren, this is dangerous and could cause us to lose our soul in eternal punishment. God has commanded us to be good examples to others (I Timothy 4:12; Matthew 5:16). We cannot be the light of the world and the salt of the earth when we become unfaithful to God. Therefore, this is a great reason why we must be faithful to God. Our behavior can either help or avoid someone from entering heaven some day.

3. We must be faithful to God because our faithfulness will bring us great rewards.

There are great rewards when we are faithful to God. Let us consider a few of these rewards:

1. We become great examples to others (Matthew 5:13-16).
2. God will be glorified through our faithfulness (Matthew 5:16).
3. We will be showing God that we love Him (John 14:15).
4. We will receive the crown of life and righteousness (II Timothy 4:7-8; James 2:12; Revelation 2:10).

5. Our names will be in the lamb's book of Life (Revelation 20:14-15)
6. We will be in heaven some day (Matthew 7:21; Hebrews 5:8-9).

These are great rewards that could be ours if we strive to maintain faithfulness in our lives. Do you want these rewards? If so, please, may I encourage all of us to be faithful no matter what comes our way.

Now, let us consider for a few minutes the HOW of faithfulness.

THE "HOW" OF FAITHFULNESS

Is faithfulness possible for us as Christians? Can we live the Christian life the way God would have us to live? Now, even though some may say no, the Bible tells us that we can live faithfully, even though we live in a world that is under the wicked one (1 John 5:19; Jeremiah 51:5). The Apostle Paul told the philippians that they could shine in a world full of darkness (Philippians 2:15). Notice what he wrote: "That you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world". This passage tells us that we can practice faithfulness to God.

It is imperative that we remember that God has given us all things that pertain to life and godliness (2 Peter 1:3). Therefore, being this the case, let us consider how you and I can remain faithful to God.

We can remain faithful to God by practicing the following:

1. By resisting the Devil (James 4:7).
2. By studying and practicing the Word of God (Psalm 119:9, 11; James 1:22).
3. By praying to God continually (Matthew 26:41; 1 Thessalonians 5:17)
4. By avoiding evil companions (1 Corinthians 15:33; Proverbs 1:10)
5. By not loving the world (1 John 2:15-17)
6. By keeping your mind busy on pure thoughts (Philippians 4:8)
7. By keeping in mind the terrible consequences of not being faithful (Romans 6:23)

I strongly believe that these principles, when practiced, can help us to be faithful to God. May I encourage all of us to consider and practice each one of them. Remember, this is the only way to make it to heaven.

CONCLUSION

In this lesson we have considered our present reality concerning faithfulness, the why of faithfulness and the how of faithfulness. It is my prayer that we carefully consider each of these points. It is my desire that all of us be in heaven some day. But, in order for this to take place, we must... "Be faithful unto death..." (Revelation 2:10). God bless us all to that end!

THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST

Willie A. Alvarenga

It was almost literally 2000 years ago when a historical event known as the Resurrection of Christ took place in Jerusalem. According to Christianity, the Resurrection of Christ took place in fulfillment of great Old Testament prophecies found in the pages of the Holy Bible. Jesus Christ Himself also predicted His own resurrection while He proclaimed the Word of God in His earthly ministry. Evidence of these arguments will be later shown in this work. Sadly to say, not many people in this world believe the Resurrection of Jesus Christ to be a true historical event. There are literary hundreds and hundreds of books that have been written all over the world concerning the providing of proof to show that the Resurrection of Christ did indeed happen. At the same time, there are those who have written books and articles to demonstrate that this resurrection did not take place. Most scholars who have spent several hours researching the subject of the resurrection of Christ have presented a logical case in favor of this fundamental subject of the Christian faith. Some of their evidence will be included in this brief study. A proper treatment of this important subject will include the explaining of some arguments against the Resurrection of Christ; arguments in favor of this historical event; and, finally, I would like to impress upon the mind of our readers the need and importance to have a deep conviction upon the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, which is a matter related to our eternal salvation.

As we consider the work of several scholars, we realize that many arguments have been put forth against the historical event of the Resurrection of Christ. One of these arguments deals with the naturalistic theory which argues that the disciples of Christ were suffering hallucinations and thus, their testimony of a resurrected Christ cannot be taken into consideration. Dr. Habermas has produced six arguments which completely refute this naturalistic erroneous view. Notice with me the arguments that he presented for our careful examination,

One popular theory of the nineteenth century postulated that the disciples and other early believers experienced hallucinations and thereby believed that Jesus had risen. However, with the advent of twentieth-century psychology and psychiatry, and by using the historical facts cited above, many substantial criticisms of this theory arise. First, hallucinations are subjective experiences in an individual's mind and therefore are not collective or contagious. Since these experiences cannot be shared or induced, the disciples could not all have had the same hallucination. Second, the psychological condition of the mind needed for hallucinations, characterized by belief and expectation, was lacking. The disciples were not expecting the resurrection but were in a state of despair. Third, the variety of times,

places, and personalities involved in these experiences also militates against any hallucination theory. Fourth, care was taken to show that these experiences were not hallucinations. For instance, the New Testament clearly separates the resurrection appearances from subjective visions, thereby relating that Jesus' appearances from mental illness or from physiological sources such as deprivation of sleep and lack of food or drink. These conditions were not applicable to the disciples, however. Sixth, how do we explain the conversions of two non-believers, Paul and James? It is extremely doubtful that they would have desired to see Jesus enough to hallucinate.¹⁹

The arguments refuting the hallucination theory presented by Dr. Habermas proves to be effective, especially when you reason correctly about the evidence thus shown. The sixth argument presented in the quote above, presents, in my personal view, one of the strongest arguments, since the Bible clearly shows that Saul of Tarsus and James, the Brother of Jesus, who did not believe in Him prior to His resurrection end up believing in the resurrection of Christ (cf. John 7:5; Acts 1:14). Saul of Tarsus, who later became the great apostle Paul and a faithful supporter of the Christian faith, was a strong

¹⁹ Gary R. Habermas, *The Resurrection of Jesus* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House), 26-27

persecutor of those who believed Jesus had risen from the dead. Clear examples of his opposition to Christianity can be seen in the following Scriptures (Acts 8:1-4; 9:1-2; 22:4-5; 26:9-11). A man who strongly opposed Christianity, which is founded upon the Resurrection of Christ, cannot change his beliefs based on a hallucination. This just cannot be the case with this man. And so, anyone who carefully considers the logical evidence thus presented cannot refuse to deny the great impact Christ's Resurrection had on Saul of Tarsus, James, and thousands of disciples from the early century to this day.

Another argument that has been raised against the Resurrection of Christ deals with the questioning of Jesus being a real historical person. Some argue that Jesus did not exist in the past, but that he was a fictional character made up in the minds of Christians. Nevertheless, this argument can be easily refuted by providing evidence for the historicity of Jesus Christ. Several scholars have written extensively defending the argument that Jesus was a real historical person who walked through the streets of Palestine. Personally, I would like to include one piece of evidence that proves that Jesus was a real person who lived several years ago. Please consider carefully and logically what the roman historian, Cornelius Tacitus, wrote about Jesus,

Consequently, to get rid of the report, Nero fastened the guilt and inflicted the most exquisite tortures on a class hated for their abominations, called Christians by the populace. Christus, from whom the name had its origin, suffered the

extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius at the hands of one of our procurators, Pontius Pilate, and a most mischievous superstition, thus checked for the moment, again broke out not only in Judaea, the first source of evil, but even in Rome, where all things hideous and shameful from every part of the world find their center and become popular. Accordingly, an arrest was first made of all who pleaded guilty; then, upon their information, an immense multitude was convicted, not so much for the crime of firing the city as of hatred against mankind. Mockery of every sort was added to their deaths. Covered with skins of beasts, they were torn by dogs and perished, or were nailed to crosses, or were doomed to the flames and burnt, to serve as nightly illumination, when daylight had expired" (Annals 15:44).²⁰

As we can see, there is record of valuable information which proves that Jesus Christ was a real historical person. To deny the evidence is to be guilty of willingly rejecting what history has recorded for our learning. In this quote by Tacitus, not much good is being said about the disciples and Christ; nevertheless, this Roman historian reveals information which proves the existence of the

²⁰ J. L. McKinley, *Jesus and the Resurrection, The Catalyst of Historical Christianity* (Xulon Press, 2005), 32-33

historical Jesus Christ. Let me remind you that the proof of the historicity of Jesus can be substantiated by dozens of quotes from historians who either spoke in favor, or against Christ. The book entitled, *Evidence that Demands a Verdict* by Dr. Josh McDowell is recommended to those who are interested in examining additional quotes from historians who provided valuable evidence in favor for the historicity of Christ; and many other fundamental subjects of biblical theism.

Now let us turn our attention to the evidence that proves, in my opinion, the case for the Resurrection of Christ. The refutation to the arguments thus far examined concerning the case against the Resurrection of Christ can be used as evidence that the resurrection is indeed a true fact that cannot be denied; Nevertheless, let us further consider more evidence that can help any honest person believe that Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world, resurrected from the dead.

My first additional evidence in favor of the Resurrection of Christ deals with the attitude and actions of the Pharisees and chief priests concerning the Resurrection of Christ. Please notice carefully what the gospel according to Matthew has to say about this:

On the next day, which followed the Day of Preparation, the chief priests and Pharisees gathered together to Pilate, saying, "Sir, we remember, while He was still alive, how that deceiver said, 'After three days I will rise.' Therefore command that the tomb be made secure

until the third day, lest His disciples come by night and steal Him away, and say to the people, 'He has risen from the dead.' So the last deception will be worse than the first. Pilate said to them, "You have a guard; go your way, make it as secure as you know how." So they went and made the tomb secure, sealing the stone and setting the guard (Matt 27:62-66, NKJV).

If you notice, the chief priests and the Pharisees were well-informed of the predictions that Jesus Christ did concerning His own resurrection. Based on this, these people wanted to make sure that the body of Jesus was not stolen from the tomb. Pilate agreed to their petition of making the tomb secure so that nobody could steal the body. It is interesting to note that this passage of Scripture mentions the word "sealing," which, according to Roman law, if anyone broke or destroyed this seal, this person would be in danger of being prosecuted. Notice what Dr. Josh McDowell commented on this part, "Considering in like manner the securing of Jesus' tomb, the Roman seal affixed thereon was meant to prevent any attempted vandalizing of the sepulcher. Anyone trying to move the stone from the tomb's entrance would have broken the seal and thus incurred the wrath of Roman law."²¹

²¹ Josh McDowell, *Evidence that Demands Verdict, Volume I: Historical Evidences for the Christian Faith*. Rev. ed. San Bernardino, CA: Here's Life Publishers, 1979), 217

Based on this evidence, there was no way that anyone could attempt to break the seal, much less in the presence of the guards that were put there to make sure no one stole the body of Jesus; otherwise, they, themselves, would get into much trouble. Now, the biblical record reveals that Jesus was raised from the dead, and so the body came out of the tomb, leaving an empty tomb for the years to come. Please notice with me what the biblical text reveals about how Jesus was able to come out of the tomb, even when the guards were present:

Now after the Sabbath, as the first day of the week began to dawn, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to see the tomb. And behold, there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven, **and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat on it.** His countenance was like lighting and his clothing as white as snow. **And the guards shook for fear of him, and became like dead men.** But the angel answered and said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. "He is not here; for He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. "And go quickly and tell His disciples that He is risen from the dead, and indeed He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him. Behold, I have told you." So they went out quickly from the tomb

with fear and great joy, and ran to bring His disciples word (Matt 28:1-8, NKJV, emp. added).

From this portion of Scripture, we can clearly see who broke the seal, and removed the stone of the tomb where Jesus was buried. The Bible tells us that an angel from heaven did this, even when the Roman guards were present. How do we know that this was a true event? All we have to do is examine the evidence found in the words the guards reported to the chief priests. Please notice with me the following verses:

Now while they were going, behold, **some of the guard came into the city and reported to the chief priests all the things that had happened.** When they had assembled with the elders and consulted together, they gave a large sum of money to the soldiers, saying, "Tell them, 'His disciples came at night and stole Him away while we slept.' "And if this comes to the governor's ears, we will appease him and make you secure." So they took the money and did as they were instructed; and this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day (Matt 28:11-15, emp. added)

According to this report, the guards did indeed see what they saw. The chief priests did not deny what had happened, but instead, made arrangements

to cover with a lie what had really happened. There is no way on earth that you can dismiss this kind of evidence in favor for the Resurrection of Christ. The evidence is clear and without any fabrication to explain it away! Therefore, as we can see, this narrative we have examined is part of the evidence that can be utilized to establish the case for the Resurrection of Christ. The internal evidence from the record of the Scriptures can help us realize this to be the case. Concerning the empty tomb seen on this biblical narrative, notice what Dr. Bert Thompson commented about it,

Thousands of people go annually to the graves of the founders of the Buddhist and Muslim religions to pay homage. Yet Christians do not pay homage at the grave of Christ—for the simple fact that **the tomb is empty**. A dead Savior is no good! For those who accept, and act upon, the evidence for Christ's deity provided by the resurrection, life is meaningful, rich, and full (see Paul's discussion in 1 Corinthians 15). For those who reject the resurrection, the vacant tomb will stand forever as eternity's greatest mystery, and one day will serve as their silent judge.²²

As we can see in this quote, the tomb is empty, and it has been empty for centuries; which, if reasoned correctly, this would make a very strong

²² Bert Thompson, *Rock-Solid Faith How To Build it* (Montgomery, Alabama: Apologetics Press, 2000), 257

case in favor of Christianity. Let us now turn to our second piece of evidence which will establish the case for the Resurrection of Jesus. This evidence is clearly seen by the many witnesses that established and proclaimed having seen the Lord Jesus after His death. Again, there may be some who may argue that these people were experiencing hallucinations in their lives; nevertheless, as we have shown already, this just cannot be the case. The biblical record reveals that several people had the opportunity to see Jesus alive after the resurrection. For this evidence, we turn to the writings of one of the persons whose life changed for the better right after the resurrection of Jesus; this person is the apostle Paul. We recall earlier that this Christian used to persecute Christianity in the early century, but then he had an encounter with Jesus himself, which changed his life completely. Now, this man offers evidence which helps us to understand that the resurrection of Christ is proved by the hundreds of witnesses who saw the living Savior right after His resurrection. Let me encourage you to please consider what the inspired text says concerning these witnesses:

Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you—unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: That Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, **and**

that he arose again the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve. After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep. After that He was seen by James then by all the apostles. Then last of all He was seen by me also, as by one born out of due time (1 Cor 15:1-8, NKJV, emp. added).

According to this passage of Scripture we see how Paul establishes the fact that Jesus arose again from the dead on the third day, which is exactly what the Lord said would happen. He then showed how He appeared to as many disciples who actually saw Him alive. Dr. McDowell provides a list of Bible references that shows how many people actually saw Jesus Christ after His resurrection:

1. Mary Magdalene (John 20:14; Mk 16:9),
2. Women returning from the tomb (Matt 28:9, 10),
3. Peter later in the day (Lk 24:34; 1 Cor 15:5),
4. Disciples at Emmanus (Lk 24:13-33), the apostles, Thomas being absent (Lk 24:36-43; John 20:19-24),
5. The apostles, Thomas being present (John 20:26-29),
6. The seven by the Lake of Tiberias (John 21:1-23),
7. A multitude of 500 plus believers on a Galilean mountain (1 Cor 15:6),
8. To James (1 Cor 15:7),
9. To the eleven (Matt 28:16-20; Mk 16:14-20; Lk 24:33-52;

Acts 1:3-12), 10. To the disciples at the ascension (Acts 1:3-12), 11. To Paul (Acts 9:3-6; 1 Cor 15:8), 12. To Stephen (Acts 7:55), 13. To Paul in the temple (Acts 22:17-21; 23:11) and finally, to John at Patmos (Revelation 1:10-19).²³

Friend, the evidence is very compelling to the point that it cannot be denied. This evidence is so strong that based on this truth, Christianity began to be spread all over the world back then as it is still the case today. Professor C. S. Lewis commented the following concerning this piece of evidence, "The first fact in the history of Christendom is a number of people who say they have seen the Resurrection. If they had died without making anyone else believe this "gospel" no gospels would ever have been written."²⁴ Also, John R. W. Stott said, "Perhaps the transformation of the disciples of Jesus is the greatest evidence of all for the resurrection..."²⁵ There is no way that millions and millions of people throughout the centuries will base their faith on something which does not rest upon logical and sufficient evidence or something that is false.

There is logical and sufficient evidence to establish the case for the Resurrection of Christ, as

²³ Josh McDowell, *Evidence that Demands Verdict, Volume I: Historical Evidences for the Christian Faith*. Rev. ed. San Bernardino, CA: Here's Life Publishers, 1979), 233-234

²⁴ Lewis, C. S., *Miracles, A Preliminary Study* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1947).

²⁵ Stott, John R. W., *Basic Christianity* (Downers Grove, ILL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1971), 236

well as anything that entails biblical theism. Hundreds of Christians have died because of what they believe to be the true claims of Christianity. They experienced a change of lives that can only be explained by their true faith in Jesus Christ and His resurrection. Dr. McDowell commented the following which serves as the best explanation for the change of life the disciples of Christ experienced, "The established psychological fact of changed lives, then, is a credible reason for believing in the resurrection. It is subjective evidence bearing witness to the objective fact that Christ arose on the third day. For only a risen Christ could have such transforming power in a person's life."²⁶ Consider also what Dr. Harrub commented on this same thought,

The profession of disciple did not offer a great life expectancy for those willing to preach and teach in His name. For instance, we know James was killed with a sword (Acts 12); Paul was beheaded; whereas Peter and Andrew were crucified. And yet they preached Christ crucified with boldness. This was not a profession for the faint of heart. The question should be asked: Why would men be willing to give up their lives in exchanged to preach the Gospel? The answers lie in a cogent

²⁶ Josh McDowell, *Evidence that Demands Verdict, Volume I: Historical Evidences for the Christian Faith*. Rev. ed. San Bernardino, CA: Here's Life Publishers, 1979), 237

understanding of what the resurrection
of Christ really means for mankind²⁷

I do not believe anybody would be willing to give his life for something that is not logical and true. Christianity is a logical religion based upon sufficient evidence. If anyone does not want to accept the true claims of Christianity, then this person is not reasoning correctly about the evidence set before them. Notice what Ramon C. Kelcy commented about this, "Modern religious teachers have not rejected the resurrection because they examined the evidence and found it to be insufficient, but because they first decided that such a miracle could not have occurred and approached the question with that preconceived opinion."²⁸

What should be our attitude after considering this kind of evidence? Did you reason correctly about the arguments presented in favor of the Resurrection of Christ? Do you now believe that Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world, arose from the dead about 2,000 years ago? Are you now convinced that the Resurrection of Christ is a true historical event? Personally, I really hope and pray that this brief document has helped you realize the truth about the historical event of the Resurrection of Christ. It is my prayer that you will acknowledge the logical evidence that has been presented to you! The implications of this historical event are critical indeed. Therefore, let

²⁷ Brad Harrub, *Convicted, A Scientist Examines the Evidence for Christianity* (Brentwood, TN: Focus Press, INC., 2009),170

²⁸ Ramon C. Kelcy, *Why I Believe in God and Other Sermons*, 18

me encourage you to please accept the evidence that has been presented in this material.

From a biblical stand point, the importance of believing in the Resurrection of Christ is strongly emphasized. This is due to the fact that those who do not believe in this event will not have a chance to spend eternal life in heaven. Jesus Christ stated the following, "Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for if you do not believe that I am *He*, you will die in your sins" (John 8:24). Part of believing in Jesus Christ includes believing that He was raised from the dead on the third day after his crucifixion. The resurrection of Jesus Christ is very attached to the claims Jesus made concerning His deity. If he was not resurrected from the dead, then his claims of who He was are false. But, His claims were not false, He indeed was raised from the dead; therefore, He is the Son of God, the Savior of the world. And, in order to be saved from our sins, we must obey the Gospel of Christ, which message includes His resurrection from the dead (cf. 1 Cor 15:1-4).

As I bring this study to an end let me remind you of some of the things that we have considered throughout the development of this very important and fundamental subject. We have examined some information that has been utilized to refute the true claims of Christianity in favor of the Resurrection of Christ. We have also considered carefully the evidence that presents a clear and logical case for the true claims of the Resurrection of Christ. This task was accomplished by showing the internal evidence found within the Scriptures and the external evidence of the testimony of scholars who have written

extensively in favor of the Resurrection of Christ. Any person who reasons correctly about the evidence thus shown, will, indeed, accept the information as true and valid. Personally, my plans are to use the evidence we have examined to help people realize the importance of believing in the Resurrection of Christ. I want you to examine the internal and external evidence that proves this very important and fundamental subject which is so related to our eternal salvation. May you please reason correctly about the things you have examined in this brief study!

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ENDNOTES

ⁱ This outline was taken from “**The Living Messages Of The Old Testament**” by Garland Elkins and Thomas B. Warren (editors). The Living Message Of Hosea by Andrew Connally.

ⁱⁱ Hailey, Homer “**A Commentary On The Minor Prophets**” p. 128

ⁱⁱⁱ Stapleton, Heath “**Notes On The Minor Prophets**” BTSOP 2007

^{iv} Hailey, Homer “**A Commentary On The Minor Prophets**” p. 129

^v Elkins, Garland, and Warren, Thomas B. “**Living Messages Of The Old Testament**” p. 324 Lecture by Andrew Connally.