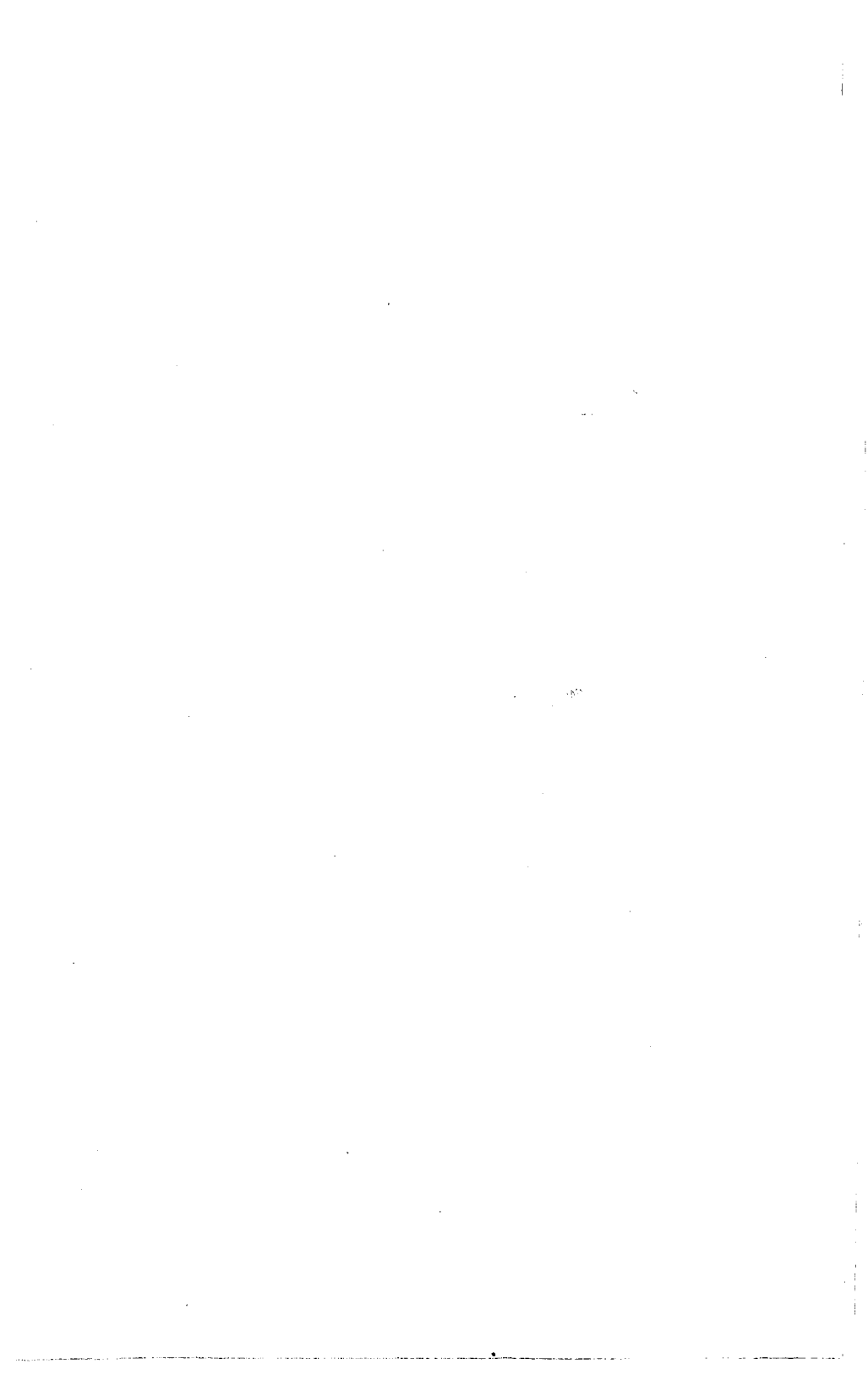


**MY
FAVORITE
MISSIONARY
SERMONS**

REGGIE THOMAS



MY FAVORITE MISSIONARY SERMONS

REGGIE THOMAS

MY FAVORITE MISSIONARY SERMONS
PLUS
“HOW GOD CALLED ME TO THE MINISTRY”

A personal testimony written by Reggie Thomas. In this testimony Reggie tells in a most humorous way stories from his childhood days as he grew up in Joplin, MO. With great emotion he tells how God called him as a 16-year-old lad to preach the Gospel. You will be moved to laughter and tears as you read.

This book needs to be read by all teenagers who are a part of Sunday School and/or the youth group of your church. It will inspire youth to enter full time Christian service. It contains the powerfully told story of how God dealt with one young, shy boy in the early 1940s and how God called this boy to a world-wide soul winning mission. The book is filled with true and inspiring illustrations of how God does call, direct, and powerfully win precious souls who are lost in sin into the salvation and light of His great Kingdom, the church.

I am that young, shy boy, now grown old, but still preaching His powerful Gospel. I want you to read and understand a little of how God took my life, a very unworthy and unlikely vessel, changed my life and used me to win souls unto HIMSELF.

Now that I'm old and growing older and I can see the end of my earthly existence drawing near, I am increasingly concerned that the youth of today be challenged to accept the "greatest calling," that of preaching "the unsearchable riches of Christ."

It is my earnest prayer that this be not just another book of sermons, but that it also be a "call from God" to allow Him to use YOU in His church to win souls to Christ. I have included my own personal testimony along with scores of inspiring illustrations gleaned from 28 years of travel in 66 different foreign nations.

MY FAVORITE MISSIONARY SERMONS

I dedicate this book to my wife Esther, my best friend, help mate, and traveling companion. Esther has inspired, encouraged, and supported me not only with her presence, but with her daily prayers. I also dedicate this volume to our eight children, Terry, Tony, Tracy, Chris, Timmy, Teresa, Tom, and Lori, all of whom have traveled and participated in our world-wide ministry of White Fields.

Table of Contents

Personal Testimony

“A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to Church”	9
---	---

Sermons

1. Some Angels Who Visited Me	45
2. I Am Not a Missionary! What Do I Do? (by Esther Thomas)	53
3. Am I My Brother's Keeper? No!	61
4. The New Testament Church, the Body of Christ	71
5. A Great Vision	81
6. A Christian America — Can It Be?	93
7. Drive Fast!	111
8. The New Testament Missionary	119
9. Preach the Word	133
10. What Does the Christian Church Believe?	147
11. 5 Loaves and 2 Fishes	161
12. The Measure of the Cross	175
13. Heaven	191
14. Lift Up Your Eyes	207
15. God's Plan for World Evangelism	221
16. Faithfulness	233
17. One More Night with the Frogs	243
18. What Does the Christian Church Believe About Worship?	255
19. A Plea for Unity	265

A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to Church

A PREACHER: THE THRILLS AND TEARS PART ONE — BIRTH TO 14 YEARS

I first came to life in Joplin, MO, January 8, 1929. Having been conceived by Godly parents, Arthur Reginald Thomas and Florence Lucille Thomas, who prayed before I was born that I would be a preacher. It is not therefore a surprise to tell you that I began preaching the Gospel at the age of 16. But I am getting ahead of my story.

My parents were completely dedicated to God. They attended and were members of the South Joplin Methodist Church, where they took me at the tender age of 8 days old and christened me. Their understanding of this religious ceremony was that they were dedicating me to God and promising that they would teach me and bring me up in the nurture of the Lord. This they did do.

Every night before retiring, my mother always read to me out of God's Word. Then my father would get down on his knees and pray. This teaching has stayed with me all the days of my life. I can truthfully say that I learned the Bible not from Cincinnati Bible Seminary, where I graduated in 1951 with the A.B. degree, but from my parents.

MY FAVORITE MISSIONARY SERMONS

My sister's birth

I really have no recollection of my first 3 or 4 years on this earth except that of being really loved by my parents and grandparents.

At the age of 4 years, I remember my daddy awaking me one morning with these words, "You have a little sister!" This was a tremendous surprise that they had not prepared me for. Words like sex, pregnant, conception, etc. were never spoken in our house!

So Barbara Lucille Thomas was born March 8, 1933. As a little boy and teenager, I apparently, did not take too well to a "little sister." Many stories have been told to me by my sister how I argued with her, teased her, and ignored her. I remember none of these things and am happy to say that my sister and I have become very close in later years as we served the Lord together.

Switches and ashes

A story which made an indelible impression on me was told by my Grandpa, A.W. Thomas.

As a young lad, he was repeatedly warned by his parents, "You must be good or you'll get switches and ashes for Christmas." One year he had been a naughty boy, as he arose expectantly for Christmas, he found nothing but switches and ashes!

The next year he was very careful to be good. On Christmas Day, he received one chocolate candy!

The Great Depression

From about the time of my sister's birth until I was 8 years old, I remember as a time of poverty. The Great Depression was in full swing. My father was a printer. He and my grandfather, Arthur William Thomas, had a small job shop located at 32nd and Byers

TESTIMONY

in Joplin in my grandparents' garage. They had a good growing business, but with the deepening problem of depression people had a nasty habit of ordering printed materials and then not paying the printer. My grandfather saw the inevitable so he reluctantly closed the job shop (which left my father unemployed) while he took a job in printing with the *Joplin Globe and News Herald*.

My parents had purchased our home place (which still stands) at 3102 Pearl Street for \$600 with money borrowed from my Aunt Delpha Higginbotham. They were obligated to repay this loan \$1 per week.

Tithing

My parents, deeply dedicated Godly people, were tithers, but as the Great Depression went on and my father's unemployment was extended they finally decided they could no longer tithe.

A story my father told me from this period of time greatly affected me. Daddy said, "Because the church was always in the habit of taking unexpected Missionary offerings, I would save back part of the tithe and then we would have that to give in the special offering. At that time the tires went out on our Model T Ford. I decided we would have to take the \$40 which was God's money and purchase tires. Otherwise we could not go to church. At the time I took the \$40, my dad closed the job shop! For one entire year I had no income. I worked briefly on the P.W.A. and WPA. I did odd jobs repairing furniture, cutting wood, anything to make a dime.

"At the end of 1 year, my wife and I talked. We decided from then on if we got a dime, God gets a penny. If I make \$1, God gets a dime. From now on we will tithe. Following that decision, I got a job at the *Joplin Globe and News Herald*." To the end of his life, my father was never again in need. Malachi 3:10, "Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this, says the Lord Almighty, and see if I will not throw open

the floodgates of Heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it.”

The only other memory I have of this period of my life is church at South Joplin Methodist. I was probably 4 to 6 years old. Our preacher was an old fashioned man who shouted, jumped, waved his fists, and preached hell fire and brimstone.

Mocking the Preacher!

I asked to sit in the pew behind my parents and I would mimic the preacher.

One Sunday the preacher was expounding on Noah and the Ark. He was jumping and running, trying to escape the flood. He was preaching and pleading trying to get the world in the Ark. I was mimicking him perfectly! Suddenly my Daddy turned around and caught me in the act! I was taken out and given a blistering! It made the proper impression. I never misbehaved in church again.

Food or a Car Ride?

One of vivid memories of the depression was my daddy coming home one day to say, “I have 30¢. We can purchase 3 gallons of gas for the Model T and take a drive. I have 2 shells for the shotgun and I’ll kill two rabbits for supper or we can spend the 30¢ on food.” Our family voted for the ride. My father, a skilled sharpshooter, missed 2 rabbits! We went to sleep hungry that night.

At the age of 8 in the year 1937 my father was employed at *Joplin Globe and News Herald* for \$6 a week. He was not able to resume our house payments to my aunt at \$1 per week. We had food to eat, but in the meantime we lost our car. We walked everywhere; to school, to church, to the grocery store. We soon forgot what it was like to ride.

I secured my first job selling *Liberty* Magazines. Being a shy

TESTIMONY

little boy, I would ask my mother to go with me to sell the magazines. *Liberty* sold for 5¢ each. I made 1¢ on each sale. I soon had a route and began to make 15¢ or 20¢ each week. I was rich!

Playing with Daddy

At this time in our lives we looked forward to our Daddy's homecoming each day. He arrived at 4:00 pm. We jumped for joy as he entered the house. My mother always had supper ready promptly at 4:00 and then the rest of the evening daddy played with us. We played croquet, rode bicycles, wrestled, played marbles, Monopoly and Rook: all the children in the neighborhood gathered at our house because our daddy played with everyone.

Daddy's Jokes

Halloween was a great time. My daddy was always playing tricks on people. Everyone had an outhouse and my dad really enjoyed tipping over people's outhouses on Halloween. Of course he was not happy when others tipped our outhouse over. One Halloween he waited until dark then moved the outhouse 6 feet forward. That night when the boys came to tip it over, they scaled the fence and dropped in the hole! My daddy laughed for weeks.

Another Halloween my daddy did a tick tack joke. This was a wooden spool which he wrapped a string around. A nail went through the spool. This was attached under the clap-board of a house. We would get across the street and hide in the bushes and pull the string. The notched spool clacking on the house sounded like someone pulling the boards off. The people would come running out, but would find no one. My father and I, across the street, would laugh like crazy.

My father was a very humorous man and he played lots of jokes on people. One of the funniest jokes he did was this: he saw

our neighbor out in his yard sowing grass. My father put some lettuce seed, poppy seed, and radish seed in his pocket. Daddy walked over and started a conversation with our neighbor sowing grass seed. As they walked over the yard my daddy was scattering these seeds. When the grass grew up, there was also a crop of lettuce, radishes, and poppy seeds. Our neighbor was so annoyed and complained at the store where he purchased the seed. My daddy laughed for weeks about this.

Another very humorous joke was played by my father on one of his fellow printers at the *Joplin Globe and News Herald*. One day my daddy killed a huge, hairy tarantula. He managed to keep the spider so that it looked alive. He took the dead spider to work and managed to distract the attention of the Linotype operator who sat beside him. While this man looked the other way, Daddy attached the dead spider to the line of type that would shortly appear before the operator's line of sight. As the Linotype operator began setting type, suddenly he shouted with fear and fell over backwards as the huge spider appeared before his eyes. This practical joke caused days of laughter as daddy told and re-told the story.

The Snake!

One other story to show you the funny side of my father comes from his childhood days. He used to delight in telling this at family gatherings!

His father, A.W. Thomas, went out to visit the outhouse. He had just gotten seated when A.R. Thomas (my dad) let a big, black snake down on a string in front of A.W. Thomas. A.W. Thomas screamed in fear, jumped out, and hopped down the path towards the house, all the while trying to pull his pants up!!

I can still hear my daddy and my grandpa roaring with laughter each time my daddy told this!

Grandpa always got the last laugh as he told how he blistered my daddy with a switch once he found out who did it!!!

Life's Greatest Decision

At the age of 8 I made the greatest decision of my life. I decided to accept Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior. There is a very interesting story back of this.

As faithful Methodists, my mother and father attended Sunday School and Worship services every Lord's Day without fail. Of course I attended with them and learned the basics: faith in God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, the Bible stories, and worship of God. My father throughout his entire life was a good Bible student. As he continued to study daily, he began to point out to my mother the Bible teaching of Christian baptism. He showed my mother Matthew 3, how Jesus was baptized in the river Jordan; Acts 8:36-39, "They both went down into the water and he baptized him and when he was come up out of the water . . ."; Romans 6:4, "We are buried with Him in baptism." Throughout these scriptures and the many, many other related scriptures, my mother came to realize that as a sprinkled Methodist she had not been scripturally baptized.

My mother then approached our minister and asked, "Have you been baptized into Christ by immersion?" and "If so, why do you sprinkle?" Our minister responded, "Yes, I have been immersed and I did it to be SURE! But it is not necessary. Sprinkling is an acceptable substitution."

My mother was not satisfied and requested immersion. The Methodist minister promised he would, but he delayed. One year later my mother again requested immersion, again the minister promised, but delayed. After a second year of waiting, my parents were very disappointed and decided to leave that church.

We began visiting other churches. We visited the Presbyterian, Episcopalian, Baptists, Nazarene, and various Pentecostal churches. The Pentecostal churches fascinated us, because they shouted, cried, rolled in the aisles, and spoke in tongues. During our visiting various churches, we visited South Joplin Christian Church, where my father was baptized as a boy of 12 years. The Sunday we visit-

ed, someone accepted Jesus and was baptized. My mother was thrilled. She said, "That's what the Bible teaches. I want to be baptized." So the next Sunday my mother went forward. This decision of my mother together with the trauma associated with leaving the Methodist church and the family repercussion it caused, all made an indelible impression upon me.

Consequently, on Easter Sunday 1937 at the tender age of 8 years, I was baptized scripturally along with my mother.

This was not an easy decision. When I first mentioned to my parents that I too wanted to go forward, my father opposed it. He said, "You are too young to understand. You must wait until you are older," but I persisted. Finally my father said, "Reggie, this is the most important decision of your life. I think you are too young to understand, but if I am wrong it would be a terrible sin on my part to hold you back. So since it is your decision you can make up your own mind."

I was a very shy little boy and not until the last moment did I realize that I would have to go to the robing room and change clothes. The very thought of changing clothes in front of strangers caused me to say "I will not do it." My parents were shocked and questioned me. When they found out it was a case of modesty, my father told me he would go with me to the robing room.

So at the close of Thomas J. Bennett's message, I rushed forward on the first word of the first verse of the hymn. The minister was so surprised he jumped from the platform to shake my hand. Then an elderly lady came. She hugged me and said, "Little boy, if you had not come I would not have come." This was a beautiful moment that helped me to realize the importance of little things in winning souls to Christ.

The day of my baptism was truly the most important day of my life. Jesus not only washed my sins away, but He also changed the course of my life forever.

The Preacher Quits in Huff

Following the resignation of Thomas J. Bennett, a new minister from California came to our church. His name was Francis Aarant. He was a good preacher and attendance grew.

After sometime passed, he requested a raise in salary. The church board felt they could not, so Mr. Aarant got up Sunday morning during the worship service and announced he was resigning because the board had refused to raise his salary.

The congregation became quite irritable and blamed the board. The following Sunday, Charles Colson, the Sunday School Superintendent, got up during worship and said he wished to make a suggestion that we take a vote. All who liked the preacher and wanted him to stay should stand up. Almost everyone jumped to their feet.

The Chairman of the Board then stood and said it was in illegal vote. He said that according to the Constitution and By-laws the congregation could not vote without a two weeks' advance notice.

Loud arguing and disagreements followed. Finally, the Chairman of the Board said that if they persisted then the vote would be to dismiss all Elders and Deacons. Finally, someone suggested a vote of confidence for the board. The congregation voted overwhelmingly.

This caused Brother Aarant to get up the following Sunday to say he had reconsidered and would stay without a raise. But so much ill-will had been caused that the Chairman of the Board said he would have to leave, which he did.

This was my first experience with church business matters. It left a bad impression on me. Also, my father never wanted to be on the church board after this experience.

A Violinist

At the age of 8 I also made another important decision, to learn to play the violin. My mother was an excellent musician and

a piano teacher. She had already started me on the piano, but for some reason I was not interested.

My great-grandfather on my grandmother Thomas' side had owned a violin. It was a beautiful old instrument with rounded edges instead of flat ones. My grandmother Thomas gave me this violin and urged me to learn to play.

Robert Rue, a member of the South Joplin Christian Church, was my first teacher. He must have been a good teacher because he had me playing in numerous recitals and finally prepared me for entry in the Missouri State Fair violin contest at Sedalia. I worked, practiced, and memorized long and hard for this contest.

The day before we left for Sedalia, I went to my Grandfather Higginbotham's garage at 32nd and Main Street to play. There was an old drill press in the garage that I liked to spin. On this particular day I was playing with that drill and I took my left hand and spun the fly wheel with all my might. As my hand passed around the backside of the flywheel, it was smashed horribly between the wheel and the concrete wall. The pain was terrible, but I did not cry because I instantly thought of the violin contest at the Missouri State Fair. I ran to my grandfather Higginbotham and showed him the finger. He had me soak it in coal oil. After I went home and showed it to my father and mother, they had me put ice packs on it.

That afternoon, Robert Rue came to get us to drive to Sedalia for the fair contest. He was so angry when I showed him my finger and told him what had happened, I really thought he would strike me. He drove very recklessly all the way to Sedalia. Once we arrived and got a room where we would sleep that night, he insisted I practice. I tried, but each time I applied pressure to the finger the pain was unbearable. Mr. Rue was furious!

All night long I soaked the finger in coal oil. I kept my mother and father awake because of the pain.

Early the next morning my father bandaged the finger and put more ice packs on it. The ice took away the pain.

One hour before the contest, Mr. Rue insisted I must take the bandage off and I must play the violin. He gave me a pep talk,

TESTIMONY

telling me how much of his time and effort had gone into me and that in spite of pain, I could play.

So with the grit and determination, I stepped on the stage and performed. Although the pain was unbearable, I played the 3 pieces to perfection and the judges gave me the blue ribbon for First Place!

Boyhood Friends

From the age of 8-14, I had four main friends. They were Junior Travis, Freddy Treece, Nathan Holt, and Winston Neal. These four friends all lived in the same block with us on Pearl Street.

Nathan Holt was my best friend. He was a nice boy who did not fight or argue. He walked with me to and from school and later when we had bicycles, he rode with me. We often set up lemonade stands in the summertime and sold ice cold lemonade for one penny per glass.

Junior Travis spent a lot of time at our house. He rode bicycles with me and we also had a tree house together, but he also liked to tease me. One day he stuck his foot in my bicycle causing me to fall over. I ran home crying. My father insisted I had to do the same to Junior. So the next time Junior rode past our house, I ran out and pushed him over. He got up and hit me in the nose. This incident put a damper on our friendship.

Freddy Treece liked to ride bicycles, play ball, and pal around. He also liked to get into mischief, so I did not spend too much time with him. In later years, I was able to baptize Freddy during a revival I preached at Blendville Christian Church in Joplin.

Winston Neal was an avid stamp collector. He did not play with us, but I liked to go to his house and look at the stamps. He got me interested in starting my own stamp collection.

Grandpa's Death

When I was 8 years old my grandfather Higginbotham became ill and died at the age of 59. It was a tragedy in our family. I can still hear my grandmother, two aunts, and my mother weeping. It was the saddest event of my entire childhood. After his death, I did not enjoy visiting my grandmother because she cried all the time.

When I was about 10 years old, I quit my job as a *Liberty Magazine* salesman and got a full fledged newspaper route with *Joplin News Herald*. This was a daily paper so I had to deliver 5 days a week. My route was 5 miles and ran from 32nd and Main all over Stapleton Hill. I became something of an expert bicycle rider. I rolled newspapers, carried them in a canvas bag in a basket, rode without using the handlebars, and threw papers right and left using both hands. On several occasions I ran the entire 5 mile route and never touched the handlebars!

War!!

On December 7, 1941, we were at church at South Joplin Christian Church. When we came out the newsboy was shouting, Extra, extra, read all about it. Japanese bomb Pearl Harbor!"

The war had begun! I was afraid. The only memories I have of the war are that my daddy had to register for the draft. He was deferred for awhile because of his family. Then as the war became worse it appeared he would be drafted so he volunteered for the Navy. He went for his physical at the age of 37 and passed 1A! It was a sad day for me. I knew my daddy would go and be killed! However, he was never called to go. We never knew why.

As the war began to wind down, General MacArthur liberated over 2000 Americans held by the Japanese in the Philippines. The Vernon Newland family was among those liberated. Our church had helped the Newlands when they first went to China after they fled the communists and went to the Philippines. Our church con-

TESTIMONY

tinued to help, so upon their return home, Vernon Newland came to report to South Joplin Church. It was my first remembrance of a missionary; he profoundly influenced my life.

Moving to Arizona

As we approached June of 1943, my father announced we were moving to Tucson, AZ. At first it seemed my life was coming to an end, but I gradually adjusted to the idea. Our \$600 home was sold. With the money from the house my dad bought an old 1935 GMC moving van. We loaded all our earthly belongings (3 little rooms) into the van and as soon as school finished, we set off for Tucson. Gasoline was rationed, but we obtained a book of T stamps to make the trip. Four smooth, worn out tires were on the rear wheels. Two tires with a little tread were on the front wheels. I was old enough to sense the danger of the situation and my heart was in my throat the entire trip.

We traveled old highway 66 out of Joplin towards Tulsa and Oklahoma City. As I had never traveled any further than Sedalia and Kansas City, about 150 miles, this was a big thrill. The first day we made it as far as Oklahoma City. The second day we made it almost to Amarillo, TX when a huge explosion scared us! It was one of the rear tires! A blowout! Our spirits sank as daddy crept along about 15 mph until we reached a service station capable of changing such a big tire.

The spare was put on; it was down to the cords! A big boot was put in the blown tire, and that became our spare. We spent the night in Amarillo. The next day we headed on into New Mexico. We got to see the Painted Desert and the Petrified Forest! This was a thrilling experience I had never expected to see in my lifetime.

We then turned south to Alamogordo. We were amazed to see the White Sands, but then began the most fearsome part of our journey. We began the long, slow ascent of Organ Peak. It was growing dark as we began this climb. The old GMC did not have

the power needed. In a little while the water began to boil. Daddy ordered me to find a big rock and put it behind the rear wheels to block us from rolling down the mountain backwards in case the brakes failed!

For the next three hours daddy would start the truck, I would remove the rock and jump into the truck, and we would go 1/10 of a mile. The water would boil. Daddy would stop and I would jump out and put the rock under the wheel.

An Army convoy was crossing the mountain that night. You could hear the army trucks growling, groaning, stripping gears for miles away. When the Army trucks would pass us, they would shake our moving van and we were terrified one was going to hit us in the darkness and send us careening over the mountain side.

Finally, at midnight, we reached the top. My father shut off the motor and we began coasting. We coasted 23 miles until we reached the outskirts of Alamogordo. What a relief when we finally got a motel and went to sleep.

The next day we journeyed on to Tucson and stayed in a motel for 6 weeks. My dad worked as a Linotype operator for one of the newspapers in Tucson. We had friends there named the Skidmores. They were very kind to us. They had an old Model T Ford. On one occasion they took us to Nogales, Mexico. This was another thrill I will never forget.

My Parents Argue!

After 6 weeks my daddy was very homesick and wanted to return to Joplin. My mother was very much against this and it caused the only argument I ever knew my parents to have.

My daddy applied for and received the gasoline to make the trip. We started back in silence. Every mile was agony for my sister and me because mama was not speaking to daddy. When we arrived back in Joplin, my mother refused to go see her parents or daddy's. We slept in a motel. My sister and I felt they would divorce.

TESTIMONY

However, the next week, daddy announced we were moving to Miami, OK. My mother accepted this and began talking again. Peace and harmony returned to our family.

August 1943

The move to Miami, Oklahoma was a time of trauma and re-adjustments. We moved into a tiny, two room apartment upstairs at 102 A. NW in Miami. Daddy got a job as a Linotype operator with the *Miami News Record*. I got a job as a newspaper delivery boy at the *Miami News Record*. Because World War II had taken all the available men to war, I got a man's route with over 300 customers. I was now making \$150 per month, I was rich! We sold the 1935 GMC moving van to a local moving company and daddy bought a 1935 Panel Ford. After the sale of the truck, we also moved to a beautiful, large, 2 story house at 7 G NE. It felt wonderful to live in a large house. At the age of 14 this was the first time in my life that I had a room all to myself!

Back to the Methodists

The first thing we did upon getting established in Miami was to go to church. Naturally, we went to First Christian Church. It was cold and dead! A very old man, Coral D. Walker, was the minister. He spoke slowly and used very big words. The congregation was small and unfriendly.

So we went to the Methodist Church. It was very big, friendly, and inviting. Everyone was real nice. My daddy wrote a letter to the minister at South Joplin Christian. He explained our dilemma. I shall always be grateful for Roy Fields' reply. He wrote a very kindly letter. He did not criticize the Methodists, but he said, "Brother Thomas, you and your family are un-denominational Christians. You would be giving up considerable if you left the

MY FAVORITE MISSIONARY SERMONS

Christian Church. Why give up Christ's name for a denominational Church? Acts 4:12, I Peter 4:16. Why give up the Lord's Supper? Matthew 26:26-31, John 6:53-59." He said, "Why not go back to First Christian where you belong and help to improve things? You be friendly and they will be friendly. You work and the church will grow!"

Thank God for Roy Fields. His wise advise was the spiritual turning point in our family and First Christian Church, Miami, Oklahoma was the place where I was challenged and helped to become a preacher.

First Christian Church, Miami, Oklahoma

Once the decision was made, our family went down the aisle and we placed membership with First Christian Church. Surprisingly, everyone was friendly and we learned to love Coral D. Walker even though we didn't understand his sermons.

I joined the church orchestra directed by Mrs. Frank Kraybill. I joined the church choir directed by Noel Wyatt, Jr. I joined the Sunday School class and the Sunday Evening Christian Endeavor. I got a big newspaper route with over 300 customers.

PART TWO — HIGH SCHOOL

By the time school started, I was so busy and happy that I thought I was in paradise. I also joined the high school Marching Band and the high school orchestra both directed by Claude (Doc) Killion.

9th Grade

I turned 15 years old as a 9th grade freshman high school stu-

TESTIMONY

dent. All my time was occupied with the above mentioned activities. C.J. Lawrence was a year ahead of me. As his father was the superintendent of the printers at the *Miami News Record*, C.J. got a job grabbing papers off the press.

Everyday when I went to the *Miami News Record* to get my 300 papers to deliver, C.J. would hand them to me. C.J. was loud and witty. I liked him very much. C.J. was also in the Sunday evening youth group at church. He started working on me about going to summer youth camp. I was not interested, but C.J. was persistent.

Heart O' Hills Camp

Every Sunday evening during Christian Endeavor, our youth sponsors Mutt and Arella Teehee, would promote going to camp. I didn't want to hear it and didn't want to go. But after 9 months of relentless pressure from Mutt Teehee on Sunday evening and C.J. Lawrence every day at the *Miami News Record*, I capitulated.

In August 1944, I went to camp. I was both frightened and thrilled! I had never been away from home one night in my life! Mutt Teehee drove and it was lots of fun. We sang silly songs, told jokes, and finally after 6 or 7 hours, we arrived at Heart O' Hills near Tahlequah, OK.

I was very shy and it was difficult living in a dormitory. I hated having to shower and use the toilet in front of other boys and men. But I survived.

The camp itself was a genuine spiritual thrill. The daily classes were all taught by Godly men who helped to reinforce all my parents had taught me for 15 years. The chapel services and nightly evangelistic services took me with the angels in the Heavenlies!

This was also the first time in my life I can ever remember being favorably impressed by girls! Some of the girls acted as though they liked me, but I was too shy to have any girlfriend! I did notice that some were pretty.

The Calling of God!

As a little boy, I was always very impressed by the story of the boy Samuel and how God called, "Samuel! Samuel!" and after the third trip to Eli, he said, "It is the voice of God calling you." Then Samuel responded, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth!"

I always thought that if God spoke to me, I would hear Him and answer.

God Calls

The closing night at Heart O' Hills was an emotion packed evening. The minister in charge had a fireside service. It was very inspiring as the entire student body and faculty gathered around the fireside. The song leader led us in special heart moving choruses like, "Into My Heart, Come Into My Heart Lord Jesus," "I Know The Lord Will Make A Way For Me. If I Live A Holy Life, Shun The Wrong And Do The Right, I Know the Lord Will Make A Way for Me," "Where He Leads Me I Will Follow," etc.

By the time the song service had ended, we were all in tears. Then the minister, who spoke, closed in a most dramatic way. He had us move away from the campfire out towards the dark woods. He then lit one candle and placed it on a stand in the center. he said, "This one candle represents Jesus, the True light of the world." Twelve candles were then placed around the Jesus candle and were lit. He said, "These twelve candles represent the 12 apostles." Then he asked for all ministers and missionaries in the camp to come forward and take a candle and light off the Christ candle and form an inner circle.

Come to the Inner Circle

The minister spoke convincingly about the need for young

TESTIMONY

men and women to dedicate their lives to Full Time Christian Service. This was the first time I had ever heard that expression. I understood it to mean, Preacher, Missionary, Youth Minister, etc. I could actually feel a tug in my heart as though God was urging me to be a preacher!

But I resisted! Like Moses, I made excuses. "I can't preach! I can't even pray publicly! We are too poor of a family. I could never afford to go to Bible College!"

At that moment as I offered those excuses, the song of invitation started. "I know the Lord will make a way for me!" Many went forward and dedicated their lives. I wept and held back.

God Taps Me on the Shoulder

As the candlelight ceremony closed, the leader challenged us to return to our bunks without speaking a word. We were to silently pray and let God speak to us. I cooperated, as did the entire camp.

After I had retired, I lay in my bunk in the darkness praying. Suddenly there was a tap on my shoulder! I sat upright! It was Dyer Campbell, an elderly, Godly preacher. He said, "Reggie, has God called you to preach?" "No," I lied. Mr. Campbell said, "Don't preach if you can be happy doing anything else."

I had always told myself that if God spoke to me, I'd know his voice. He did speak to me, through the Bible, through my parents, through Mutt Teehee, through C.J. Lawrence, through the camp time, the candle, and Mr. Campbell. I did recognize His voice and His call. But, I made excuses!

Spiritually Miserable!

I went home from camp a totally changed boy. I was miserable because I was making excuses to God's call, but I was totally dedicated to God in my daily life and church life.

I wanted to read the Bible, pray, and live for God. I wanted to win souls to Christ. I began to lead in public prayer, singing in the choir, playing the violin in the church orchestra, and the Sunday evening Christian Endeavor took on new meaning. Every day I talked with C.J. Lawrence about going to camp the next summer.

My Brother's Birth

Around January 1, 1944, my mother became pregnant for the third time. I did not know and my sister did not know. Even though I was 15 years old, I was still totally ignorant of the facts of life. After a few months, I observed, my mother seemed to be getting fat, but I thought nothing about it!

In later life I learned that Mama and Daddy were very surprised about baby number 3. Because my mother was now 35 years old, it was considered somewhat of a disgrace to have a baby so late in life.

On September 11, 1944, my daddy came home early in the morning and announced to my sister and me, "You have a baby brother!" Barbara was thrilled. I was totally unaffected.

It is sad for me that my little brother, Edwin Eugene Thomas, was born when I was 16 years old. I was too old and too preoccupied with my own life to pay any attention to him. When I left home at 18, I held him in my arms and today the photo looks as though I am holding my own child.

10th Grade Motor Bike

Up to this time I had always ridden a bicycle. I was quite skillful at bike riding. Approaching the age of 16 meant I had been delivering newspapers on a bicycle for 8 years. I was also quite strong and in good health.

TESTIMONY

As my 16th birthday came closer, I asked permission to buy a motor bike. The Cushman Motor Scooter was the in thing. As I had the money, Daddy and Mama reluctantly gave in.

As soon as I got the Cushman Scooter, I was suddenly one of the most popular boys in High School! There were only 5 or 6 of us in Miami who had Scooters; John Cone, Roger Hutchison, Denver Gibson and 2 or 3 others.

Girls began hanging around! LaVerne Simpson, Pat Barlow, Pat Donica, Neewanda Schmitt, Ramona Valley, and Alice June McFerron are some I remember who were eager to ride with me.

My Daddy told me I was to be home by 8:30 pm on school nights and 9:20 pm Friday and Saturday nights. I was having so much fun taking girls riding that I forgot. I came in a half an hour late one Friday night. My daddy was waiting!! I was scared, but I apologized and he said, "Don't let it happen again!" The next week it happened again. This time daddy met me at the door and he said, "As long as you live in this house you will obey me. If you think you can whip me, let's fight right now!" I was terrified! I cried and apologized and never again did I disobey!

16th Birthday 3 Great Happenings

January 8, 1945, was a memorable time for me. I had been begging and pleading for months. As you might guess, I wanted an automobile. So on my birthday I purchased, with my own hard earned money, a 1934 Plymouth. I purchased the car from Claude Donica. I thought the car was great! But there were many problems. It broke down constantly and it leaked gas.

Gas rationing was still on. However, I had a big newspaper route which was judged essential and I qualified for B stamps. That gave me enough gas to run the newspaper route. However, I used my bicycle to deliver papers and used the car to have fun!

Because of the gas leak, the B coupons ran out. I told my tale

of woe and someone said, "You can go to any truck stop and purchase T stamps on the Black Market. I did it! Daddy soon found out and asked, "Where did you get all that gas?" I told him. He was furious. He gave me a one hour lecture on Patriotism, the War Effort, the sin of Black Market gas, etc. I was ashamed and apologized for my ignorance. Then I got the leak in the gas tank fixed!

Russell Martin

The second momentous happening was the coming of Russell L. Martin to First Christian. Russell was 26 years old and a ball of fire for God! He had just come from 4 years as a traveling evangelist and was a soul winner *par excellence*!

Wading Water

Russell's first Sunday as our minister was a day never to be forgotten! We choir members always used the big baptismal pool as a short cut going from Sunday School to the choir robing room. The reason we could do this was because the pool was always dry. No one ever got baptized. Our church was dead so far as soul winning was concerned. Unbeknown to the congregation, Russell had persuaded the fire department to come and fill the huge baptismal pool with water.

When Sunday School ended, all the choir members started to the choir robing room. The first lady was waist deep in water before she realized she was all wet! This lady was quite upset and the news of her mishap swept through the congregation like wildfire. By the time church started, we all knew the new preacher already had made an enemy.

But when Russell began to preach, his dramatic delivery and sincere presentation of God's word electrified the dead congrega-

TESTIMONY

tion. We all felt like Ezekiel's army of dead bones coming to life again! When the invitation was extended 12 souls came to accept Jesus as Savior and the baptismal pool was used! Our church was set on fire and was never the same again!

Worldwide Influence

During Russell Martin's 27-year ministry in Miami there were literally thousands that were saved. There were 71 young people who went into the ministry. I was the first one. Some of these 71 have really become world famous as gospel preachers! Lloyd Cameron, Charles Gibson, Ronnie Epps, Wally Rendell, Chief Rendell, Charles Scott, Freeman Bump, Davie Barger to name a few.

Friends for Life

Russell was 26 and I was 16. We were instantly attracted to each other. I looked up to Russell as though he was my second father. I admired and respected him. I wanted to imitate him. He was young enough to also be my friend. He was funny and clever. He made me laugh. I wanted to be with him all the time.

Playing Jokes

Russell had plenty of jokes he played on people. As a result, we began to play jokes on him!

Lloyd Cameron and I teamed up to play some of the wildest jokes on Russell. Some almost caused disaster! One day we knew Russell had a funeral at 2 pm at Cooper's Funeral Home. He was always in the habit of arriving one minute before the start of the service. So Lloyd and I jacked up the left rear wheel of Russell's big Buick. We hid and watched. At 2 minutes until 2:00 pm.,

Russell rushed out and jumped in the car. He started it and put in gear. The wheel spun and he sat there gunning the engine. We laughed until we were exhausted. Russell had to walk to Cooper's and was 5 minutes late. If he had known we were the culprits, he would have killed us!

Another day Lloyd and I slipped in the basement of the church with a big giant firecracker. We got it all set up and we had rigged up a giant, long fuse that would take 3 to 4 minutes before it would ignite the firecracker. We lit it and then ran upstairs to the baptismal door leading into Russell's office. We lit a cigar and puffed on it blowing lots of cigar smoke into Russell's office. Then we ran around the entrance door and walked in.

Russell was suspicious, he said, "Have you boys been smoking cigars?" "No," we lied! Just at that moment the big firecracker went off in the basement with the loudest explosion you could imagine. The church building shook and reverberated! Russell looked at Lloyd and me and said, "What have you dirty rats done this time?" Rose Turner, the elderly church secretary burst into the office screaming, "Call the police! A bomb has gone off!" Russell said, "Calm down, Rose, it was just Andy smoking gunpowder!" Andy was the church custodian. As soon as he calmed Rose, he turned to us very sternly and said, "Let's go to the basement and see the damage! And you boys are going to pay for every broken window!" The joke was no longer funny as we soberly went to the basement. Fortunately no windows were broken and no damage done to the building. This sobered Lloyd and me for a few days.

Revival and DeMolay Dance

About this time, Russell led the church in a big 3 week revival meeting. Russell preached and Earl Grice was song evangelist. It was a thrilling meeting. Hundreds attended and over 100 were baptized. I attended every night except 1 during the 3 weeks. The one night I missed was because of a DeMolay dance. I did not dance

TESTIMONY

and I did not believe that it was right to dance. But some of my friends persuaded me to go. My conscience killed me and I did not enjoy one moment of the evening. As I left the dance, I bumped straight into Earl Grice! He looked at me and said, "Why Reggie! We missed you at the revival! What are you doing here?" My face turned fiery red! I was so ashamed! It seemed to me that God arranged for Earl to be there at that moment. I never again went to another dance.

The Singing Brocks

Russell had two revivals each year. So in about six months he began advertising the Singing Brocks. We learned that Virgil and Blanche Brock were the composers of "Beyond the Sunset," "He's a Wonderful Savior to Me," "Sing and Smile and Pray" and over 200 of the hymns and choruses sung around the world.

Great crowds attended and scores were won to Christ. We came to the last night of the revival. When Russell extended the invitation the 99th soul walked forward. Russell signaled his associate, Dallas Kneale, and whispered in his ear. Dallas was instructed to get in his car and go get Imogene Tatum, the Indian church secretary, to place membership. Dallas drove like a madman while Russell kept pleading and extending the invitation. Suddenly at this moment, Virgil Brock grabbed the microphone and began a very emotional appeal while he concluded with his own rendition of the 90 and 9. As Virgil Brock brought tears streaming down our cheeks, down the aisle walked 5 more souls including Imogene making 104 additions.

Afterwards, Russell loved telling this story and he would always conclude by saying, "That dirty Virgil got 4 more that I was saving for next Sunday!"

The Policeman and Russell

Once we had a great Christian camp at Sedan, KS. At this time Russell had a beautiful Chrysler convertible. Everyone loved riding with him in this car. One day Russell took me, Pearl Willis, Davie Barger, and a couple of others into Sedan. He parked parallel instead of angle parking. When we came out of the store, the town cop was leaning on the bumper writing a ticket. Russell shouted, "Write her good, buddy!" The policeman was highly offended by Russell's attitude and voice. He said, "I'll have you know we have rules and regulations in this town." Russell said, "Hurry up and write it!" and he started the engine. Suddenly we were very shocked as Russell put the car in gear and took off with a roar. Pearl Willis said, "Russell, aren't you afraid he'll shoot you?" Russell laughed and replied, "How can he when he's rolling in the gutter?" We all looked back and the policeman had fallen and was actually rolling in the gutter! Russell never drove into Sedan again!

My First Sermon

The third big event in my 16th year was my first sermon. Russell approached me one day and said, "Reggie, I want you to preach next Sunday." I was terrified. I replied, "I can't do that!" Russ said, "Oh yes you can! I've already put in the paper that you will!"

Every day that week I went to the church during study hall and Russ helped me. By Sunday, I was ready. Even though I knew the Bible, it only took 10 minutes for me to tell everything I knew. I ran out and offered the invitation. To my thrill and amazement, 2 souls came to accept Jesus. I was smart enough to know I had not converted these people. But it was the sign from God I had been looking for. Now I knew it was His call for me to preach. The decision was made!

TESTIMONY

Heart O' Hills — My Candle is Lit! A Memorable Summer-Revival Meeting

The summer of 1946 was not only memorable because of my life's dedication to the ministry, but also because of 2 great revivals I preached in Fairland and Afton, OK.

Russell Martin had made the arrangements. Lloyd Cameron was song leader, Sarah Kraybill the pianist, and I was to preach.

First we went to Fairland, OK. Brother A.Z. Matthews was minister of the Christian Church at Fairland. He had four wonderful sons; Faust, a preacher, Bill, Jack and Monty. Monty and I had become fast and close friends in High School. We both played bass horns in Claude Killion's Championship Miami High Marching Band. I was thrilled to be with Monty and his Dad. (Later in life, Monty became the organizer and lead singer of the world famous Foggy River Boys, who sang over national TV every Saturday night with Red Foley on the Ozark Jubilee.)

30 Souls Added

The revival at Fairland was a huge success. Great crowds filled the building overflowing every night for 2 weeks. I preached my heart out. God blessed with 30 souls added. It was a sensation! News spread fast.

40 Souls Added

Following the revival at Fairland, we moved on to Afton, where an even greater revival occurred. The news of the success in Fairland fueled the fires of revival in Afton. Record crowds attended and 40 more souls were added.

MY FAVORITE MISSIONARY SERMONS

My Candle is Lit!

I could hardly wait until camp time. This summer I drove my old 1934 Plymouth to Tahlequah. Some of the youth rode with me. Camp was another great spiritual time in my life and during the Friday campfire I went forward to light my candle and stand in the inner circle with those who were dedicating their lives to full time Christian Service. God's call was answered!

Trouble With Russell

From the moment Russell became our minister, he and I differed on the youth work. I wanted to go to "Heart O' Hills Camp" and Russell wanted me to go to "Sunset Bible Camp." The one I attended was the Disciples of Christ camp, while Russ was promoting the undenominational, independent Christian Church Camp. I was in ignorance of the situation.

Without realizing it, I caused Russell problems. I became President of the Heart O' Hills Camp during my Senior year and worked very hard to recruit the youth go there. Russell opposed me and worked to get the youth to Sunset.

It took Russell two years to get me straightened out and change my Bible College influence from Phillips U. to Cincinnati Bible Seminary. I shudder when I realize that I would have been a Disciples of Christ minister had Russell not come to Miami. Thank God for Russell Martin.

11th Grade — My First Ministry

During the spring of 1946, Russell asked me to start preaching regularly at the North Miami Christian Church. This church was only able to have Sunday School because no one was available to preach. Naturally, I was speechless and told Russell, "NO!" He

TESTIMONY

said, "You can do it! I've already told them you would be there Sunday!"

So as a Junior in High School, I became the minister of the North Miami Christian Church. Lloyd Cameron agreed to be song leader and soloist. Our youth group cleaned up the old, dirty building at North Miami. We went visiting door-to-door in North Miami, announcing the service and inviting everyone to attend.

We enjoyed every Lord's Day for nearly 2 years that I served as minister. Some who helped play the piano were Sarah Kraybill, my mother, Florence Thomas, my sister Barbara, and others. Lloyd Cameron served faithfully as song leader and soloist and we recruited lots of young people to help with special songs; Charles Gibson, Pat Donica, Nemamah Schmitt, Pat Barlow, and many others.

Souls Were Won

There were souls won to Christ. To me it appeared that God was reaffirming again and again that he had called me to preach His Gospel and to be an Evangelist!

More Jokes!

It seemed that Russell Martin had 10,000 jokes. He pulled one after another. I got the idea that one of the best things for a minister to do was pull jokes on people! In retrospect it is a wonder why people did not run me out on a rail!

The Thing

At Afton I started advertising that I had captured "The Thing" and would display it on a certain night. There was a popular song

at that time called, "The Thing." The basic message of the song was nobody wanted the thing, not even Hell or Heaven. As I announced this night after night the crowds grew. The night I displayed The Thing was spectacular! I held up the offering plate! The audience roared with laughter. People talked about it far and near! (How times have changed. If anyone would attempt such a sensational thing today they would be accused of blasphemy and would be driven out of the church.)

Amen — Hallelujah — Praise the Lord!

Another spectacular joke that I pulled in Afton was at offering time. I announced that on a certain night we would have a shouting offering! When the night came, I had 4 men in the church primed to carry out the plan.

I announced that when anyone dropped in \$1 or less the deacon would shout "Amen." When the offering was \$1 to \$5 the deacon would shout "Hallelujah." And when anyone dropped in \$10 or more would get a "Praise the Lord"! The audience roared with laughter. As the offering began there were "Amens," "Hallelujahs," and a few "Praise the Lords." Then someone dropped in a \$20 bill and Onus Waugh shouted "Whew-eee"! The audience laughed until they cried. Onus was the most respected and Godly man in the church. In retrospect, I realize that things of this nature were terrible to do in God's house. But as a 16 year old boy, I got away with it and people loved it. Although they were very funny at the time, I would never recommend anyone doing anything like this today!

The Joke that had a Tragic End!

Following the meetings at Fairland and Afton, Lloyd Cameron and I resumed our ministry at North Miami. We were not only thrilled with soul winning but we now had many new jokes to play

on the members at North Miami. One was a car bomb!

I put the bomb under the hood of one of the church elders, Brother Wilson. I then quietly notified every member what I had done and invited the entire congregation to wait after the dismissal for the fun!

When Brother Wilson and his wife got into their car, unsuspecting, the entire congregation watched. As Brother Wilson turned the key there was a loud whistle followed by a very loud explosion and then billowing smoke. All of us roared in laughter. Then suddenly the laughter stopped because we realized Brother Wilson had slumped over the steering wheel! He had a heart attack!

The next few days and nights were anxious for me. Fortunately Brother Wilson recovered. He and his wife forgave me and we remained good friends!

That put an end to my practical jokes!

Sunset Bible Camp

Russell Martin had continued to argue with me about the Disciples of Christ and Heart O' Hills Camp. He was very insistent that I attend Sunset Bible Camp and he said, "You will see the difference!" So the summer of '46 ended with me going to Sunset Bible Camp.

Russell had engineered things so that all the youth group went to Sunset Bible Camp. Jim Rutherford, Jr. was the president of the camp. His father, Jim Rutherford, Sr., Forest Bailey, Charley Wilbanks, Frank Grubbs, and Russell Martin were the faculty members.

The camp seemed like a pool hall or beer tavern to me. The boys were smoking, gambling, drinking, cursing and fighting! Most of these boys had just gotten out of the service as World War II was winding down. They were wild and woolly. I hated it. I was rejoicing that I was right and Russell was wrong! Sunset Bible Camp was no good!

But suddenly a little short man with a booming loud voice walked in the boys' dorm. It was Jim Rutherford, Sr. He shouted, "You bums shut up! I am ashamed of you! Where do you think you are? This is no beer hall! This is a Bible Camp. Now you either straighten up right now or I'll personally knock your block off! If any of you sissies think you're big enough to challenge me, step forward!" Not a boy moved. Everyone was ashamed!

That night Jim Rutherford, Sr. preached his famous sermon, "If I Were The Devil!" It was the most gripping, compelling, emotional sermon I have ever heard. The sermon lasted 1 hour, the invitation lasted over 3 hours. By the time it was over more than 300 had gone forward. The boys who had been drinking, cursing, gambling, and fighting had all gone forward and were on their knees weeping and praying in repentance. More than 100 were baptized. The rest rededicated their lives or dedicated to full time ministry.

At the close of camp, I was elected President of Sunset Bible Camp for the next year. I was to preside over the mid-winter rally and the biggest honor of all, I got to keep the camp Bible for the next year.

Invited to Preach in Tulsa

As a result of Sunset Bible Camp, I was able to become friends with Jim Rutherford, Sr., Charley Wilbanks, Frank Grubbs, and Forrest Bailey who, along with Russell, were some of the greatest soul winners of that day.

One of the biggest thrills was to be invited by Jim Rutherford, Sr. to preach at the world famous Cincinnati Avenue Christian Church in Tulsa. The last Sunday afternoon of August, I drove to Tulsa and preached Sunday evening. I was amazed. The church met in a huge, old, white frame building. There were hundreds present. The biggest crowd I had ever seen. Jim Rutherford, Sr. introduced me like I was a big time preacher. I was flattered and

TESTIMONY

amazed. Several souls were converted that night! This contact with Jim Rutherford, Sr. profoundly influenced me as a young preacher boy. Jim Rutherford, Sr. became a very big influence on the rest of my life.

Conclusion

Dear Reader:

You have now read the story of how God called me to preach!! The years have rolled by. It is now 50 years later. Praise God. He has spared my life and is still using me to preach His Word.

If I had my life for Him to live all over again I would not change anything. I believe God has led me all the way. It has been a thrilling life. Seeing precious souls come to Christ is the most satisfying way to live.

My prayer is that YOU might be led to use your life to preach the gospel.

Why Print This Testimony?

Because I am convinced that young people need a testimony like this. The years of youth are decision making years. Great numbers of young people are lost to the ministry because their questions are not answered. Satan often wins by urging youth to settle for second best rather than the best for God.

And ministers need this testimony to remind them that recruitment for the ministry depends greatly on them. No matter how heavy the load ministers should not lose sight of recruitment and should allow time and effort for programming in this direction.

One of the great tragedies in our day is that many churches are teeming with youth and have programs to meet their needs at all levels, but nothing definite in the direction of ministerial recruitment.

Youth should be made aware that at the moment of salvation God gives to them at least one spiritual gift. And the basic drive of any young man ought to be to determine what God did for him at the point of salvation, and when he discovers that, then he has an obligation to develop it and use it totally to the glory of God.

“The Spirit of the Lord (is) upon Me, because He has anointed Me (the Anointed One, the Messiah) to preach the good news (the Gospel) to the poor; He has sent Me to announce release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind; to send forth delivered those who are oppressed — who are down trodden, bruised, crushed, and broken down by calamity; To proclaim the accepted and acceptable year of the Lord — the day when salvation and the free favors of God profusely abound.” Amplified Version Luke 4:18, 19.

“And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how can men (be expected to) preach unless they are sent? As it is written, How beautiful are the feet of those who bring glad tidings! — How welcome is the coming of those who preach the good news of His good things!” Amplified Version Romans 10:14, 15.

“He Himself appointed and gave men to us, some to be apostles (special messengers), some prophets (inspired preachers and expounders), some evangelists (preachers of the Gospel, traveling missionaries), some pastors (shepherds of His flock), and teachers. His intention was the perfecting and the full equipping of the saints (His consecrated people), that (they should do) the work of ministering toward building up Christ’s body (the church).” Amplified Version Ephesians 4:11, 12.

I do not believe that any church has the right to a preacher that is not at the same time producing preachers. And I believe that any minister worth his salt ought to be duplicating himself at least, and even multiplying himself. He should be looking for young men in the congregation where he serves and surrounding himself with Timothies, Tituses, and Silases. The image of the ministry present to these men should challenge them to the preaching ministry.

The starting point is in the dedicated Christian home. This is

TESTIMONY

complemented by devoted Bible school teachers who love Christ, His work, and His church, and instill within the hearts of boys a vision and a challenge for service.

Youth is the time for commitment. Life soon becomes complicated!

Always with those ministering to youth there needs to be a sense of urgency to capture the best for God before it is too late.

Any young man wanting to be a preacher for God, above everything else, can be that preacher by just turning everything over to God! With a prayer that many Timothies will be swept into the preaching arena by the powerful wind of the Holy Spirit, I publish my testimony.

Reggie Thomas
Romans 1:16

1. The first part of the paper is devoted to a study of the properties of the function $f(x)$ defined by the equation

$$f(x) = \int_0^x \frac{1}{1+t^2} dt$$

for $x \in \mathbb{R}$. It is shown that $f(x)$ is an odd function and that $f(x) \in C^1(\mathbb{R})$. The second part of the paper is devoted to a study of the properties of the function $g(x)$ defined by the equation

$$g(x) = \int_0^x \frac{1}{1+t^4} dt$$

for $x \in \mathbb{R}$. It is shown that $g(x)$ is an even function and that $g(x) \in C^1(\mathbb{R})$. The third part of the paper is devoted to a study of the properties of the function $h(x)$ defined by the equation

$$h(x) = \int_0^x \frac{1}{1+t^6} dt$$

for $x \in \mathbb{R}$. It is shown that $h(x)$ is an odd function and that $h(x) \in C^1(\mathbb{R})$.

Some Angels Who Visited Me

The Bible has much to say about angels.

In my experiences over the past 27 years of world travel, I've been to 65 different nations. I should be dead, because I have traveled over three million miles. I was in Vietnam during the Vietnam war. I was in Hong Kong during the bombings in 1967. I was in Chile, South America when they had the revolution, and the President was killed. I've been in coups twice in Nigeria, twice in Ghana, and several in Haiti over the past seven years since they deposed their dictator, Baby Doc.

In all these travels God has wonderfully delivered me. I cannot account for it in any other way except to say God has delivered me through the ministry of His angels.

In Genesis 48:16 there is a marvelous verse of scripture. Jacob was an old, old man. He was on his deathbed. He was telling his children and his grandchildren goodbye. He was praying God's blessing upon each member of his family. As he prayed God's blessings upon his family, he made reference in his prayer to the angel, "who has delivered me from all harm."

In Exodus 23:20 God was speaking to the children of Israel, He said, "See, I'm sending an angel ahead of you to guard you along the way and to bring you to the place I have prepared."

In Psalm 34:7, we read, "The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear Him and He delivers them."

In Psalm 91:11, "For He will command His angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways. They will lift you up in their hands so that you will not strike your foot against the stone."

In Daniel 3:28, "Then Nebuchadnezzar said, 'Praise be to the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who has sent His angel and rescued His servants.'"

In Daniel 6:22, Daniel said, "My God sent His angel, and He shut the mouths of the lions."

In Matthew 1:20, "But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, 'Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.'"

When Jesus, our Lord and Savior, was tempted, Matthew 4:11 says, "Then the devil left him and angels came and attended Him."

In Matthew 18:10, "See that you do not look down on one of these little ones. For I tell you that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father in heaven." From that teaching of Jesus we get the idea that we all must have a guardian angel.

Hebrews 1:14, a beautiful verse of scripture, "Are not all angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation?" What reassurance we should have as Christians to know that all the angels are ministering servants that God has sent to serve us.

Just a Few of the Angels that Have Visited Me

1. I was in Jamaica, the year was 1975. The Gospel Lads were there with me singing. We had set up a tent in downtown Kingston at Half-way Tree. This was a three week revival meeting. There were many, many people coming to Christ. Every service was a spiritual thrill.

This particular night the Gospel Lads had just finished singing and I stepped up to the pulpit to preach. The tent was crowded to

overflow. They were standing all around the edge of the tent, and were even standing in the darkness on the outside. The pulpit was on the far edge of the tent, so I was standing with my back to the outside.

As I began to preach, I suddenly realized that something had gone dreadfully wrong, because I could see a terrible look of fear come upon the faces of the congregation. There was a Rastafarian back in the darkness, and he had a great big knife. He intended to kill me.

He ran directly toward me as I stood at the pulpit preaching. I did not know this, of course, all I saw was the fear in the eyes of the people. One of the Jamaican ministers, Gerald Murphey, was seated to my left. Suddenly, he leaped out of his seat like a shot from a gun and tackled this man in the last split second that remained before he plunged that knife in my back. The man fell right beside my left foot and the knife plunged into the platform beside me.

As I reflect upon this, I know God delivered me from certain death. I've asked myself, "How did Gerald Murphey see that man running out of the darkness in time to leap to his feet and tackle him?" I cannot think of anything else except that God sent one of those ministering angels to my rescue.

2. We go next to Ghana, Africa, 1988. My wife and I had gone to Ghana to hold revival meetings in unreached villages. We traveled back in the jungle where there was no electricity. There was no moonlight, no starlight, it was really black. We were in a very primitive village, where we were trying to start the church.

When we finished our service the African evangelist, Appiah Danquah, said, "The vehicle is broken. And so I sent the driver to find a mechanic to fix it." My spirits fell. I said, "Appiah, why did you do a dumb thing like that. Here we are stranded in this jungle." He said, "We'll get it fixed. They'll come back for us." I said, "There's no mechanic in his jungle and you know there isn't. They won't get it fixed and we'll have to walk out."

We started walking in the darkness. You can imagine the

thoughts that went through our minds because we knew there were plenty of wild animals out there, also snakes. We only had one little flashlight and it was so black that without that flashlight you couldn't even see your hand if you held it in front of your nose. We walked two or three miles before we got to the next village. There was our Volkswagen van.

Some fellow said, "It's broken." I said, "What's wrong?" He said, "The van will only go in high gear and the battery was dead!" I said, "We'll put it in high gear and push to start the engine, then we'll drive home in high gear." We tried that and it worked for a little while. But then we came to a hill.

The van did not have the power to climb the hill in high gear and choked down and died. We jumped out and found some rocks and put them under the tires so it would not roll down hill. We pushed and it wouldn't budge. I pushed so hard that I broke out into perspiration until my clothes were as wet as if I had been in a shower. We could not budge that Volkswagen van no matter how hard we tried. We realized that we were at the end of our resources. There was nothing else we could do.

In that moment of absolute helplessness our Ghanaian evangelist, Appiah Danquah, prayed a simple prayer. At the top of his lungs he prayed, "Jesus, help us." After he prayed that prayer that vehicle started up the hill and we were not pushing it. I realized that somebody was pushing the vehicle, but it was not any of us. We were all stunned and we silently followed. We walked up to the top of the hill and no one spoke a word. We climbed inside and whoever these people were just silently pushed the vehicle and again it started in high gear and we went all the way back to Accra, Ghana; forty miles without any further difficulty.

When my wife and I were all alone I said, "I hesitated to say anything in front of the other people because I don't want anybody to call me crazy. I think God sent angels to rescue us. Am I crazy?" My wife said, "No, you are not crazy. That's exactly what happened."

3. We were in the Ivory Coast, Africa. We had gone to the village of Abengourou, where there was not a church.

Upon arrival in the village of Abengourou, we found a place to stay and attempted to exchange our money. The bank teller said, "We do not exchange U.S. Dollars here." It's the only place on earth that I've been that they didn't want U.S. Dollars. We were stranded. We were helpless. We went back to the hotel and quickly went back to our rooms and had a prayer meeting.

At the close of the prayer meeting, we left our room and went down to the lobby and up walked a stranger. He said, "I heard you were here and so I came." I said, "Who are you?" He said, "I'm an ivory trader. I've come to sell you ivory." I said, "We don't have any money to buy ivory. Even if we had the money, we couldn't, because it's against the law to buy ivory. If we were to try to take ivory into the United States they would put us in prison." He said, "What do you mean you don't have any money?" I said, "Well, we have money, but it's not recognized here in the Ivory Coast." He said, "What kind of money do you have?" I said, "U.S. Dollars." He said, "That's what I want. I will exchange your money." A total stranger solved the problem!!

We were able to start the church at Abengourou with 28 souls being baptized into Christ. That new church had 600 more baptisms in the first year. In the second year, they had 1,000 more baptisms and there are nine churches in the villages around Abengourou. We started with only 28 people. The point is that we never could've started if God hadn't answered prayer and sent an angel to the rescue. We may call him an ivory trader, but how did he know we were there? Why did he say, "I heard you were here and so I came"? Why did he want U.S. Dollars when no one else, not even the bank, would take them? I can't explain it in any way except that God answered prayer and God sent an angel to the rescue.

4. We were in Haiti, December 1989, holding revival meetings. This one particular night we came out of the little, primitive, thatched roof shelter where we had been meeting, got in our car, started the car, and started back to Gonaives. We hadn't traveled more than a half a mile until the car went dead. We had no flashlight and it was pitch black. We had no tools and no way of finding

out what was even wrong with the car. I said, "I guess we'll have to walk."

At that very second, four people appeared out of the blackness. It was so dark we couldn't see anything. I don't know who they were or where they came from, but they appeared. They said, "We heard you needed some bicycles. We'll loan you ours, so you can go to Gonaives."

I couldn't think of anything except "Thank you, Lord for sending these angels, we need them so much."

5. I was in Guyana, South America in January 1991. I was working in a village called Zeelught.

In order to reach the village of Zeelught you must cross a floating bridge. It is built on pontoons and the pontoons are tied together with steel cables. As the tide comes in there is enormous pressure on the bridge and it has to raise up with the tide and when the tide goes out, the bridge has to go down.

We had a wonderful revival at Zeelught. We came to the last day when we were to go to the airport and fly home. We were helping to build a church building at Zeelught and I wanted to get one last picture to see the final work that had been done on the church building.

As we approached the floating bridge, we rolled upon it, and just then there was an outcry from the second car in front of us. The bridge broke and a huge section started floating out in the ocean!

After we got home, we received a letter from the minister, Brother Sateo Persaud, and the letter read something like this, "Dear Brother Reggie, all I can say is that God's angels came to your rescue once again."

6. The day is coming when Jesus will descend and the angels will come with Him to gather all the Christians and take them home. Matthew 24:31 Praise the Lord for the ministry of angels.

Dear friends, you may not realize it but every one of you have been ministered to by the angels. Maybe you don't recognize it, but

the angels have been there guarding over you, helping you along the way. I know they have, because the New Testament says, "Are not all angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who inherit salvation." I just want to encourage you to try to open your spiritual eyes and be looking for angels; God is with you. He has promised that He will never ever forsake you. When the angels come and minister to you be ready to thank God and give Him the glory and be appreciative for His ministry of angels.

I Am Not a Missionary! What Do I Do?

by Esther Thomas

The question I'm asked most often by people here in the states is, "What do you do on these trips?" Well, I know they expect me to tell them I do something profound, exciting. My answer is always, "Nothing." It's true, I don't do anything.

I don't have any of the talents that you would expect someone to have who is involved in a missionary organization like we have. But, that answer became embarrassing to me. I could see disapproval on the face of the person who asked me and disappointment, too. So I thought about that question for awhile, determined to come up with some kind of answer that would satisfy people. It's really hard because I really feel like I don't do anything.

I thought to myself, "Why do I keep on going on these trips?" I really don't like to go and it's not what I wanted to do. It's not what I had in mind for myself to be doing at this time in my life. What I really want to do is be a Super Mom, a Super Wife, Super Homemaker, and a Super Grandma. I don't get to do those things very much.

I have no training to be a missionary and when someone refers to me as a missionary, I just nearly faint. I always think, "I wish they wouldn't call me that, because I'm not a missionary; I'm an ordinary person; I'm a believer; a church member, but I could

never be so great as a missionary." I wouldn't last ten minutes on a mission field if I thought I was there to stay forever. There's no way.

As I thought about this, the Holy Spirit reminded me of the time I spent sitting under a tree in the village of Mapou, just observing. I saw the 32 young children that Mama and Papa Delicat had living in their home. I saw how Marie, the cook, was cooking rice and beans, to feed the children, in a small hut; just a tiny, little hut. She did that to protect the food from the hungry, village people. She cooked the food on the floor, on the ground, on the dirt floor, over a charcoal fire. She did this every day and when she would come out of that hut, her eyes would be blood red; they were burnt from the charcoal smoke. I saw how the children ate their food from a gourd with their fingers. I saw how the children used the bathroom on the ground in the same place they sat to eat their meals. I saw there was no water at all in the village. The nearest water was a river about two miles up the road. I saw how the children, 32 of them, slept on the dirt floor in one room.

I saw a young woman very near giving birth in which she would die. I don't know what was wrong with her, but Mama Delicat told me that when her baby was born, she would die. She did. That baby was a little boy. His name is Moise and he is now 12 years old, and he has lived at the Mapou Christian Orphanage all of his life.

I was there in a village helping a group of nurses when a mother came carrying her child in her arms. The child's head was covered with a fungus like none of us had ever seen before. We just stood there helpless. We didn't know what to do. Several of us cried, one of the ladies got sick and vomited. We just stared at the baby. Without speaking a word, we slowly moved together until we could hold each other's hands. We prayed until God cleared the minds of the nurses and they were able to treat the baby the best they could.

I was there in a public meeting when a native preacher was talking and creating a confusion, while Reggie was preaching. I got

up and went over to that preacher and I made him leave the meeting. I found out later that in his own language and his own way, he was trying to quiet the loud and unruly crowd. I was also there in that same preacher's church several years later when his congregation was quietly, and very orderly, worshipping God. I was allowed, that same morning, to put medicine and a bandage on a huge sore on the foot of that same preacher I had insulted and humiliated.

I was there where people live in huts made of mud and manure and straw. They build their huts round because they believe evil spirits live in corners. Where the people eat rats and have no clothes to wear. Where it is so dark at night we could not even see our hand in front of our face. It is so quiet we could hear our heart beating and the snakes sliding over the ground outside.

Where a little boy came with a rope tied around his waist and at the other end of the rope was tied a very old man who was blind. His clothing was a robe made out of patches that were just rags. It was worn out clothes put together to make him a robe. It was pathetic. They had walked for miles to hear about Jesus.

I was there staying in a home of a black family, where just a few years ago the law would not have permitted that family to even own a house nor would they have allowed us to enter the home of a black family.

I was there where people worshipped idols made by man, created from their own imagination.

I was there where a woman was sick and was being carried on a bed. She appeared to be 50-55 years old. I was told she had just given birth and was hemorrhaging and they were trying to get her to a clinic. She was 28 years old!

I was there where women work from daybreak to sundown in a stooped position planting a field of rice and wading in mud to their ankles and carrying their baby on their backs the whole time.

I was there walking down a busy street and the people kept staring at me and bumping me as they passed by. Suddenly, I realized that in their eyes I was not Black or White, I was Colored.

That's the lowest form of humanity in that country. It didn't matter that my ancestors were American Indians and even though I have never experienced prejudice like that before, I knew exactly what those bumps on my arms meant; they didn't want me walking down their street.

I was there in the prisons, the blind schools, in the orphanages of Korea. I was there in a leper hospital, where the people were twisted and gnarled and unsightly. The smell of rotting flesh is sickening.

I was there where an armed, drunken, guerrilla troop stopped our vehicle at night in the pouring rain and demanded that we open up our luggage and hand over our passports.

I was there in a jungle where it is so dense you can hardly even breathe.

I was there where the military stretched people on tables in the street and beat them for charging too much money for their goods or hoarding enough supply for their store for maybe two days. If they had enough in their store for that amount of time they were hoarding and were beaten for it.

I was there where demons were so thick we feel like we have to keep swatting at them like mosquitoes to keep them from robbing us of our compassion, understanding, sympathy, and of the love we carry in our hearts.

I was there where we were stopped at police checkpoints and they demanded money before they would let us pass.

I was there to see the smiles on faces of ignorant people when they came to the understanding of who Jesus is.

I was there sewing for 16 hours a day for two weeks, helping to make clothing for the orphan children at Mapou.

I was there walking house to house in the boiling sun, inviting people to come to the tent and hear about Jesus, when an old woman told me I was fat and we were wasting our time. She came to the tent that very night to hear the Gospel and was baptized into Christ.

I was there helping my own sons and daughters build the

buildings that have become the Mapou Christian Orphanage. I was there helping to plant fruit and shade trees. I was there watching as my daughter, Lori, not knowing how to speak in the Creole language and the orphans not understanding English, broke the communication barrier and she taught them how to play softball with just a shovel handle and a tennis ball. I was there sitting patiently as some of the orphan girls braided my hair in an effort to make me look more like them. I was there to see hundreds of people baptized into Christ.

What do I do? Nothing profound, nothing I had planned for myself. But I obey what Jesus told us to do, "Therefore go and make disciples in all the nations; baptizing them in the name of the Father, of the Son, of the Holy Spirit and then teach these new disciples to obey all of the commands I have given you; be sure of this, I am with you always even to the ends of the world."

I have mixed concrete, painted buildings, played with children, cried with brokenhearted, abandoned young women, bandaged the injured, and loved people the world has seem to have forgotten. I've been angry with the world and with God. I've been thirsty, hungry, frightened. I've been so tired I ached, and so happy I've cried. I've had mosquito bites, bedbug bites, diarrhea, rashes, Dengue Fever, and I've been so homesick I could die. I've carried trunks full of clothing, shoes, medicine, books, Christmas candy, and soap to what seemed like the end of the earth. I have been rejected, criticized, hated, accepted, and loved.

I have tried to encourage women in the most remote villages on this earth, who have no hope of seeing even their country let alone the rest of the world, by telling them that women are very much alike all over the world. We all get married, have children, we all clean our house, go to the market, wash the laundry, cook a meal everyday for our family.

What I don't tell them is that we go to a clean, germ-free hospital where we have a whole crew of doctors and nurses to deliver our babies. They deliver their babies in a hut and, if they are lucky, they have a mid-wife. I don't tell them that we have an electric

sweeper to clean our plush carpets, while they have a handful of weeds to sweep their dirt floors. Or that we have an air conditioned car to drive to our giant supermarket where we can buy any kind of food we have a desire for, while they walk several miles in the hot sun to an open market where they can buy a little bag of rice, or beans, or maybe a little piece of meat that is covered with flies and maggots. I don't tell them that we have a microwave oven that will cook our food in minutes, while they labor over a fire on the ground, taking several hours to cook one meal. I don't tell them we have an automatic washer and dryer to do our laundry, while they have to carry their laundry to the nearest river and wash it by hand and then spread it on the ground to be dried by the sun. I certainly don't tell them that we wouldn't even think about working in the fields all day, let alone with a baby on our back. I just tell them God made us different colors and different sizes, that we are all God's children and he loves each one of us the same.

You must be thinking that some of these emotions are due to cultural shock. No, cultural shock is when I have seen so much poverty, filth, disease, and ignorance I feel like I cannot stand to see anymore and I want to come home and shut myself up in our clean, comfortable house and not go out or see anyone for a time. Cultural shock is when I walk into the grocery store and see all the food available to us; all of it clean, packaged, kept at the right temperature to preserve it as long as possible. I actually feel a pain in my heart when the picture of an open market, where most of the rest of the world has to go to buy their food, passes through my mind. That first trip to the grocery store after we have been overseas is always devastating to me.

What can you do? You can go with us. There is always a place for you. There is always something for you to do.

You can let God use you in whatever way He can, even right here where you sit, even if it isn't what you want to do. I would rather be knitting than doing anything else on earth, but I have time to do that too. God provides long airplane trips for me to knit as long as I want to.

You can pray for us. Your prayers are the only support and strength we have when we are in danger physically, mentally, and spiritually. Let me tell you, sometimes we get so weak in all these areas, it's all we can do to pull ourselves up even to come home. Any time a thought of me enters your mind, it could be the Holy Spirit prompting you to pray for me. I may be in trouble, so please whisper a small little prayer. It doesn't have to be anything extravagant, just, "God, help Esther. She needs help right now, I know it." Praying is the most important thing you can do for me or anyone else. "So ever since we first heard of you, we have kept on praying and asking God to help you understand what He want you do to; asking Him to make you wise about spiritual things; and asking that the way you live will always please the Lord and honor Him, so that you will always be doing good, kind things for others, while all the time you are learning to know God better and better. We are praying, too, that you will be filled with His mighty, glorious strength, so that you can keep on going on no matter what happens, always full of joy in the Lord." That is the hardest part, to always be joyful.

I hope you will pray for White Fields. I hope you will pray that God will continue to use us to win souls, to educate, to support preachers and teachers, to start new churches, and to care for the poor, the widows, and the orphans. There are a lot of them in this world.

Am I My Brother's Keeper? No!

I want to preach to you on the question "Am I my brother's keeper?" The answer that I'm proposing is "No!" This question comes directly from scripture found in Genesis chapter 4; "Then the Lord said to Cain, 'Where is your brother, Abel?' 'I don't know,' he replied, 'Am I my brother's keeper?'"

The story has been told of a little six year old boy who crawled up on his daddy's lap when his father came home from work late in the evening. The little boy said, "Daddy, I have a question to ask." But the father was reading the evening newspaper; he did not want to be bothered by questions. So, he pushed the little boy to one side and continued to look at the paper. But, you know how little children can be very insistent. The little boy pushed the paper away and he said, "Daddy, I have an important question to ask you." The father said, "Well, what is it? Hurry up and ask, so I can get back to reading my paper." The little boy said, "Daddy, what is a Christian?" Well, the father dropped the paper. He then realized this was an important question and he thought, "I cannot give a lightweight answer to this question. I've got to give the correct answer." So, he began to scratch his chin and he said, "Well, son, that is really a big question. What is a Christian? Well, it's like this son, a Christian is someone who believes in God with all their

heart. A Christian believes that God's Son, Jesus, came into this world to save us from our sins. A Christian believes the Bible is the Word of God and we must live by the teachings of the Bible. A Christian doesn't hold any grudges. A Christian forgives his enemies. In fact, son, a Christian is someone who tries everyday to be exactly like Jesus." The little boy then looked at his daddy and he asked this question, "*Daddy, have I ever seen a Christian?*"

I want each and every one of us to ask the same question. It's a very thought provoking question, isn't it? Have I ever seen a Christian? As we ask ourselves that question, it also causes us to go back to the first question ever propounded by any member of human society. It was a question that was asked by a murderer. Am I my brother's keeper?

Cain's Question

You remember in the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, He also created a man and then from a rib taken from the man's side He created a woman. This man and woman were placed in a beautiful garden and were allowed to live there and enjoy everything that God had created. The first two children that were born to Adam and Eve were named Cain and Abel. Cain was a farmer and Abel was a herdsman. When the two brothers came to present their sacrifices to God, God looked with favor upon Abel's sacrifice, but He was not impressed with Cain's sacrifice. We are not told exactly why God rejected Cain's sacrifice. Some people have suggested that maybe the smoke from the sacrifice did not go up when Cain offered the fruits of the ground as a sacrifice to God. Others have suggested that maybe Cain had not offered the right proportion, that maybe in the very beginning God had asked for one-tenth and maybe Cain did not offer that proportion. Others have suggested that instead of Cain offering the best of the fruits and vegetables that he offered some of the leftovers. We don't know exactly what was wrong, but we do know that Cain did not

AM I MY BROTHER'S KEEPER? NO!

offer the sacrifice in perhaps the right spirit and, therefore, God rejected his sacrifice. Cain was very angry and jealous of his brother, Abel. It all resulted in murder. After the murder had been committed and the body had been buried, the blood of Abel rose up to witness against Cain and cried out to God from the ground. It was at this point that God came and approached Cain with the question, "Where is your brother, Abel?" With a shrug of his shoulders and an apparent air of indifference, Cain replied by saying, "I don't know. Am I my brother's keeper?" This subtle answer of Cain's was designed to settle the matter forever in a lightweight manner and dismiss it completely.

No!

The rest of the sacred scripture that follows gives us the correct answer to Cain's question. God's answer which is found in all the rest of the Bible is, "No, you are not your brother's keeper, but you are your brother's brother." That makes all the difference in the world.

Keeper? or Brother?

The brother idea is the essence of democracy. The keeper idea is the underlying essence of nazism, socialism, and communism. For a few seconds let us apply this brother-keeper idea to areas of life that we are all concerned about.

A. Let's think about industry, the employer and the employee. Sometimes the employer considers himself a keeper of the employees. On the other hand the employees get together and they look askance at their employer and say, "It is we who are keeping the boss." Bloodshed and lock-outs become unavoidable, when either the employer or the employee looks upon the other as if they are the keeper. We are not our brother's keeper, but we are

our brother's brother. If every employer would look upon the workmen as his brothers then, of course, the employer would see that the workmen get the very best that industry can afford. If the workmen would look upon the boss as their brother then they would give their very best on the job, working a full eight hours a day and making sure that they did not cheat their employer in any way. The trouble always comes when we look at one another as though we were the keeper.

B. Let's look at the United Nations. God tells us in the Bible that He has made of one blood all nations of people who dwell on the face of the earth. In other words, we are brothers. As long as any nation prides itself upon being the keeper of another nation, then that long the war gods are going to suck the bloodstream of humanity. Pray that all nations might hear the voice of God and say, "We are brothers under God."

C. During the days when the British empire stretched around the world and the saying was, "the sun never sets upon the British empire," the proud British people considered themselves the keeper of all the other nations of the world. So, there was trouble. Constantly there was trouble, until finally, one by one the nations demanded their freedom and the great British empire collapsed. America should beware because the whole world, at least the free world, looks upon America as the keeper. The slave world looks upon Russia as the keeper. This is wrong. Even in our lifetime we have come to see every nation in the world hate America. The slogan everywhere these days is, "Yankees go home." They do not like us because we look upon ourselves as the keeper of the nations of the world. We need to get this idea out of our minds; we are brothers and not keepers.

D. Let us consider foreign missions. Many people in the church today say, "Why don't we do what is needed at home first? Let's forget about those pygmies over in Africa. Anyhow, I think the heathen are going to be saved without the Gospel. We are not our brother's keeper. "No, of course we aren't, and even the heathen themselves would resent our coming if we were coming as

their keepers. But, it makes a world of difference if we go as our brother's brother. The question is not "Will the heathen be saved without the Gospel?"; the question is "will we be saved ourselves if we do not win our brothers to the Lord Jesus Christ?"

A Fool for Christ

Rudyard Kipling, in one of his books, tells about touring the foreign lands. On one occasion he met General Booth, the Salvation Army leader of that day. Rudyard Kipling describes in his writings how he saw General Booth walking backwards over the wharf, his cloak blown upward in tulip fashion over his grey head, while he beat a tambourine in the face of a singing, weeping, praying, emotional multitude, who had come to see him off. During the boat journey that followed, Rudyard Kipling told of how he met General Booth on the boat and had a visit with him during the voyage. Kipling says "Like the young fool that I was at that time, I expressed distaste for such a sensational, emotional demonstration at the wharf as General Booth told his followers goodbye." Kipling said, "The General shook his long, shaggy eyebrows at me and he said, 'Young fellow, if I thought I could win one soul to Jesus Christ by walking on my head and playing a tambourine with my big toes, then I would learn how to do it.'" Now what is the kernel of that story? It's the all consuming desire of a dedicated soul to win his brothers to the Lord Jesus Christ, even if the occasion demanded him being called a "fool for Christ's sake."

Our Personal Responsibility

Cain's lie and alibi has grown to a horrible crescendo of wild, weird discord. On every hand there are those who fill up our church membership rolls, who are uttering the feeble question, in the form of an excuse, saying, "Am I my brother's keeper?" What

the average church member is seeking to gloss over is his personal responsibility for being his brother's brother.

Let Them Come to the Church House

Years ago when I was the minister at Catlin, Illinois, there was an elder in that congregation that used to get all bent out of shape every time that I would preach a message about soul winning. Every time I would preach a missionary message this elder would always violently disagree with me. He would come out the door and argue with me. His argument would go something like this, "Preacher, why should I have to take my valuable time and go out in the community and knock on people's doors and invite them to come to church, when everyone knows that the church doors are open? I say, 'if they want to be saved, let them come to the church house. Let them hear the Gospel preached in the church house. Let them be saved in the church house, because everyone is welcome in the church house.'" The idea this elder had was, "I am my brother's keeper and I am keeping him by maintaining this church house. I am not my brother's brother, I am under no obligation whatsoever to go out and knock on anybody's door, because that is taking my valuable time to do that."

What About Church Members?

The same thing applies to our fellow church members. Every one of us can think of members of this church that are absent consistently, Lord's Day by Lord's Day. Do you know why they're absent? Have you gone to visit them? Have you even so much as picked up the telephone to call and inquire if they are ill or what is wrong? Chances are, if you haven't done it, it's because you say, "Well, am I my brother's keeper? After all, they are members. Their name is on the church book. They know it's their obligation

to be here and worship God. If they don't, well, that's their loss. Why should I have to call them on the telephone? Why should I have to go out and visit them? Why should I be concerned? I am not my brother's keeper." That's right, you are not your brother's keeper, but you are your brother's brother. And because every one of us is our brother's brother, therefore, we ought to be concerned enough to inquire about their well being and when they're absent we should find out why.

I wept for my child who was fevered and ill. I pleaded, "Blessed Lord, make her whole." But, I am humbled and shamed as I call upon His name. How long since I have for a soul? I've wept for my loved ones now gone from this world, though they are with the Savior I am told. Then from somewhere above, Jesus questions in love, "How long since you've wept for a soul?" I weep for the moments of pleasure I've missed, for the lack of life's gain and its gold, but before you condemn, let me ask you my friend, "How long since you've wept for a soul?"

Share a Meal

If we are our brother's brother then I want to go one step further. Because we are our brother's brother, have we invited people to our own home to share a meal? If not, why not? May I put that question to you very bluntly, how long has it been since you've practiced biblical, Christian hospitality? That is, preparing a meal and inviting one of your Christian brothers or sisters to come to your home and eat with you. There is a scripture that we find in the New Testament in Hebrews 3:13. That verse says, "But encourage one another daily as long as it is called today, so that none of you be hardened by sin's deceitfulness." I want you to think about that verse for a few seconds. How can we encourage one another daily? I have been told, and it is my own shame that I've heard this from not one, but from many members of this congregation. They say, "I go to church on Sunday and everybody is so kind, so loving, so

friendly, I feel so welcome. But then I don't see them, I don't hear from them for all the next week until we meet back in church again the next Sunday." The question that I have to ask myself is "Am I guilty?" I hope each one of us will be like the disciples there at the Last Supper, "Is it I Lord? Am I one who comes to the services on Sunday and just greets everyone very friendly, very loving, but the moment we walk out the door, that's it! It's over! It's finished!" It ought not be that way because we are brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ and the scripture plainly teaches us, "Encourage one another daily." We cannot do that by just saying, "howdy" on Sunday. It's important that we stay in contact with each other on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, and Saturday that we might keep encouraging one another daily.

Hard Hearted!

Medical science is searching for a cure to relieve this frail temple of hardening of the arteries that renders our bodies useless. Oh, how we fear that term, "hardening of the arteries." It is a terrible thing, but I fear something worse than I fear hardening of the arteries. I fear hardening of the soul. Oh, how clever the devil is. There was a time when we first accepted Jesus and our heart was so tender that we would weep over a dead canary or dead dog or a dead cat. But, now through the years we have become so hardened that we cannot even weep over a dead soul.

Too many of us have to make the confession along with the poet who said:

I remember. I remember the house where I was born. The little window where the sun came peeping in at morn. He never came to wink to soon, nor brought too long a day, but now I often wished the night had born my breath away. I remember. I remember the fir trees dark and high. I used to think the slender tops were close against the sky. It was such a childish ignorance

but now 'tis little joy to know that I'm farther off from heaven
than when I was a boy.

Afraid for my Soul

There is a young lady down in Miami, Florida, who calls Esther and me her mom and dad. The girl is about 29-30 years old. She was a dedicated member of the Miami Springs Christian Church back in 1980. She was a soul winner. She was a Sunday School teacher. She was involved in everything in the life of the church. Then gradually, through the years, she began to withdraw. She began to be unconcerned. She stopped attending on Sunday night. She stopped going to prayer meetings. She stopped going to Sunday School, and finally, she even stopped attending morning worship. On Mother's Day, that girl called long distance to say to Esther, "Happy Mother's Day, Mom." We appreciated that very much. I got to talk to her, too. It was really heart breaking. Before the conversation was over she said, "I am afraid for my soul. I know it is unbelievable for you to hear me say this, but do you know that I don't even go to church anymore? That's how far I have drifted away from God." She did close on a happy note. She said that she was quitting her job in Miami and she was packing all her belongings up and moving away to another community. She is going back to the midwest, where there are a lot of Christian Churches and lots of Christian people and she is going to re-dedicate her life to Christ and get back into the Church. I hope so. I pray that she will before it's too late.

It's amazing how this can happen to any one of us. It starts with a little bit of drifting and little bit of indifference and a little backsliding here and a little backsliding there. Pretty soon we say, "How did this ever happen?" Because it does happen, my brothers and sisters in Christ, I plead with you to keep your eyes open, to keep your ears open and when you see people slipping a little bit, be a brother, be a sister, go after that person when they start to drift

away and show your love by drawing them back into the fold before it's too late.

In the writings of Admiral Byrd, he tells about the time that he journeyed all by himself to the South Pole. He lived there for some length of time. He had no contact with the outside world except his radio. He had told everybody to leave him alone; he wanted to experience what it would be like to live there and survive all alone, without contact with any human being. There came a day when Admiral Byrd was desperate for a contact with human beings, because the batteries in his radio failed. Shortly after the batteries in his radio failed and he was totally cut off from the rest of the world his stove broke and the house he was living in started getting cold. There was no hope of contacting anybody. He set off his flares. He knew it was hopeless because he knew nobody would be coming. He had not sent out any SOS before the batteries in the radio failed. As time went on, his body temperature began to go down. Admiral Byrd began to realize that death was very near. When he knew there was no hope left and that he was going to die, he had one flare left. As one last desperate effort, even though he knew it was useless, he set off that flare. As it went up in the air and lit up the sky, suddenly in the distance he saw a tractor coming. He realized then that his friends, when they failed to make radio contact, knew that something was wrong and they were coming to the rescue. Admiral Byrd stated that in that moment, when that flare went off and he saw that tractor coming, he said, "I felt like that everybody in the world was my brother."

I pray that love may permeate this congregation, and that we might show such loving concern for all of our brothers and sisters in Christ that those who are being reclaimed, one by one, might feel like Admiral Byrd; they might feel like everybody in the church is coming to their rescue. That's the way God intends for the church to operate. Am I my brother's keeper? NO! But I am my brother's brother. May God help me to be that and may God help you to be that!

The New Testament Church The Body of Christ

Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God — this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is — His good, pleasing, and perfect will.

For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgement, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you. Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. Romans 12:1-5

The New Testament Church; the body of Christ. We are members of His body. Everyone of us Christians help to make up the church.

On November 23, 1963, the entire world was suddenly plunged into mourning. A bullet from a communist gun took the life of the president of the United States of America. In the days that followed that tragedy of the assassination of our president, everyone sat around glued to their TV sets, because everything that happened from the moment of the bullet tearing into the body of our president was televised. The dead body as it left the hospital was

transferred to Air Force 1. The sorrow of Jacqueline Kennedy. The crowds that came to pay their respects. The funeral service, the committal service at Arlington cemetery. Everything was televised. During these days, very often the television commentators would say, "The body of our President is in repose." What did they mean when they said "repose"? They meant it was a dead body. There was no heartbeat in that body. The blood was no longer flowing through the veins of that body. There was no air in the lungs of that body. Rigor mortis had set in. It had begun to deteriorate.

The New Testament Church is the body of Christ. There are three words that I want to use in connection with the body of Christ, the church.

I. The first word I want to use is the word repose. I use it in the form of a question. Is the church, the body of Christ, in repose? Is it a dead body? If there is not evangelism, then the church is gradually dying. If there is not missionary activity, then the church is dying. If there is no commitment on the part of the individual members of the body, then the church is dying. If there is no sacrifice on the part of the body, then it is a dying body.

The latest statistics about the church show that the church in America is gradually losing its struggle for the hearts and minds of people in America. During the last 10 years, all churches in America have been losing members to the tune of 9.5%. During the last 10 years there have been 4,826,707 church members lost. Now, the shocking thing is that in the last 10 years the population of America has grown by 11.4%. 24,153,000 more Americans are in this country as a result of the last 10 years than there were before. Yet, during this time of population explosion, the churches of America have lost members. To add further to the problem we observe that there have been over 4,000 churches in America that have died and closed their doors over the past ten years.

Do you understand why I am asking the question: Is the church in repose? Is the church dead?

Adolf Hitler

During the days of Adolf Hitler in Germany some few preachers criticized Hitler and so some of Hitler's followers came to him and they said, "What are we going to do about the church?" Hitler wasn't at all worried about the church in Germany. He knew the church in Germany was dead. Liberalism began with the church in Germany. It was the church in Germany that first said they had no faith the Bible was the inspired Word of God. They had no faith that Jesus was born of the virgin. So, when they came to Hitler and said, "What are we going to do about the church?" Adolf Hitler said, "We are going to do nothing about the church." He laughed. He said, "We're just going to let the church go right on doing what she is doing." Which was nothing. Hitler knew he had nothing to fear from the church of Germany, because it was dead. It was in repose. There was no evangelism. There was no missionary activity.

The Church in Chicago

P.H. Welshimer for many, many years was the minister of the world's largest Christian Church in Canton, Ohio. He was an advocate of New Testament evangelism. He was a great example of a personal evangelist. Under his dynamic ministry, which spanned 56 years, the church in Canton grew to be the largest Christian Church in the world. P.H. Welshimer was invited everywhere as a guest speaker. On one occasion he was invited by the Christian Churches in Chicago, Illinois to come and speak on the subject of evangelism. So, he flew over to Chicago to speak at this church conference. That particular day, they quarreled and argued all day long about what to call the minister of the church. Shall he be called Pastor? Shall he be called The Pastor? Shall he be called Preacher? There was a heated debate, an argument. People even got uptight with each other as they quarreled about this. Brother Welshimer

was totally disillusioned. As he left the conference, which he thought was going to be a soul winning conference, and headed back to Midway Airport in Chicago to fly back to Canton, Ohio, he passed a street meeting. A group of Moody Bible Institute students were holding a street meeting. He asked the taxicab driver to stop and he listened for a few moments. Those young people were really earnest about witnessing to the people on the streets of Chicago. They were trying to win souls to Christ. Brother Welshimer came back to his church, the First Christian Church in Canton, Ohio, and he told his congregation, "I was far more inspired by those students of Moody Bible Institute and their street meeting than I was with that dead church conference, when all they could argue about was what to call the minister of the church."

A Church in Repose

Many years ago I was acquainted with a church that was known as the Lone Oak Church of Christ. On one occasion the preacher of that church came to our preachers' meeting and he was just about as low as a human being can ever get. I said, "Brother Tom, what's the matter with you today?" He said, "We've had two board meetings this last week that have lasted until midnight." I said, "My goodness, what was going on? Surely one of the members was in dying condition and you were having an all night prayer meeting or something?" He said, "No. It was a debate over whether we could plant a second oak tree in the church yard." He said, "Down through the years it's been called Lone Oak Church of Christ because there is just one oak tree in the church yard. Now some of the people want to beautify the church grounds and someone has gotten the idea to plant a second oak tree. The argument is that we cannot plant a second oak, because if we do we'll have to change the name of the church to Lone Oaks (plural) Church of Christ. Other people say, 'No, we'll have to change it to Two Oaks Church of Christ.' For two nights they have debated until midnight

and it's killed my soul." It killed my soul just listening to the story. To think the church didn't have anything better to do than to quarrel about something like that.

I ask you, does repose seem to be a good name to describe the church? Are we dead?

II. There is a second word I want to use. That word is expended. This word became popular during World War II. Our government built boats called PT Boats. You remember them very well. They were very fast. The PT Boats were made out of plywood. They were expendable. They had a machine gun on board. It was the purpose of the PT boats to delay the great Japanese navy as they were trying to take over every island nation and most of the other nations in the south Pacific. Those who served on PT Boats knew they were expendable. They were left behind while the others went on. They were expected to stop the enemy if they could, but probably the best they could do was delay the enemy. In the end they would lose their lives on these plywood boats no matter how fast they were.

The question I have on my mind is this . . . are we expendable members of the body of Christ? Is the church itself expendable? Down through the years God's greatest servants have been expendable.

The Expendables of the Faith

Let's think about the great prophets of God in the Old Testament times. Hebrews 11, beginning in verse 32, describes these great expendables of God.

And what more shall I say? I do not have time to tell about Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel, and the other prophets, who through faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, and gained what was promised; who shut the mouths of

lions, quenched the fury of the flames, and escaped the edge of the sword; whose weakness was turned to strength; and who became powerful in battle and routed foreign armies. Women received back their dead, raised to life again. Others were tortured and refused to be released, so that they might gain a better resurrection. Some faced jeers and flogging, while still others were chained and put in prison. They were stoned, they were sawed in two; they were put to death by the sword. They went about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, persecuted and mistreated — the world was not worthy of them. They wandered in deserts and mountains, and in caves and holes in the ground. These were all commended for their faith . . .

They were the great expendables and because they were willing to be expended in God's service, God's word was made known to the people.

John the Baptist was one of God's expendables. He paved the way for the coming of Jesus and in doing so, his head was placed on the chopping block. But, he was willing to do this so that the world might know about Jesus.

Jesus, Himself, was expendable. He expended Himself there in the garden as He prayed until His sweat became great drops of blood. Finally, in reality, He was expended upon the cross of Calvary.

The great Apostle Paul was chosen by Jesus Christ to be the special apostle to the Gentiles, that he might be expended. As Jesus called Paul, He said in Acts the 9th chapter and the 16th verse, "I will show him how much he must suffer for my name." Paul was the suffering apostle. He preached the Word of God at great cost. In II Corinthians the 4th chapter, verses 8-10, Paul said in describing his suffering:

"We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body."

And, again in II Corinthians, chapter 11, beginning with the 23rd verse, Paul talks about his sufferings:

Are they servants of Christ? (I am out of my mind to talk like this.) I am more. I have worked much harder, been in prison more frequently, been flogged more severely, and been exposed to death again and again. Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from the rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my own countrymen, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false brothers. I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked. Besides everything else, I face the daily pressure of my concern for all the churches.

Paul was expendable. From the year 40 AD until 312 AD God expended His church everywhere. During those years, members of the church were tossed to the lions, they were boiled in oil, they were burned at the stake. What happened during those years when the church was expendable? The church grew. It multiplied. Every member of the church went everywhere preaching the Word, souls were added to Jesus daily. The Church has always grown when the members of the church were willing to be expendable.

Are you an expendable member? Are you willing to sacrifice for the cause of Christ? Are you willing to sacrifice your time for the cause of Christ? Is your heart burdened right now for some soul that you are trying to win to Jesus Christ? Or are you in repose?

III. There's a third word I want to use. That word is raptured. Webster's Dictionary says that rapture means the act of being transported. Jesus is getting ready to transport His church, up in the air, into the clouds and beyond. Are you ready for the rapture?

I Thessalonians 4 says:

Brothers, we do not want to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of the men, who have no hope. We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. According to the Lord's own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore encourage each other with these words.

Are you ready for the rapture?

Christian, it may be in any moment, the trumpet is going to sound, Jesus will descend from heaven with a shout, and those who have died in Christ will be resurrected. They will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air. Those of us who are alive at the coming of Jesus will be caught up above and we will meet the Lord in the air if we are in Christ. But, those who are not in Christ will be left behind.

A.W.O.L. Fishing!

I want to use a hypothetical illustration, because it is the purpose of this sermon to cause everyone of us to think. Think more earnestly than you have ever thought before. It's time for serious thinking. Is the church in repose? Is the church expendable? Is the church ready for the rapture?

The hypothetical question is this: Just suppose that you willfully plan to skip the church service and you decide that you are just going to go out to the river bank and be AWOL and fish. It's

the Lord's day and let's suppose the Lord Jesus Christ decides to come back, to rapture His church on His day, the Lord's day, and lo and behold there you are out on the river bank. Jesus sends forth the call, "Where is the body?" and suddenly you hear that call at the trumpet blast and you wake up and realize what you have done. You say, "Oh, Jesus I have been a part of the body, but Jesus, the body, of course, is in Your house meeting around the Lord's table and here I am, a member of the body, I am not in your house. I am not with the body. You see, Lord, I am detached from the body today. I am out here fishing. I know I should've been in Your church, Lord. If you'll give me just 5 minutes, I'll throw this fishing pole down and I'll get with the body." But, it's too late. You see, He's going to come in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, just like lightning, and there won't be time to throw the fishing pole down and get back to the church and meet with the body.

You are a part of the body, that means when the body meets, we are to be here as a part of the body gathered around the table faithfully. The Lord's day is the Lord's day, every Lord's day. God expects us every Lord's day. Are you ready for the rapture?

Left Your Membership Behind!

Here is another hypothetical question: You move away from your home town, where you have always been a member of the body, the church. You move someplace else and you don't affiliate with the church, you just drift along, you visit here, you visit there and finally you lose all interest. The Lord comes. He says, "Where is the body?" You say, "Well, Lord, you know, I joined up in Kentucky 25 years ago. My name has always been on the church book up there. And, Lord, I was faithful all the time I lived in Kentucky, but since I have moved I have never been able to find a congregation like the home congregation. Lord, I intend to get with the body. Please give me just a few moments and I'll run and get with the body." But, it's too late. You left your membership behind in

Kentucky and through the years you have drifted all the way, far away, from the Lord and now He came and you were not ready for the rapture.

Where is the body is the question. The smallest unit of the body is you, because everyone of us, as Christians, are members of His body, the church. So the question comes right to me and to you personally. Am I in repose? Am I expendable? Am I ready for the rapture?

Oh, I pray that if you know in your heart that you have a decision to make, will make it right now. There is no time to lose. We've already lost too much time. Whatever time is left we must dedicate it to God and give Him our best. There are those that need to come and accept Jesus and be baptized. There are those here that need a church home, who could place your membership today. Perhaps there are many of us, in our hearts, who need to rededicate our lives to Christ. Will you face that question: What will you do with Jesus?

A Great Vision

In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of his robe filled the temple. Above Him were Seraphs, each with six wings: with two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. And they were calling to one another: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty, the whole earth is full of His glory." At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke. "Woe to me!" I cried. "I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty." Then one of the seraphs flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar. With it he touched my mouth and said, "See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for." Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?" And I said, "Here I am. Send me!" Isaiah 6:1-8.

He Had a Vision

A tribe of Indians had decided to select a new chief. The old chief, realizing that his days were numbered, had wisely decided that his successor should be chosen while he was yet living. So, he proposed this test to the 3 most promising young braves. "Go and

climb the distant mountain and bring back the most beautiful thing that you can find from the top of the mountain. Which ever one of you succeeds will be the new chief of these people." The 3 young braves set off to meet the challenge of their chieftain. Early in the afternoon the first young brave returned and eagerly the old chief inquired, "Did you go to the top of the mountain? And what is the most beautiful thing that you have brought back?" This first young brave said, "It was very difficult to climb that mountain and so I did not go all the way to the top. As I started climbing the mountain, I came to this lovely golden leaf tree and as I saw it in all of its beauty, I knew that there was no use to go even one step further. There could not possibly be anything on top of that barren mountain any more beautiful than this golden leaf that I picked from the tree on the side of the mountain." He handed that golden leaf to the old chief. The old chief said, "We'll wait and see."

Late in the evening the second young brave returned. He was obviously worn out and the old chief eagerly asked him, "Did you go to the top of the mountain? And what is the most beautiful thing that you have brought back?" This young brave said, "I almost reached the top of the mountain. The climb was terribly difficult and I was exhausted, but just before I climbed those last few hundred feet, I chanced to stumble across this nugget of gold and realizing the priceless value of gold and the fact that it is indestructible, I knew that it wouldn't make any difference about climbing those last few hundred feet to the top because I couldn't find anything more beautiful or more priceless to bring back to you than this wonderful treasure of a nugget of pure gold." The old chief took the nugget and said, "We'll wait and see."

Late that evening, long after sunset, the third young brave returned. He was so completely exhausted that he collapsed at the feet of the old chieftain and was unable to speak a word. The old chief allowed him to rest for a while and regain his breath and then he eagerly asked the brave, "Did you go to the top of the mountain? If so, what is the most beautiful thing that you brought back?" This young Indian brave sat up, breathed deeply, and said to the old

chief, "I climbed to the very top of the mountain. It was terribly difficult and there were times when I didn't even know if I was going to make it. But, I did reach the top of the mountain and then I was disappointed because I didn't know what to bring back. I couldn't decide what was the most beautiful thing that I had seen climbing to the top of the mountain. But, in that moment of disappointment, I lifted up my eyes and looked to the west, all the way to the great ocean. And as I viewed all that land, I had a great vision. A vision of our people becoming strong enough and numerous enough to possess all of that land to the west of us and that is the most beautiful thing that I saw on the mountain."

Well, I think that you know without my carrying the illustration any further that is the man that was chosen to be the new chief of the tribe and he was chosen because he was a man with *a great vision*.

In Proverbs 29:18, the Bible says, "Where there is no vision, the people perish." I want us to examine anew, this great vision that Isaiah had.

He Saw the Lord

I. In the first place, I want you to notice how Isaiah saw the Lord. He said that he lifted up his eyes and he looked and he saw the Lord sitting upon His throne. What a magnificent sight this must have been as Isaiah saw the Lord in all of His divine glory and wisdom and majesty and power. If we want to be busy as fruitful servants of the Lord Jesus Christ in His vineyard, I dare say that each one of us needs to lift up our eyes as did Isaiah and look upon the Lord. I am afraid that most of us do not do that. We talk about God. We think about God, but do we really see Him through eyes of faith? I mean do we see how great He is, how good He is, how powerful He is?

How Big is Your God?

Dr. Henry Norris Russell, the famed Princeton University astronomer, once gave a lecture in which he talked of the Milky Way and its millions of stars. He told how many of these stars are far larger than our sun and how the still more distant heavens swarm with stars innumerable. When he finished his address a troubled woman came up to him and inquired, "Dr. Russell, if our world is so little and the universe is so great, can we really believe that God pays any attention to us human beings as small as we are?" The noted astronomer answered, "That all depends, madam, on how big a God you believe in."

Dear friends, the immense magnitude of this universe all about us demands a bigger God than most of us know. We have to stretch our minds and our souls in order to even touch the edge of God's greatness. Nothing will deepen our Christian faith and enlarge our reverence for God more than contemplating how great God is. Since we have such a great God, isn't it sad that we spend so much time formulating small plans. A recognition that the resources of this great God are at our disposal will elicit from us greater expectations.

If God Is Your Partner Make Your Plans Big!

In Assumption, Illinois, there lived a man of God named Leroy Trulock. I first became acquainted with Leroy about 32 years ago. At that time Leroy was the owner and operator of the world's largest machinery fair. Brother Leroy Trulock was a self made millionaire and he was called "God's businessman." I shall never forget the first time I heard Leroy Trulock speak. It was a men's meeting and he was speaking about tithing and he was trying to tell all of us men what a joy it is to tithe your income to God. He told about his early days in business and how he promised God that he was going to be a tither. He described the great joy that he had

in bringing one-tenth of all his income to God every Lord's Day. Then, Leroy Trulock, in the joyful way he could speak and tell things, said he got to thinking, "Well, if I am having this much fun giving ten percent, I wonder how much joy I would have in giving twenty percent of all my income to God?" He said that he got so happy that he could hardly stand it. He again started thinking, "I wonder if I could have any more fun if I gave thirty percent?" So, Leroy started giving thirty percent and he said, "Oh, my joy increased. I was so happy all the time that I could hardly contain myself."

He then said that he got the bright idea that he was going to outgive God, "I was going to give more to God than God could give to me." But he said that was impossible because "the more I would give, the more God would bless me and it became a major problem how I was going to distribute all of God's money." To make a long story short, Leroy Trulock liquidated his business, took all of his assets and gave the entire amount, 100%, to God. He put the money in a non-profit corporation that he called "Church Builders."

Since that time Brother Leroy Trulock loaned money to little churches all over the world so that they could build church buildings. He primarily loaned this money to congregations that would otherwise not be able to have a church building. In many parts of the world where I have gone to proclaim the gospel, I have been able to send those people money as a loan from Leroy Trulock because he made me a promise that wherever I traveled and found the need of congregations needing a church building, if I would just tell him about it, he would make the arrangements to loan the money. He has fulfilled that promise many, many times.

I was holding a revival meeting some time ago at Moweagua, Illinois. That is 5 miles from Assumption and Brother Leroy Trulock would come every night to the revival meeting. He was such a happy man and he would always go out the door each night, shake hands, and tell me some funny story. This one particular night Leroy went out the door, shook hands with me and said, "By the

way, Reggie, do you know my motto?" Leroy Trulock started out with a motto years ago: "If God is your partner, make your plans big." Any of you that have ever gotten a letter from Leroy Trulock have noticed that motto at the bottom of every letter that he wrote. "If God is your partner, make your plans big." When Leroy asked me that question, I responded by saying, "Sure I know your motto, 'If God is your partner, make your plans big.'"

He said, "Reggie, that's right! Now let me tell you a story about my motto. The other night I was speaking to a group of Christian men in southern Illinois and they decided to have a testimonial service, so each man would stand up and testify. Some of them were quoting their favorite scripture and some of them quoted John 11:35 and John 3:16." One man jumped up and said, "My favorite verse in the Bible is 'If God is your partner, make your plans big.'" Brother Leroy Trulock said that he was embarrassed to think his motto had become so famous that some people equate it with scripture. I said, "Well, Leroy, it is a good motto."

I was in a Sunday School class one day and I heard someone say, "We have twice as many this morning as we had last week." If a church is growing like that, you need to have bigger plans. "If God is your partner, make your plans big."

Let us lift up our eyes as did Isaiah and see the Lord in all His greatness, in all His power and realize that if we are serving God, with Him nothing is impossible. Do you want to have a bigger attendance? Do you want to build a new church building? Do you want a larger missionary budget? Do you want to win more souls to Christ? *Then, make big plans! God is a big God!*

II. He saw himself a sinner. But then Isaiah lifted up his eyes and he saw something else that made him terribly sad. In fact it made him weep. He looked at himself and he saw that he was a poor lost sinner and he began to cry, "Woe with me for I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips and I dwell in the midst of a people with unclean lips and mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts." Oh, what a shock when Isaiah looked at

himself and saw how wicked that he was. Isaiah was probably one of the most holy men to ever live in the history of the world and yet when he looked at himself he saw that he was a poor, lost sinner. I wonder, how many of us are willing to take this second look, this inward look at ourselves to see what kind of men or women that we are? That is the look that most people try to avoid. Most of us look at our neighbor and we compare ourselves with someone that we judge to be not quite as good as we are and then we pat ourselves on the back and we say, "My what a good boy I am, or, my what a good girl I am. I don't cuss like my neighbor over there. I don't get drunk like my neighbor down the street. I don't tell lies like my neighbor over there. I don't cheat like my neighbor down this way. I am a very good, outstanding, law abiding citizen. I provide for my family. I am really a pretty good person. I go to church quite regularly if I don't have a picnic to go to or something like that. I even pray when I get in trouble." That is the way that most of us see ourselves.

Isaiah didn't look at himself in comparison with other people, Isaiah looked at himself in comparison to God. He saw how holy God was, how righteous God was, how perfect God was; that God had never made a mistake or never committed a sin. As Isaiah compared himself to God he could not help but see his own imperfections.

Please notice that God did not condemn Isaiah; it was Isaiah who condemned himself. Are you willing to take that honest soul-searching look at yourself as did Isaiah? If so, you will say the same thing that Isaiah said, "Woe is me. I am a man of unclean lips."

The Apostle Paul took that honest look at himself and then he cried, "I am the chief of all sinners." Are you willing to be that honest with yourself?

III. He saw himself forgiven. I want you to notice that after Isaiah lifted up his eyes and saw the Lord, he looked within and saw himself. Then he took a third look in his great vision and he

saw something that made him really glad. He saw himself forgiven of every sin. "Then one of the seraphs flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from the altar. With it he touched my mouth and said, 'See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for.'" What a happy, joyful moment in Isaiah's life that he could rejoice and know that all of his sins had been removed as far as the east is from the west and that those sins were forgiven and forgotten.

Have You Been Forgiven?

Have you, my friend, ever experienced that cleansing that can come only from the Lord Jesus Himself? Have you known the joy of turning over to Jesus all of your sins, all of your heartaches, all of your mistakes, everything wrong that you have ever said, thought, done, or felt, and known the joy of full cleansing because of His blood that He shed upon the cross of Calvary? Jesus has promised this cleansing to you if you want it. In Mark 16:16 He promised it in these words, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved."

His same promise was made to Saul of Tarsus, who had persecuted the Christians, imprisoned them, and put them to death. When Ananias said in Acts 22:16, "And now what are you waiting for? Get up, be baptized and wash your sins away, calling on his name." After the Apostle Paul had been converted to the Lord Jesus Christ and his sins had been washed away in the blood of Jesus, he was able to say in Romans 8:1 & 2, "Therefore, there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death."

IV. A vision of others. After Isaiah saw the Lord, saw himself a poor, lost sinner and then saw himself cleansed from every sin, he was able to lift up his eyes and see the needs of others. He heard

the voice of the Lord. The Lord was saying, "Whom shall I send? Who will go for Us?" Isaiah was now in a spiritual condition that he could respond to that invitation of God and he was able to say, "Here am I Lord, send me."

Have you reached a point in your life that you can hear the voice of the Lord calling for workers? Who is going? There isn't anybody to go in your place. God is calling you. There is a need for every worker in the vineyard of our Lord. There is a place of service for you, a place that nobody can fill but you. Have you been able to hear the voice of the Lord? Have you reached the point that you can lift up your eyes and see that there are needs everywhere and that the Lord needs you to minister to others? Have you reached the point that you can say, "Lord, here am I, send me"?

Judge Hathcock Saw the Vision

When I first went to East Point, Georgia to preach the Gospel, I became acquainted with a wonderful man of God. His name was Judge T.O. Hathcock. He was 82 years old when I first met him. It was Judge Hathcock who first had the vision for Atlanta Christian College. It was Judge Hathcocks's own personal, heroic, sacrificial efforts that resulted in the establishment of Atlanta Christian College. It was Judge Hathcock who invested his life, his talents, his fortune to build Atlanta Christian College. If you ever go to Atlanta, Georgia, be sure to go to East Point and visit the lovely 27 beautiful acres of rolling hills and pine trees where they have built the magnificent campus where more than 300 men and women are studying every year for the ministry of the Gospel for Jesus Christ.

The point I want to make is this: There never would have been Atlanta Christian College had there not been a Judge Hathcock who dreamed it, who saw it as a great vision and invested his life's fortune to make it possible.

Dr. Pruett Saw the Vision

I remember years ago I was holding a revival meeting in Kentucky. It was 1948. A country, preacher boy by the name of Denny Pruett from Junction City, Kentucky came to visit this revival meeting at Perrysville, Kentucky. He introduced himself and invited me to go flying in his airplane the next day. I had never been in an airplane and I was frightened. But I couldn't get out of it. So, I drove over to Junction City, Kentucky the next afternoon and went flying in Denny Pruett's old Piper Cub. The thing rattled and shook so badly that it seemed to me it was held together with bailing wire. We got into a windstorm and landed in some farmer's cow pasture. I was so frightened, I got out and kissed the ground. I said that I would never fly in an airplane again! While we were sitting there waiting out that windstorm, Denny Pruett told me of a great vision that he had. He dreamed of the day when he could go to medical college and become a qualified surgeon and then go to Africa as a preaching doctor and build a hospital out in the bush country of Africa and reach the souls of the African people through medical evangelism. After I listened to this dream of Denny Pruett's, I went back to Perrysville, Kentucky shaking my head in disbelief and inside myself I said, "That guy will never get any further than Junction City, Kentucky with a wild dream like that."

But you know the story. Denny Pruett sacrificed along with his wife Lucy. He was able to get through medical college. He did become a qualified surgeon. (I am thankful that he did because he operated on my daughter, Teresa, one night at midnight while we were in Africa several years ago. We tease Teresa to this day and say that she is the only member of our family that left a part of herself in Africa.) We really thank God for the many great things that Denny Pruett has done. He went to Africa. He built not one great Christian hospital, but 2 great Christian hospitals and since then has helped to build a third one in India and is now making plans to go into many other countries of the world building Christian hospitals to carry on this program of medical evangelism around the

A GREAT VISION

world. Thousands upon thousands of souls have been brought to Jesus because a country preacher boy in Kentucky had a great vision and he was willing to invest his life, his talent, his fortune, everything to see that the vision was fulfilled.

What is Your Vision?

“Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, ‘Whom shall I send? And who will go for Us?’ And I said, ‘Here am I. Send me!’”

A Christian America—Can It Be?

My subject seems to suggest that our nation is not a Christian nation at the present time. Let us look at our nation and see through the eyes of reality what kind of a nation we really do have.

First of all, let me begin by telling you of an incident which took place this last summer that I recently heard about. The National Council of Churches and the Episcopal Church sent Miss Elaine Radcliff of Charleston, West Virginia to Episcopal camp in Kobe, Japan. When she returned home after her so-called missionary trip, she was interviewed by her local paper. She told how she served under Bishop Yosiro whom she described as a huge, exuberant, seventy year old theologian who is known throughout Japan. According to Miss Radcliff and I quote from the newspaper, "He's just fantastic! He'd come out there in his shorts and help us dig furrows. The Japanese people all love him. He drinks two big bottles of Sake every day and he kept us kids supplied with all the beer that we could drink. We never saw so much beer before! After one party one of the boys got off the bus and walked two and a half miles in the wrong direction. It was the best summer of my life." The 19 year old girl said, "I had a ball." The *Charleston Gazette Mail*, which was the newspaper that interviewed this young so-called missionary, asked her what she thought of Christianity in

Japan and this was her reply, and again I quote, "The missionary situation in Japan is bad. So many American missionaries that come in PUSH too hard. Especially the Baptists. They all have this goody-goody attitude and try to get everybody to give up smoking, give up drinking, which the Japanese don't really see as wrong. They want them to immediately drop their Buddhism and Shintoism which they have had for thousands of years. The Japanese girls are afraid to become Christians because the Buddhist boys won't marry them."

I think that with a report like this coming through our newspaper, that the question that we have asked ourselves today is good. A Christian America — Can it be? We know that we do not have a Christian America today.

Jesus — A Clown?

Let me bring you another view of our nation-today-right now. The National Council of Churches built and sponsored the New York World's Fair Protestant and Orthodox Center. The main attraction at this center has been a film in which our Lord Jesus Christ is portrayed as a clown — a silly, stupid, uncouth clown. This, of course, is not a portrayal of Jesus Christ, but a betrayal! Christ has not been anymore unjustly betrayed since Judas, who masqueraded as a friend, sold Him for thirty pieces of silver. The author of this film is not even a professing Christian, but a heathen, a Buddhist. So offensive is the film that Robert Moses, the director of the World's Fair, who is himself a Jew and does not believe in Jesus Christ, asked the National Council of Churches not to present this film which is entitled *Parable* because he said, "It's not in good taste." Robert Moses was criticized for meddling and told to mind his own business. The saddest part of this is that there are many consecrated people in the United States who are not in sympathy with this betrayal of the Son of God, and nevertheless, they have helped to foot the bill. Every individual who supports a

denomination that is a member of the National Council of Churches has helped to pay the bill for this horrible blaspheming of our precious Savior at the Protestant and Orthodox Center at the New York World's Fair. When we think of this, we see that the United States of America is not at the present time a Christian nation.

Good-Bye Christ!

If you have not read this, listen to it carefully. It is entitled, "Goodbye Christ."

Listen Christ, you did all right in your day, I reckon. But that day's gone now. They ghosted you up a swell story too. Called it the Bible. But it's dead now. The popes and preachers have made too much money for it. They sold it to too many kings, generals, and robbers. And even to Rockefeller's church and The Saturday Evening Post. You ain't no good no more. They've pawned you till they've done wore you out. Goodbye Christ, Jesus, Lord, God, Jehovah. Beat it on away from here now. Make way for a new guy with no religion at all. A real guy named Marx, Communist, Lenin, peasant, worker, ME! I said, 'Me'. Go on now, you're getting in the way of things, Lord and please take Saint Gandhi with you when you go, and Saint Pope Pius, and Saint Amy McPherson, and big, black Saint Becton of the consecrated dime. Step on the gas, Christ, MOVE! don't be so slow about moving, this world is mine from now on and nobody's going to sell me to a king, a general, or a millionaire.

Who wrote this blasphemous verse? The man's name is Langston Hughes. Langston Hughes is a Black author identified as a communist. On December 23, 1952, he was positively identified, under oath, as a communist. And if you think this poem is bad, and it is, then note these facts: On December 3, 1961, President Kennedy entertained Langston Hughes at a White House luncheon. More of Langston Hughes' writings than any other author were

placed on the recommended reading list for children by the Department of Racial and Cultural relations of the National Council of Churches. When we think of such writing as this and such a man as this being recommended by the National Council of Churches, then we realize that our nation is not a Christian nation tonight.

Let Children Drink Whiskey!

Several years ago the minister of the Central Christian Church in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma was telling me that he had received a telephone call from some church member in the church and they said, "Will you join with us in our campaign to stop the Bible from being read in our public schools and prayers being offered in our public schools? It seems as though in Oklahoma City, since the Supreme Court prayer ban, that the schools have gone right ahead reading the Bible and offering prayers each day. So now it seems as though many of the churches in Oklahoma City have gotten together and said, 'We want it to stop!'" The minister of the church said, "Well, I think you have called the wrong person. I am working to keep prayer and Bible reading in the public schools. Do you mean to tell me there are churches in Oklahoma City that are working to eliminate the prayers and Bible reading?" This man said, "Why yes, all the churches that belong to the National Council of Churches are working to eliminate prayer and Bible reading from the public schools." The minister asked this man, "Well, why don't you want the Bible to be read in schools?" and he said, "Because I don't want anybody in school teaching my child that it's wrong to drink whiskey."

In the newspaper appeared this story of the teenagers in Connecticut who had been served liquor at the home of one of the parents and this one boy had gone out and killed someone else with his drunken driving. Now the judge had arrested many of the parents for serving liquor in the home. Right there in Oklahoma City, just after this story appeared, was the aftermath. Parents saying,

“We don’t want schools to teach our children that it’s wrong to drink whiskey.” When we have parents like that in the United States of America and when churches have banned together, organized for one purpose, and that to stop the reading of the Bible, to stop prayer in public schools, then we don’t have a Christian nation as of right now.

Corruption in High Places

When I arrived in Oklahoma City, I noticed the daily newspaper reported a Supreme Court Justice in the state of Oklahoma had just been judged “guilty” of income tax evasion during the years that he served as a Supreme Court Justice in the state of Oklahoma. We are beginning from every source to hear stories of corruption and immorality in high places that seem to make the Profumo scandals of Britain appear tame. Now, we have been informed that a second top man and our President’s closest friend, has been guilty of immorality. Unspeakable immorality. The kind of immorality that God condemned in the Bible in the most severe terms, and the kind of immorality for which God sent fire and brimstone from Heaven to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah, and yet, it seems as though most people just seem to wink at it and say nothing about it, and do not become very greatly alarmed.

America — A Christian Nation?

In America, we are building super highways, but very few are traveling on the highway of holiness. We are building great cities, but have little concern for the city four-square, whose builder and maker is God. We’re endeavoring to conquer space, but fail to conquer sin and Satan. We have manned guided missiles, and misguided men. We fear the power of the H-bomb, but we have no fear of God before our eyes. We enjoy more conveniences than any other

nation, but these do not draw us any closer to God. We're building bigger and better institutions of learning, while the knowledge of God and His book is shelved. America has had her days of celebration, when it would have been better if she had her days of fasting, praying, and repenting. America views the lusts on the screen when she needs to be reading the handwriting on the wall. America listens to the rock and roll when she needs to be heeding the divine warning, and tuning in the sweet music of Heaven. America is feeding her mind on obscene literature, when she needs to be daily searching the scriptures. America is building more and more church buildings, but at the same time it's building more and larger penal institutions. More people belong to churches today than ever before, and at the same time on the Lord's Day, more people can be found at the lakes, beaches, ball games, racetracks, golf courses, and at home watching TV, then ever before. In America we are experiencing a home building craze, while at the same time, one out of every two marriages end in divorce, and many others are held together by a mere thread.

The Bible Answer

I believe that the word of God has an answer to the question that we have asked ourselves this day . . . A Christian America, can it be? The answer, I feel, is found in II Corinthians chapter 8. Perhaps you will remember that in this particular scripture the Apostle Paul was talking about the giving of the Macedonian Christians. He complimented them for their giving, he praised them for their generosity towards the saints at Jerusalem, because the Macedonian Christians gave to this cause liberally in a time when they themselves were afflicted with poverty. In spite of their own poverty, in spite of their own afflictions, in spite of their own supreme need, yet they gave to help out other people who were also in a time of need. Now, what motivated such liberality on the part of the Macedonian Christians? II Corinthians 8:5 tells us the answer, "And this

they did, not as we hoped, but first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God." I believe that this is the scriptural answer. A Christian America, can it be? I believe that the answer is, "yes," if the church people of America will do like the Macedonian Christians did. First, give ourselves to the Lord. That to me is the answer.

The Greatest Danger

Upon that scriptural basis, I make the claim that the greatest danger to America today is not communism, it is not socialism, it is not the threat of war, it is not the danger of inflation, or unemployment, it is not liquor. All these are real dangers and grave problems that we face in America, but I say that none of these is the greatest danger to America. Rather, the greatest danger to America, and the entire world, is the inactive, unconcerned, uncommitted, unattending, non-participating, non-supporting, and unfaithful church member, who has his name on the church membership roll, and kids himself into believing that he is saved and that he's a Christian. This person is responsible for most of the world's ills. Just think how easily the communist menace to America could be done away with if every church member in America would first of all give himself to the Lord.

We have more than 116,000,000 church members in the United States today. What would happen to the communist threat if 116,000,000 church members would first of all give themselves to the Lord? We wouldn't have anymore problems with communism. Think of the threat that liquor is to the United States of America. We now have more than 6,000,000 hopeless, helpless alcoholics. But if the 116,000,000 church members would first of all give themselves to the Lord, liquor wouldn't stand a chance. Why, the liquor industry would be voted out of business by the Christians. The only reason that liquor is for sale is because Christian people permit it. They don't vote it out. They just wink their eyes and let it

go on. Unemployment would not be a problem if all church members would first of all give themselves to the Lord. If anyone was in need, Christians would supply their needs. Delinquency would no longer be a problem. When President Eisenhower was inaugurated the second time, he cited juvenile delinquency as one of the major crisis, or threats, that he was going to try to overcome during his second term in office. Juvenile delinquency is still a terrible threat to America, but it would not be if church members would first of all give themselves to the Lord, because then parents would set the right example instead of the wrong example. We wouldn't have these parents wanting to teach their children that it's all right to drink whiskey and serving whiskey in their own homes. We wouldn't have juvenile delinquency, because parents would exercise discipline.

Serious Questions

I suggest then this evening, that it's time for us to ask ourselves some serious questions. First of all, ask ourselves this, "Do others see Christ in me?" Second, "Am I growing in the Christian faith?" Third, "Do I recognize my faults, am I trying to correct them?" Fourth, "Do I realize that I am purchased by the blood of Christ, that I'm not my own, that I must glorify God in my body and in my spirit?" I feel that the thing that is wrong with America today, is that we have failed. We, who call ourselves Christians, have failed to follow the example of the Macedonian Christians who first of all gave themselves to the Lord. In other words, I think that we have too many church members in America and too few Christians. I want each one of us to ask ourselves the question, "Am I a church member or am I a Christian?" In other words, "Am I a part of the problem or am I a part of the answer to the problem?" First of all, the Macedonian Christians gave themselves to the Lord. I want to suggest that the answer to communism, atheism, juvenile delinquency, and every other problem that we face

can be met head on if we'll do this: Give ourselves to the Lord.

I. If we do this it means that we give ourselves to the cause of righteousness. Back in the Old Testament, Hosea 10:12, the word of God says, "Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground: for it is time to seek the Lord, till He come and rain righteousness upon you." It seems to me that the average church member in America today has forgotten that being a Christian means living a holy, Godly, sanctified, righteous, life. In the New Testament book of Hebrews 12:14, the Bible says, "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord." And in II Peter 3:11, the Bible says, "Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner or persons ought ye to be in all holy conversations and Godliness. Looking for and hastening of the coming of the day of God."

Moral Decay

Too often today instead of the church raising the standards of the world, the world has lowered the standards of the church. We read of jazz music being played in religious services. Recently in the *Saturday Evening Post* we were told that a sensual play with licentious lines was presented in a church service to depict a moral truth. This is just another of the signs of moral decay in America.

Jenkin Lloyd Jones, who is the editor of the *Tulsa, Oklahoma Tribune*, wrote an article some time ago. The title of this article is "Who is tampering with the soul of modern America?" In this article, he describes the present precarious position that we face as American citizens. Now, I was particularly interested in this article because you would think that a preacher wrote it, but it was not a preacher; it is the editor of the *Tulsa, Oklahoma Tribune*. Listen to a few quotations from Mr. Jenkin Lloyd Jones' editorial. He says:

"Progressive education in America has produced tens of thou-

sands and thousands of graduates who move their lips when they read and are unable to write a coherent paragraph. In the field of art today, all one needs is a figment and a press agent. A man today can drive his car back and forth over pools of paint on a canvas and receive a write-up in *Life Magazine*. And in the field of morals we have decided that sin is imaginary and that man is just a chip, tossed helplessly in a force beyond his control, and therefore, he is not responsible. Relief has become a career of honor, the states will give a mother a bonus for illegitimate children and if she neglects them sufficiently, she can save enough out of her A.D.C. payments to keep herself and her boyfriend in wine and gin."

He goes on to say, and God bless him for saying it, "Can anyone deny that movies are dirtier than ever? But they don't call it dirt, they call it realism! Why do we let them fool us?" Bill Diehl, the angry entertainment editor, I say rightfully angry entertainment editor, of the *St. Paul Dispatch*, not long ago, ran down the list of present and coming attractions at the local movie theaters in St. Paul, Minnesota. *Walk on the Wild Side*, this picture was set in a brothel. *A View From the Bridge*, the theme of this picture was incest. *The Mark*, the theme of this picture, a strange young man trifled with little girls. *The Children's Hour*, and the theme of this picture, two school teachers suspected of being lesbians. *All Fall Down*, the theme of this picture, a psychopathic attacker of females. *Cape Fear*, the theme of this picture, a crazy rapist. *Lolita*, the theme of this picture, a middle-aged man's affair with a 12 year old. *The Chapman Report*, the theme of this picture, the adventures of a nymphomaniac.

No wonder the number of unwed mothers is shockingly increasing. Many of our young people are spending all their leisure time in dimly lit drive-in theaters watching this subjective realism. Is it any wonder that Jenkins, and others like him, are beginning to call from high places? There must be corruption in high places when it has so infiltrated the movie industry. I believe that it is time for Christian people to stand up and be rightfully angry, to boycott the theaters that show such filth, to refuse to attend the theaters, to

be sure that our young people do not attend theaters that show movies like this.

We have taken our stand in East Point, Georgia and it just so happens that the owner of the local theater in East Point is a member of the congregation where I preach. I have brought out these same facts from the pulpit and I have noticed, and I'm glad, that our theater owner in East Point (we have just one theater) has come out with more of the films with the Walt Disney variety, family entertainment, instead of the dirt, and the filth that has been shown in downtown theaters in Atlanta, Georgia. I think that too long Christian people have compromised their convictions with Hollywood. We have allowed these things to go on, but we must take a stand before it's everlastingly too late. We must give ourselves to righteousness.

II. Secondly, I want to suggest that we must give ourselves to the study of the scriptures. Sometimes, the problem is not that we have chosen the wrong things, but have failed to choose the best thing. Too many times we choose like Martha. You remember, Mary and Martha, when Jesus came to their home, Mary fell down at the feet of Jesus to learn the things pertaining to the Kingdom of God. Martha was out in the kitchen busy cooking a meat loaf and baking a pie. Nothing wrong with meat loaf and pie, but there had been a better choice to sit at the feet of Jesus and learn the things of the Kingdom of God. This was far more important than food. The Psalmist said, "I have loved thy word more than thy necessary food." How many of us can say that? That we have actually loved the word of God more than necessary food.

Too many times we would have to sadly confess that we have had plenty of time for politics, that we have had plenty of time for the Boy Scouts, we've had plenty of time for the P.T.A., we've had plenty of time for lodges, plenty of time for bowling, fishing, boating, skiing, and I don't see anything wrong with any of these things, I enjoy most of them myself, but here is the thing that's wrong in America. The church people of America have time for all

of these things and then they come up and say they have no time to study their Bible.

Modern Idols

Whenever bowling comes first and there's no time for Bible study, it's a sin. Whenever water skiing or boating comes first and there's no time for Bible study, I believe it's a sin. We're just as guilty as the children of Israel, who worshipped idols. These are modern day idols that church people have begun to worship. Many churches no longer even have a prayer meeting during the week. Why? Because church members don't have time to pray. They're too busy bowling, fishing, going to the lodges and everything else. And a few churches who still do have prayer meetings find that it is most poorly attended service of the whole church calendar. I wonder if this is not the reason that we have so many back-sliders on the church roll. I wonder if this is not one of the reasons why we face the present dilemma, moral decline in our nation. Immorality in high places. The Bible says in Hosea 4:6, "My people perish for lack of knowledge." When the devil tempted Jesus, Jesus resisted the devil's temptations by quoting the word of God. Jesus had hidden the word of God in his heart that He might not sin against God. We need to give ourselves to a study of the scriptures, and once again, like the Psalmist said, "Hide the word of God in our hearts." Study and memorize it, and dwell upon it to the extent that we will resist the devil with scripture and not sin against God.

III. If we first of all give ourselves to the Lord, then we will also give ourselves to evangelism. God, if He'd wanted to, could have written His gospel in blazing letters across the heavens and everybody could have known the good news. But God did not choose to do it that way. God chose to give us the job of spreading the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Most church members have the opportunity to evangelize in at least two ways:

A. Through the organized visitation program of the local congregation. Most all churches today do have an organized calling program. This is an effective way of witnessing and evangelizing for Jesus Christ. Go out the next night your church has set as calling night and see how few workers are present! Volunteer your efforts to go visiting in your community to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ. You are needed! It is still true, what Jesus said so long ago, that the harvest is plenty and the workers are few. There are people in your neighborhood who are perishing and dying for lack of knowledge of Jesus Christ. You could win their souls, if you would just help your local congregation go visiting.

B. And another way that every church member has of evangelizing is by daily witnessing on the job. Think what it would mean if all surgeons who are members of the church would begin each operation with a prayer to God asking His blessings upon the doctor who performed the surgery and upon the patient who undergoes the surgery. Think what a spiritual uplift this would be for the person who had gone into the operating room if a Christian doctor would witness his faith.

Dr. Dennis Pruett of Southern Rhodesia tells us that they've already baptized more than 100 patients at the Mashoko Hospital in Southern Rhodesia this year and this is one of the reasons why. He is a Christian doctor. Every person who enters this hospital has the Gospel of Jesus Christ proclaimed to him before he leaves the hospital. Think what it would mean if all nurses would be Christian nurses and first of all give themselves to the Lord. A nurse in a hospital has such a wonderful opportunity to evangelize. Think what it would mean if every office worker would first of all give himself to the Lord, then go to work in the office and witness his faith. Think what it would mean if school teachers would all be Christian and first of all give themselves to the Lord and in the classrooms witness to pupils faith in God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Give us the watchword for this hour, a thrilling word a word of

power. A word to rouse the church from rest, and heed the Master's high behest. The word is given, Evangelize, Evangelize!

IV. We must give ourselves to righteousness, we must give ourselves to a study of the scriptures, we must give ourselves to evangelism, and we must give ourselves to prayer.

Jesus' Example

Perfect though he was, Jesus felt the need of constant prayer and communion with His Father. Every important event and decision of the life of Christ was safeguarded and sanctified in prayer. At the beginning of His public ministry as He dedicated Himself to God in baptism He prayed. When He was to choose 12 men who were to be His apostles, and finally the instruments by which He was to establish His kingdom, He spent one entire night in prayer. After the feeding of the 5,000 and before rescuing His disciples at sea, He went into the mountains and prayed, alone. At the conclusion of his departing message to the apostles, just before His crucifixion, He lifted up His eyes to Heaven and earnestly prayed on behalf of all His followers. At the institution of the Lord's Supper which should memorialize his death and remind each generation of the precious gift of His atoning blood, He did not forget to pray. Just before the final ordeal of His arrest and crucifixion, He took three of His disciples and went into the garden of Gethsemane to agonize in prayer, and as he hung suspended on the cross, His dying lips were eloquent in prayer. Jesus prayed much. Many times continuing all night in prayer. Paul was a great man of prayer and some of his beautiful prayers are preserved for us in his epistles. He said, "Pray without ceasing." These were the words of His Master, who taught that men ought always to pray and not faint.

God's Answer to America

I have not painted a pretty picture of our United States of

America. We have asked the question over and over again, A Christian America — can it be? We know that it is not a Christian America now. But, if we would give ourselves to the Lord and if we would give ourselves to prayer, things would happen, and things would change. Solomon, long ago, had the Lord appear unto him and the Lord said to Solomon, "I have heard thy prayer and have chosen this place to myself for a house of sacrifice. If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sins, and will heal their land."

I believe that this promise that God made to Solomon so many years ago is still effective today. God still hears the prayers of the people. God is still a prayer-answering God. God is capable and powerful and able to do anything. Nothing is impossible with God. If we will only heed II Corinthians 7:14 and remember that we are God's people. We need not sit back and say, "Oh, we're outnumbered, we're so few, what can we do? The Bible says "My people". It's the Christian people. Outnumbered though we are, and in the minority though we are, it is "my people which are called by my name."

If just the Christian people you see, in America, would do that: "If we humble ourselves and pray." Oh, we are proud people. We need to humble ourselves and admit that we are nothing. We are nothing. Humble ourselves and pray. Wouldn't it be a shame and disgrace, after we've argued so much about prayer and Bible reading in school, that it turned out that we weren't even praying at home. "If my people, which are called by My name, will humble themselves and pray and seek My face." And what would happen if we would seek the face of the Lord? Why, the same thing that happened to Isaiah, when Isaiah saw the Lord, he cried out, "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts."

If we would seek the face of God, this in itself would humble us, we would repent of our sins, we would repent of our worldli-

ness, we would repent of the immorality that is sweeping our nation. So we're to humble ourselves. Pray, seek God's face. Turn from their wicked ways! And God says that if His people will do these things then He is going to hear our prayers. He will hear from Heaven. he will forgive our sins and He will heal our land.

Isn't that a wonderful promise? I think of the words of the apostles at the time when the deacons were first chosen. In Acts 6:4, the apostles said, "We will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word."

I want to suggest that if we are concerned about the United States of America, that we give ourselves continually to prayer. I want to suggest that we pray each day that the people of America will consider carefully how they're going to vote, who they're going to vote for. Consider carefully each candidate and his qualifications. Ask ourselves, will this candidate that I'm going to vote for work for the best interest of America to help make it a Christian America. Oh, we had better pray.

A True Story From Russia

Paul Bayko, from Poland, tells this true story that happened in Russia. There was a knock at the door of a faithful preacher in the middle of the night. The preacher answered the knock and it was a group of Russian soldiers. They said, "Get dressed and come with us." This preacher and his family got dressed and went with the Russian soldiers and they were shipped to Siberia as slaves of the government. This was their penalty for preaching the word of God faithfully.

We're all curious about the communist propaganda that the church is free Russia and the preachers are free to preach the Gospel, which is all a lie. They aren't free. The church is not free, preachers aren't free to preach the Gospel over there. The official religion of Russia is Atheism, so this preacher, because he was preaching the word of God, was shipped to Siberia. But they were

still faithful to the word of God. They still taught the Gospel as best they could, even as slaves and soon other slaves in this horrible place in Siberia were believing in God, believing in Christ, were accepting the Gospel of Christ, and soon the church was planted, even among slaves in Siberia.

But, then, once again, the Russian officials heard about it, the secret leaked out, and again, there was a knock in the middle of the night. This time the soldier said to the preacher, "You come with us, the family stays here." They took him out in the forest and shot him. This preacher's family and wife have never seen him, of course, and never did see him since that time.

We found out what happened. When they took him out in the forest, the soldiers called upon him to denounce Jesus Christ and say he didn't believe in Him. They offered him freedom and his life, if he would just say, "I don't believe in Jesus," but this precious preacher said, "He is my Savior, I cannot deny Him." and one soldier said, "Well, if you don't deny him you're going to be shot. What will happen to your wife and children? You will never see them again." This faithful preacher said, "Yes, I will, I'll see them in Heaven." The Russian soldier said, "Then prepare to die."

They asked him if he wanted to be blindfolded, and he said, "NO, he just simply requested a few moments to pray, and he knelt in the snow and offered a prayer for the Russian soldiers that were about to shoot him, he offered a prayer for his family, he prayed for the Christian people of Russia, and the Christians around the world, and then he was shot.

Several years passed. Paul Bayko said that the church in Siberia has been flourishing during the years, and not long ago, in one of their secret churches, a stranger came into their midst. The Christians admitted this stranger to their services and all at once, right in the middle of the services, this man jumped up and he was going hysterical, and he said, "He sees me, his eyes are looking at me, I can't get away from him!" He cried and wept and shook. The Christians comforted him and finally got him to tell his story. This man who was so hysterical was the Russian soldier who had shot

the Christian preacher a few years before, and he said that ever since that night out in the forest since he had seen this preacher kneel in the snow and pray God's blessing upon the very soldiers who'd come to put him to death, that it seemed like that executed man's eyes had followed him all over Russia and he tried to escape, he had gone everywhere, he had traveled, he had run, but he couldn't run away from his conscience and so the Christians in this Siberian congregation taught this Russian soldier faith in Christ and got him to become a Christian, showed him how his sin could be forgiven by obeying Jesus Christ's Gospel. And Paul Bayko says that man today, that same Russian soldier, stands in Russia and proclaims the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

May God help us as Christians to be true to Jesus Christ. To hold Him up in this ungodly world and be righteous people, Godly people, prayerful people, a Bible believing and Bible preaching people. If we will be true to God, and faithful to Him, God will be faithful to us, and will see us through, somehow, these difficult times.

Drive Fast!

In Dublin, Ireland, a man named Tom Huxley was delivering a lecture. When he finished his lecture, he left the hall and jumped into a taxi cab. He was in a great hurry to get to the railroad station to catch the train where he would move on to the next city where he would lecture the next day. He was very late as he left the lecture hall and so as he jumped into the taxi cab, he was nervous, he was on a high tension and he shouted to the taxi driver, "Hurry! I'm late. Drive fast!" The taxi driver took off like Jehu. Tom Huxley had failed to tell the taxi driver where to take him. He just assumed that one of his aides had previously given his driver instructions to take him to the railroad station. As that taxi driver drove like a mad man through the streets of Dublin, Tom Huxley looked out the window to see if they were about to arrive at the railroad station and suddenly it dawned upon him that they were going in the exact opposite direction of the railroad terminal. He shouted to the taxi driver, "You idiot, do you know where you are going?" The taxi driver turned around and smiled to him and said, "No sir, but I am driving fast." *That is what Huxley had told him to do!!!*

This story, I am afraid, is a picture of our lives. Everyone of us in 1993. What are we doing? We are driving through life with great

speed, with much motion, with rapid movement, but where are we going?

I am afraid that most of us are just exactly like the Athenians that Paul addressed in Acts 17. The city of Athens at the time Paul preached this sermon was a city of idolatry. One historian, who wrote 50 years later after Paul had died, said that Athens had more images than all of the rest of Greece put together. Another historian from the time wrote, "In the time of Nero, Athens had 20,000 public idols that the people worshiped and that did not include an additional 30,000 that were located in the Parthenon." Like Huxley's taxi driver, the people of Athens did not know where they were going, but they were driving very fast.

As the Apostle Paul used this pathetic sight of all of these thousands and thousands and thousands of idols that the people of that city were worshipping, his heart stirred within him and he delivered one of his famous sermons. Did you realize that his entire sermon only comprised six sentences? It only took two minutes to read Paul's mighty sermon. In that sermon, the Apostle Paul, a Jew, became a Greek to the Greek in order that he might win the Greeks to Jesus Christ. Acts 17:16-23. "I even found an altar with this inscription: To An Unknown God."

Yes, he had found one inscription in that city to the unknown god. They put that there just in case they had forgotten some god with all of the thousands of others that they were worshipping and Paul said this god that is unknown to you is the one true God, the creator of heaven and earth, the savior of your souls. He is the one I want to tell you about. Paul then proceeded to preach the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ from the dead. He presented Christ as the Savior of all mankind and he concluded his sermon with a call of repentance reminding them that now God commandeth all men everywhere to repent. He warned them that if they did not repent that a judgment day was coming when they would be judged by almighty God. This unknown god that they had not previously known anything about.

Jesus charged the church in Revelation 2:1, "Nevertheless, I

DRIVE FAST!

have something against thee because thou has left thy first love." Is it possible, brothers and sisters, that you and I may have left our first love? I have 12 evidences to present to you that we have lost our first love, that we are driving too fast!

1. When my delight in the Lord is no longer as great as my delight in someone else, I have lost my first love.
2. When my soul does not long for time of rich fellowship in God's word and in prayer, I have lost my first love.
3. When my thoughts, during leisure moments, do not reflect upon the Lord, I have lost my first love.
4. When I claim to be only human and easily give into those things that I know displeases the Lord, I have lost my first love.
5. When I do not willingly and cheerfully give to God's work or the needs of others, I have lost my first love.
6. When I cease to treat every Christian brother and sister as I would the Lord, I have lost my first love.
7. When I review the commands of Jesus as restrictions to my happiness rather than expressions of His love, I have lost my first love.
8. When I inwardly strive for the acclaim of the world rather than the approval of the Lord, I have lost my first love.
9. When I refuse to give up an activity when I know it is offending a weaker brother, I have lost my first love.
10. When I become complacent with sinful conditions around me, I have lost my first love.
11. Whenever I am unable to forgive another for offending me, I have lost my first love.

America, we need to repent. The Apostle Paul called upon the Athenians to repent and then warned them that if you do not repent, judgment and Hell await you.

1995, in modern day America is very much like ancient Athens. Everyone is busy and in a hurry! We want the preacher to preach a sermonette in 15 minutes and then shut up! We are idol

worshippers! We bow before the idol of money, pleasure, sports, sex, and TV.

What would it be like to die unrepentant? To go into eternity and face a Hell without God? In Luke 16, Jesus drew aside the curtain and showed us a picture of what it is going to be like. I want you to listen to these words because they are Jesus' own words beginning with Luke 16:19.

I. What will be the first thing people will do if they drive too fast, fail to repent, and are judged by God and go to hell? The first thing they will do is to start praying, Luke 16:24, and realize the importance of prayer. The first thing this rich man did when he got to hell was to begin to pray for water. Just a few drops of water, he prayed to cool his tongue. Here on earth you can be sure that he never prayed. He didn't have time to pray. He was a rich man, he was too busy investing money and making more money. No time for prayer, but that is the first thing that he took time to do when he got to hell. He started praying and he prayed and he kept on praying.

I issue a call for repentance. Repent, repent America, of our lack of prayerfulness. We are driving too fast!

II. What was the second thing that this man did when he got to hell? He started praying for a visitation program. Luke 16:28. He prayed that Abraham would send Lazarus back to his five brothers to visit them, to testify to them about being saved so that they would not come to hell.

William McPherson had a charge of dynamite to go off in his face. He lost his eyes, he lost his hands, he lost feeling in all parts of his face. After this tragic accident, William McPherson then realized how much the Bible meant to him and how much God meant to him and how much the church meant to him. He had never read the Bible even though he claimed to be a church member and now that he was blind and had his hands blown off, he could not read the Bible. He couldn't even read it in Braille

because he didn't have any hands to touch the Braille.

He began to investigate and he tried to touch the Braille with his lips, but his lips were numb as a result of the dynamite blast, but then one day as he was examining a Braille Bible, suddenly he realized that he could touch the Braille with his tongue and so painstakingly he began to read the Bible with the tip of his tongue touching those raised Braille dots. After reading for a little while, his tongue became sore, but he was so thirsty to know the word of God, he continued to read even with a sore tongue. Then his tongue began to bleed, but he prayed to God to just give him strength to go on reading his Bible with a bleeding, sore, painful tongue. During the 65 years that he lived after this dynamite went off, William McPherson read the Bible through completely four times by using the tip of his tongue.

Would I read the Bible if I had to get up an hour earlier each day before going to work, would I read the Bible if I had to sacrifice one hour of my favorite TV program each night? Would I read the Bible if I was like William McPherson and didn't even have any eyes to read it with or any hands to read the Braille? Do I love the word of God so much that I would read it with a bleeding and painful tongue as he did? You know what, if I don't read the Bible and if I die and go to hell, that is the second thing that I will be interested in. I will want somebody to come back and visit the people who are lost teaching them the Bible so that they won't go to hell. Repent America! We are driving too fast!

III. The third thing that this man wanted was the preaching of the Gospel. Luke 16:30. He said, "If somebody will go back from the dead. If someone will rise again and go back and testify to my five brothers, then they will believe and then they will not go to hell." And what did Abraham say, "They wouldn't believe even if somebody did rise from the dead."

The resurrection from the dead is the centerpiece of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, I Corinthians 15:1-4. The facts of the Gospel, the good news, are that He died for our sins according to

the scriptures and was buried, but on the third day, he arose from the dead and it is the preaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ that will convict those who are going to be convicted and bring them to Jesus Christ. If people will not believe the preaching of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, then they won't believe.

In Romania, under communism, the government arrested two preachers. They charged them with preaching illegally. The church of Romania was under the direct influence of the government and that means that all of the preachers of Romania were hired by the government and that means that they had to preach what the government told them to preach and if they didn't they arrested them and put them in jail. These two Romanian preachers did not preach what the government told them to preach, they preached the Gospel. They preached the resurrection of Jesus Christ, they preached repentance and hundreds of Romanians joined the church. Both of these churches had increased by hundreds and the Romanian government was so angry that they arrested the two preachers on charges of preaching illegally because they were too evangelistic. When I thought about the people in that country controlled by communism and when I thought about the people in our country free to do as we please, to go where we want to go, to think whatever we want to think, to worship wherever we want to worship. Look at the difference! America, we are driving too fast!

Here in America, where we are free people, we are not turning to Christ, people are not being converted, churches are not growing. But in Romania where there was slavery, the churches are growing by hundreds wherever the truth is proclaimed. I almost wanted to pray for God to make us slaves, for God to send suffering upon us. If we suffered, if we were slaves, maybe at last people would repent and turn to God. I pray that it will not be necessary for us to become slaves before we come to repentance.

We need a revival in America. America, repent of idol worship, repent of prayerlessness, repent of a lack of concern, repent of failure to visit the unsaved, repent of failure to study the word of God, repent of failure to listen intently to the preaching of the

DRIVE FAST!

Gospel of Jesus Christ. If each one of us will repent, revival will come. A great evangelist of an another generation once said, "Lord, send a revival, but let it begin in me."

The New Testament Missionary

This message was preached for the ordination of Tracy Thomas at Central Christian Church, Las Vegas, Nevada, on November 28, 1983.

Tracy's Ordination

I want to speak tonight directly to Tracy, as well as to you, the members of the congregation on the subject, "What is a minister?" I would like to read from I Thessalonians chapter 2. You may want to follow along in your own Bibles, I'll be reading verses 1-12.

You know, brothers, that our visit to you was not a failure. We had previously suffered and been insulted in Philippi, as you know, but with the help of our God we dared to tell you his gospel in spite of strong opposition. For the appeal we make does not spring from error or impure motives, nor are we trying to trick you. On the contrary, we speak as men approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel. We are not trying to please men but God, who tests our hearts. You know we never used flattery, nor did we put on a mask to cover up greed — God is our witness. We were not looking for praise from men, not from you or anyone else. As apostles of Christ we could have been a burden to you, but we were gentle among you, like a mother caring for

her little children. We loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well, because you had become so dear to us. Surely you remember, brothers, our toil and hardship; we worked night and day in order not to be a burden to anyone while we preached the gospel of God to you. You are witnesses, and so is God, of how holy, righteous and blameless we are among you who believed. For you know that we dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children, encouraging, comforting and urging you to live lives worthy of God, who calls you into his kingdom and glory.

What is a minister? We generally refer to a minister as an evangelist. The New Testament scriptures use this term in numerous passages. In Ephesians 4:11, the Apostle Paul indicates that the evangelist had an office in the church. In II Timothy 4:5, Paul challenges young Timothy, "Do the work of an evangelist, fulfill thy ministry." Philip is also called an evangelist in the New Testament. The work of the evangelist is primarily to proclaim the good news that Jesus Christ has come into the world. An evangelist also has the job of edifying the congregation and instructing the congregation in matters of the faith. Now today, most churches do not use the term evangelist, most churches refer to preachers as ministers, or preachers, or sometimes they are referred to as pastor.

These terms are used as synonymous in modern day usage to the term evangelist as it is found in the New Testament. It is obvious that the work of the evangelist and the work of the elder in the church will many times overlap. It is quite possible for one man to be able to do the work of both offices in the church. This is illustrated by the Apostle Peter, who would have certainly been termed a preacher or a proclaimer of the good news of Jesus Christ. Yet, we read in I Peter 5:1 how Peter also called himself an elder. It is possible also for those who are servants or deacons in the church to serve as evangelists or preachers. In Acts the sixth chapter we read about the seven men who were called as servants in the church in Jerusalem. They were deacons, and yet, we read in the seventh chapter of Acts how one of these deacons, Stephen, a great man of

faith, went out and preached such a strong, gospel sermon that he was put to death as a result of his preaching. In Acts chapter eight we read how one of these other deacons, whose name was Philip, went out and preached the gospel and converted souls to Christ and held a great revival meeting.

If Tracy were to live up to the description of a minister as is outlined for us in the Bible here in I Thessalonians 2, he would have to be perfect. I am sure that every member of this church has voted for Tracy to come here because you think he is perfect. I can tell you a lot of things about Tracy. I can tell you, for example, that when he was growing up he had the messiest room in the house of all the children. He threw clothes all over the floor until you couldn't even walk in the room, you had to walk on clothes. I have sometimes threatened him within an inch of his life, "If you don't clean up this room you're going to get it."

It was the most amazing thing to me, as soon as Tracy left home and went away to Bible College he changed and became 100 percent the opposite. When you go into Tracy's house today, you don't dare get a speck of dust on anything or you're in for trouble. I wish he would have been that way when he was at home. He was the worst of all the children about leaving the lights on. I can't tell you how many times I said, "Shut the lights off, Tracy, it costs a fortune to burn electricity." That's another way that he's changed. I tell you when you go to his house today, you don't dare turn anything on because he'll be right there following you, turning it off and saying, "Don't you know that it costs a fortune to run all this electricity." I can tell you so many interesting things about Tracy, but I don't want to spoil anything, because you think he's perfect, but he isn't. You'll find out as time goes on that he won't suit you in all ways and that will be a disappointment to you because you want your preacher to be absolutely perfect.

No preacher is perfect, but I was just reading, recently, about a church that found a perfect preacher. "After hundreds of fruitless searches a model preacher has been found. It is guaranteed that he will please any church that desires to call him. He preaches exactly

25 minutes and then sits down. He will hold his audience in condemnation of sin, but never hurt anybody's feelings. He works from 8 a.m. in the morning to 10 p.m. every night in all types of work from preaching in the pulpit to running rummage sales. He always wears good clothes even though his salary is only \$15 a week. He buys good books of all kinds regularly. He has a nice family. He drive a good car. He gives \$450 a week to the church. And he stands ready to contribute to every good work with which he's confronted. This model preacher is 26 years old and he's been preaching the gospel for 30 years. He is tall, short, handsome, heavy-set. Has one large brown eye and one large blue eye, his hair is parted in the middle, the left side is dark and straight the right side is brown and wavy. He has a burning desire to work with teenagers, but spends all his time with the older folks. He smiles all the time with a straight face, because he has a good sense of humor that keeps him seriously dedicated to his work. He has a glowing personality with deadened feelings and nerves of iron." There you are, the perfect preacher that will suit everybody. Even though Tracy is not the perfect preacher or minister of Jesus Christ, he has come here, I hope, not to please men but to please God.

I. Boldness

So, tonight, I want us to reexamine these qualifications of the ministry as they're outlined in I Thessalonians 2. First of all, I'd call your attention to the fact that Paul, Silas, and Timothy are describing the ministry in this passage. I feel quite certain that as you have called Tracy to be Minister of Music, that you are expecting these same qualification in his life that Paul, Silas, and Timothy said were to be found in their lives. I feel quite certain that as a minister of God that your are expecting Tracy to deliver the word of God with great boldness. I want you to notice again in verse 2 of I Thessalonians 2, Paul says, "But even after that we suffered before them were shamefully entreated as you know in Philippi, we

were bold in our God to speak unto you the gospel of God with much contention." These are easy words to use, but they are not easy characteristics to live. Paul says that he was shamefully treated at Philippi.

Do you remember what happened at Philippi to Paul and Silas? They were falsely accused. They were brought before the magistrates of the city and they were beaten with many stripes. They were then cast into jail, their feet were made fast in the stocks. That would be enough to drive most young ministers out of the ministry, but not Paul and Silas. From their position as prisoners in the jail in Philippi, what did they do? They prayed, they sang praises to God, and the jailer was converted. Now as Tracy has been called here as Minister of Music, I couldn't help but use that scriptural passage and bring out that fact. Paul and Silas prayed and sang praises to God, and it was because they delivered the word of God by music that the jailer at Philippi was converted.

Music is a very, very important part of Christianity. Next to preaching the word of God, I suppose we would have to say that music is most important. So, Tracy is called here to fulfill a very important ministry, to deliver the word of God with great boldness in the form of music. From this musical evangelistic campaign at the jail in Philippi, Paul then proceeded on to Thessalonica where he engaged in an aggressive campaign for souls in that city.

There are always those who will try to silence the minister. They tried to silence Paul at Philippi. But he would not be quiet; he was determined to deliver the word of God with great boldness. I do not doubt, Tracy, that there will be those in this congregation, as time goes on, who will try to silence you. It is up to you to stand firmly upon the word of God. It is up to you to be bold in delivering the message of the word of God through your own particular ministry of music.

There are those who will try to compromise the word of God and persuade you to present unscriptural music, then you will have the task of standing firm and insisting that the word of God must be presented. There can be no compromise. Any minister of Christ

must be bold in standing up for the truth.

II. Simplicity

The second thing that I would point out from this passage of Scripture is the fact that the Apostle Paul, as a minister of God, proclaimed the word of God in very simple terms. The gospel is a simple message of good news. It's so simple for example, that Isaiah 35:8 says, "The wayfaring man, though he be a fool, need not err there in."

God has given us a clear example of simplicity in delivering the word of God in the life of Jesus Christ. Without a doubt, Jesus was the greatest minister that ever lived and ministered on the face of this earth. How did Jesus deliver the message of God's word? In a very simple way. So simply that the common people heard him gladly. Jesus almost always taught the word of God by the means of parables. What was a parable? Nothing more than a little story with a heavenly meaning. Large words, deep theological messages will not generally warm the hearts of sinful people. I know that in the ministry of music is often times found the battleground in the church. There are those in the congregation who would like to hear Kiamichi music like "I'll Fly Away." Then there are those who would like to hear the in-between. How in the world are you going to please everybody? Obviously, you won't please everyone. Whether you present something like Bach and Beethoven or the Kiamichi gospel songs, just be sure it is the word of God and that the message is couched in simple language, words that are easy to be understood so that the love of God can be felt by each member of the congregation.

In years gone by, I have often worked for the North American Christian Convention. I served on more than one occasion as Registration Chairman. In 1965 I served as Vice President of the North American when it met in Louisville, Kentucky. Serving several years on the Executive Committee I can remember how we used to

read those evaluation sheets that people turned in at the end of the convention. In particular I remember the convention of 1965 in Louisville, when almost every speaker on the convention's platform read from a manuscript. The messages were well prepared., the sentences were complex. But day after day, I heard people going out saying, "What did he preach? What did he say? I didn't understand, the words were too big and complicated." When the evaluation sheets came in at the close of that convention and we read them, almost every person said, "Throw away the written manuscripts. Forget about the big words that you have to have a dictionary, in order to look up the meaning. Just preach the gospel from the heart."

I'm sure that every member of this congregation will appreciate it, Tracy, if you will keep the music of the variety that we have heard this past weekend. With beautiful words from the word of God to teach the message of God and the love of God to all who come within this building to hear the word of God. It is up to you as a minister of Christ to present the word of God with boldness, with simplicity.

III. Sincerely

In the third place, I want to say that you must present the word of God sincerely. The ministry must not be just another way of making a living. You must live your life so that people can emulate the life of Jesus as they watch you. Don't be one of those preachers who say, "Do as I say, not as I do," but be a preacher so that you can say, "Walk in my footsteps, as I walk in the footsteps of Jesus Christ." A minister must have a genuine conviction and believe with all his heart that the Bible is the word of God, that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and there is no other way to obtain life everlasting.

Paul gives several reasons for his sincerity in this passage of scripture. Please notice verse four, "On the contrary, we speak as

men approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel. We are not trying to please men but God, who tests our hearts." Paul says that he sincerely proclaimed the message of God because he felt that he was a steward. A steward is one who is entrusted with the belongings of someone else. As the steward of God, Paul had been entrusted with the gospel of Christ. As a faithful steward, he must pass this message along to others. You, Tracy, must sincerely be a steward of God and pass on the message of God through your ministry of music.

Then we notice in verse five Paul says, "You know we never used flattery, nor did we put on a mask to cover up greed — God is our witness." He says he was a sincere minister because he was not a flatterer. I think it is wonderful to compliment people when they deserve compliments. In fact, the Bible says, "Honor those to who honor is due." Tracy, you can brag on this choir all you want to, you won't be using any flattery; this is a great choir you have to work with. I wish I could hear the bell choir and the other choirs you have to work with in this church. But there is a difference between giving honor and giving a sincere compliment and then just using flattering words that don't mean a thing. All of us despise someone who comes around all the time slapping everybody on the back saying, "Oh it's great. Oh, it's wonderful. Oh, it's terrific." We know those are meaningless words, they're nothing but flattery. I would encourage you to not be that kind of a minister, but to be sincere and give honest compliments and praise where praise is deserved.

Paul also says that he was a sincere minister because he did not wear a cloak of covetousness. It is the duty of this congregation to support Tracy and his family in this ministry, to which you have called them. I trust and pray that Tracy and his family will never betray your confidence and begin to wear a cloak of covetousness. No minister should desire the things of this world to the point that he wants to be rich with the riches of this world and I need not remind Tracy, this evening, that he could've made far more money if he would have given his life to some other cause. I'm sure it's

not the big salary that you offered him that brought him to Las Vegas. But it was the opportunity to use his life and talents in the service of the Lord Jesus Christ. As you now feel that God has brought you here for this ministry, I encourage you to minister with all your heart and never try to clothe yourself with the cloak of covetousness. Be able at all times to say that I'm sincerely here to deliver the word of God not to get something out of these people. On the other hand, you the congregation must never forget that it is your responsibility to support Tracy in this ministry so that he can deliver the word of God sincerely.

Paul also said he was sincere in delivering the message of God because he was not seeking the glory of men. Notice in verse six, "We were not looking for praise from men, not from you or anyone else. As apostles of Christ we could have been a burden to you." You have not come here, Tracy, to receive the glory of men, not to get your name in the headlines down here on the strip, or something like that. You have come here to glorify God and don't ever lose sight of that fact. It is not for your glory, but for His glory that you have been called to his ministry.

We notice in verse eight that Paul's ministry was to bring hope to the hopeless and to save the souls of the lost, "We loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well, because you had become so dear to us." I pray while you're here in Las Vegas that you will find many a poor lost soul and that through your ministry you will be able to impart God's word and bring hope to the hopeless and salvation to those who would otherwise be condemned to hell.

IV. Gentleness

The fourth characteristic of a minister as outlined by the Apostle Paul in this passage is to be found in verse seven, "But we were gentle among you, like a mother caring for her little children." Tracy, as a minister of Christ, I want you to be gentle as was the

Apostle Paul. Pray for patience. You will have to have lots of patience to serve a large church like this. I guarantee you that they will try your patience to the breaking point. May God give you tact. You will need lots of tact dealing with the people. When half your choir members don't show up for practice, how are you going to scold them and still keep them as friends? May kindness be one of the virtues that will be a part of your ministry. When they hit those sour notes and you want to pull your hair out, well don't do it. Compassion, oh how you will need a great amount of compassion in dealing with members of the church and also the unsaved souls that you will come in contact with. And sympathy, you must be sympathetic with people. You're depending on them to come to the practices and someone does not show up and you're about ready to blow your top and really scold them and then you find out that one of their loved ones was taken to the hospital with a heart attack or someone has come down with cancer and then you are so glad that you didn't blow your top, because now you can be sympathetic. You realize there was a real reason for their absence.

In short, Tracy, I pray that you will fall in love with every member of this congregation. Before God, I can stand here tonight and tell you people that I dearly love every member of the Hickory Valley Christian Church in Chattanooga, Tennessee. There's not a one that I dislike; I like everyone of them. I hope, Tracy, that a year from now, after you have become acquainted with every member of this congregation, that you can truthfully say, "I love every member of the body of Christ that I serve." The Apostle Paul said that as a minister of God that he loved people so sincerely that he felt just like a nurse caring for a baby, or like a mother that holds her baby to her breast. I pray that you as a minister of God will have that same kind of love for each member of this congregation and a real sincere desire to help each member to know God better.

Paul loved the people so much that he was even willing to support himself. In verse nine he said, "Surely you remember, brothers, our toil and hardship: we worked night and day in order not to be a burden to anyone while we preached the gospel of God to you."

I pray that this type of love will be a part of your life.

V. Holy

What is a minister? The final characteristic that I want to point out is in verse ten, "You are witnesses and so is God, of how holy, righteous and blameless we were among you who believed." The Apostle Paul, like all ministers, was not perfect. He made his mistakes and people did criticize him. Oh, how people are able to criticize ministers. It's amazing how many church members go home and have fried preacher or roast preacher for Sunday dinner. Tracy, there's not doubt at all in my mind that you will be criticized, especially since you are in such a prominent ministry as the ministry of music, where people have such strong feelings and such strong opinions. But, I plead with you members of the congregation to realize that you can make or break Tracy's ministry. If you want to criticize him loud enough and long enough, you can destroy him, but on the other hand, if you will love him and pray for him and support his ministry, then you can make him into an even greater minister of God. It sometimes seems easier to destroy the man of God than it does to destroy the sins that are in our own lives and correct them.

A minister of God must focus his attention on the sins of the people in order to save the people and help them to be righteous. therefore, Tracy, I charge you as a minister to be a holy man of God. What does that mean to be a holy man of God? When Paul said he was a holy man of God, I think that means he observed all the duties of Christianity.

Now, as Tracy's father, it gives me a great deal of pleasure to be able to stand here tonight and to say that I commend him to his ministry with no fears. As Tracy grew up, I never did have to worry about him telling a lie or stealing something or going to any X-rated movies or drinking alcohol or smoking cigarettes or doing anything else. I'm so proud to say that he has always been an obe-

dient son and I fully expect that to be the same kind of life he will live here in Las Vegas. I'm quite certain that he will be a holy man of God.

The Apostle said he not only lived the holy life, but that he lived justly. What does that mean? He did no harm to anybody. He was honest before all men. I'm certain Tracy is not going to run up any bills and charge accounts that he will fail to pay for. I'm sure that he will be just and honest and truthful to everybody and pay his bills as any good man of God should do.

Paul says he lived before the people an unblamable life. People criticized him, but they were never able to bring any real charge against him. Years ago, when I served the Lord at Catlin, Illinois, there was a member of the church that had become a backslider, a real bad backslider. One day he came to me and told me that he would like to rededicate his life to Christ and so he did. The members of the Catlin church at first would not receive him back; they were suspicious that he was going to continue to live a hypocritical, backslidden life. But over a long period of years this man proved to everybody that his repentance and rededication was sincere. He eventually became the minister to the deaf in the Catlin congregation and continues in that ministry to this very day. One day I received this lovely card in the mail from this brother in Christ. This card reads like this:

What is a Minister?

A minister is someone who is chosen by God as a shepherd of souls in his care. He is someone who comforts an unhappy heart with a smile or a word or a prayer. A minister is someone whose strength and devotion enriches the living of others. He's someone who preaches the doctrine of Christ that basically all men are brothers. A minister is someone whose goal is to follow a worthy and lofty ideal, to guide other souls in the straight paths of truth, to sympathize, comfort and heal. A minister is someone of great

understanding, whose selfless devotion to duty imparts all hearts the real spirit of giving and adds to life more truth and beauty.

This brother in Christ sent me this card with that verse inside because he had judged me to be that kind of minister in his life. I knew then and I know now that I did not deserve any compliment like this, because I was never able to live up perfectly to the duties of the ministry anymore than any other man. But I deeply appreciated the card. I deeply appreciated this verse and, Tracy, I want to pass it on to you in this manner. I pray that your ministry here in Las Vegas will result in the change in somebody's life and that they will be so appreciative of it that someday you will have the joy of receiving a card like this, and that somebody else will look up to you and say, "You are my minister!"

May God bless you, Son, as you are ordained to the ministry of God. That is my prayer.

Dear friends, we come to this moment of invitation. Every gospel service in the Christian Church always offers anyone that is unsaved the opportunity of giving their lives to Jesus Christ. If you have not accepted Christ as your Savior, will you do it right now? If you have never been buried with Him in baptism, will you come and obey Him right now? If you've never placed your membership, would you come right now and place your membership? Let us stand together and sing the hymn together. Will you come?

Preach The Word

Preached at Tony's Ordination, May 8, 1977, as "Throwing Mud at Jesus"

In II Timothy chapter 4 reading verses 1-5:

In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and His kingdom, I give you this charge: Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage — with great patience and careful instruction. For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths. But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry.

The story has been told, and a most unusual story it is, concerning a missionary, who died a martyr's death. The tormenters, the accusers, the executioners of this missionary sat before him a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ. Then they began to throw mud on the picture of Jesus. The missionary, as a faithful servant of Jesus, sought to keep the picture of Jesus clean. He took a rag and cleaned

off the mud from the picture of the face of Jesus, and then the tormentors threw more mud on the picture, and again, patiently, he cleaned it off. Then his tormentors and accusers took all kinds of filth and smeared it all over the beautiful picture of Jesus. But again, he took that rag and he cleaned off the picture of the face of Jesus Christ. They took pencils and crayons and drew grotesque mustaches, goatees, beards and they completely marred the picture of Jesus. Again the missionary took erasers and he tried to erase all these markings. He took soap and water and he kept trying to keep clean the face of the Lord Jesus Christ. Finally, he knew he was not going to last much longer and he spoke up and said, "I will die before I see the face of my Lord smeared with filth." That is exactly what happened. They put him to death. He fell down beside this picture of the face of Jesus. He had died trying to keep clean the face of Jesus Christ.

As I understand the position of a Christian minister, I believe it is his obligation to so preach the Word of God that he lifts up before his congregation that perfect picture of Jesus Christ. If anyone tries to defile that perfect picture of Jesus, it is up to the minister of the Gospel to keep clean that picture of Jesus. Even if it means giving his very life in the cause of preaching the Gospel. In Matthew 17:8 the Bible says, "And when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man save, Jesus only." It is my earnest and sincere prayer, Tony, that when you stand up before this congregation or any other congregation, any place, you preach the Word of God, that people will be able to see Jesus only through your preaching.

In Luke 4:20 the Bible says, "And he closed the book and he gave it again to the minister and sat down. And the eyes of all of them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him." Jesus, of course, was the preacher on this occasion. The eyes of all the people were upon Jesus. As you, a minister of Jesus Christ stand up before the people to preach the word of God, I pray that each time you preach the message from this book, you will so preach that all the people will fasten their eyes upon Jesus.

In Colossians 1:18 the Bible tells us, "And He is the head of

the body of the church, who is the beginning, the first born from the dead, that in all things that He might have the preeminence." Again, I pray that as you preach the Word of God, you may so preach that Christ will receive the honor. Christ will receive the glory. Christ will be the one who is always preeminent.

Tony, as a preacher of the Word of God, it is your responsibility to lift up before the people the perfect picture of the Lord Jesus Christ, as the pre-existent Son of God. In John 17:5 we read, "And now, Oh Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was." Yes, Jesus Christ is without beginning or end. He is truly the pre-existent Son of God. There are many voices in the world today, who would throw mud on the pre-existent Son of God, so it is up to you to keep that picture clean.

It is also up to you to present to the people the virgin born Son of God. In Matthew 1:18 we read, "This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about: His mother, Mary, was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit." We all know that there are many in the world today who would, and who do, throw mud on the virgin birth of Jesus Christ. But it is up to you to so proclaim the glorious message of God's Word that you will keep clean the virgin birth of Jesus Christ and present Jesus in that miraculous manner to the people.

In John 1:29 we read, "The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him and sayeth, 'Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world.'" And so you proclaim the Gospel of Jesus in such a way that Jesus, Himself, will be lifted up as the Lamb of God.

The 19th century was the age of the exclamation mark, but the 20th century has become the age of the question mark. Everything that we once believed in is being questioned and, in most cases, is ridiculed today. Young people are asking, "If what you believe is right, why is the world in such a mess?" Some have even gone as far as to say that Christianity has failed. Look at the suffering, the

agony, the disease, the poverty, the hate, the racial injustice, the war, the blood being spilled all over the world. If God is the God of love, why doesn't He stop it? Christianity has failed, the enemies of Christ are saying.

I. The New Theology

I agree with G.K. Chesterton who said, "Christianity has not been tried and found wanting, it has been found difficult and left untried."

Tony, there are those today who are throwing mud at the Lord Jesus Christ in the form of the new theology. One of your duties as a minister of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ will be to constantly keep clean the face of Jesus in the midst of this so-called new theology. One of the most popular words being used today in theological circles is the word *neo*, meaning new. We hear talk about the neo-orthodoxy, neo-liberalism, neo-fundamentalism. Recently, one clergyman suggested that we need to have a moratorium on God for one year and another minister said, "No, for twenty years." Can you imagine, we are not supposed to mention God for twenty years?

Recently, a preacher said in print, "There is no such thing as a devil." When I read that, I felt like the prize fighter whose opponent was almost beating him to death. As the boxer leaned on the rope and was about to fall his manager shouted, "Get up, he's not even hitting you." The fighter replied, "Then watch that referee, because someone is sure hitting me." If there is no devil, who is it that is hitting us? Those who are proposing the new theology, question the new theology, question the authority of the scriptures. They question existence of judgment and hell. They teach and accept a form of humanism. That's not new at all. This business of it being a new theology is a misnomer. It is as old as the devil.

Turn with me to Genesis 3:1-5, "Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made. He

said to the woman, 'did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?' The woman said to the serpent, 'We may eat from the trees in the garden, but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.' 'You will not surely die,' the serpent said to the woman. "For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." Three times the devil said, "Has God said?" We who are members of the Churches of Christ have always believed in the word of God, the Bible. Two thousand times in Old Testament scriptures, the prophets claimed that God spoke. We read such passages as these: "The Lord said unto Noah," "God spoke unto Israel," "God said," "The Lord commanded," "Hear the Word of the Lord," "Thus spake the Lord." "I put my words in your mouth." Either God did speak to these men as they wrote by inspiration or else they were the most consistent liars that the world have ever known. That they should tell and record more than two thousand lies seems incredible. Did Jesus deliberately deceive us? Because Jesus also quoted freely from the Old Testament and not once did He say, "Watch out, you can't trust that. You can't believe that." Jesus quoted from Noah, Moses, and Jonah. Three of the men whose Old Testament writings are most questioned by people today seeking to throw mud on Jesus. Jesus used many quotations from the Old Testament and the apostles constantly quoted from the Old Testament Scriptures.

The devil's second statement to Eve was, "You shall not die." Doesn't that sound familiar? What do people say in 1977? They say, "There is no Hell." A.C. Dixson is the man who used to say, "If we had more Hell in the pulpit, we might have less Hell in the community." In one village, where Jesus had cured a man, the people said to Him, "Leave us alone." That is what people are saying today to Gospel preachers. They don't want to hear about death and judgment and Hell. People want to hear about God as being a kindly, old man with a long, white beard sitting on a cloud saying sentimentally to everybody, "Love, love, love." It's true that God loves

and that God is love and we must preach that.

But this same Bible also tells us that God is a God of judgment. As you preach, may you make it very clear that the day of judgment is coming. That day, when every unsaved person is going to stand before the judgment throne of God and will be judged according to the deeds done in the flesh.

The third thing the serpent said to Eve was, "You shall be as gods." That is humanism. Today, humanism has pervaded the university campuses from one end of this earth to the other. The object of humanism is to replace Christianity with the national man-centered philosophy of progress and improvement. Humanism is simply the worship of man. It is all the more dangerous because it is so sophisticated and civilized in its expressions and it has even been invading the church.

I sympathize with people that want a new method for communicating the Gospel in the twentieth century. I don't say that we must imprison the Gospel message in the old English language, the King James Version of the Bible, but neither must we disregard the truth just because it is old. No mathematician would look at the multiplication table and say, "Well, that's old stuff, two plus two equals four. That's old. I learned that back in school over 30 years ago, don't you have something new?" Yes, when I was in school thirty years ago I was taught that at sea level water will boil at 212 degrees and freezes at 32 degrees. It will always be so. In the spiritual realm, as in mathematics, there are certain truths that are constant, fixed, and firm. God is constant. The Bible says, "For I am the Lord, I change not," Malachi 3:6. The Word of God is constant. Jesus said, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my word shall not pass away," Matthew 24:35. Our Lord Jesus Christ is constant. "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today, and forever," Hebrews 13:8. The way of salvation is constant. "Neither is there salvation in any other for there's no other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved," Acts 4:12. Today, we do not need a new theology; it's ridiculous, the very thought of it. But we need the old theology, preached, believed, and practiced by all mankind.

II. The New Morality

As you are ordained to the Christian ministry, I would warn you that those who would throw mud on the perfect face of Jesus Christ are quite busy today in a second field called the new morality. I believe the new morality has been brought about in part by extremists of the so-called new theology. The new morality expressed in relativism repudiates the ten commandments, especially the seventh commandment forbidding adultery. It denies the absolute authority of God. It advocates permissiveness with affections. In other words it says, "Go ahead and sleep with that boy or girl if you find it meaningful or if love is involved, whether you are married or not." I would not call you back to that Victorian age, to that hush-hush period when everything pertaining to sex was supposed to be dirty and no one dared to talk about it. But, when a preacher writes a book on pornography that's so bad he had to be indicted by the District Attorney, that's a clear sign of how far we have gone. When a preacher stands in the pulpit to condone premarital sex experiences that's Satan preaching. When a preacher declares publicly that his hobby is painting nude girls, that goes beyond the bounds of any morality. When church people start discussing, overlooking, homosexuality and even discussing ordaining homosexuals to the ministry, that goes beyond anything since God wrote about it in the Bible.

Let us look at Romans chapter 1, beginning with verse 21, to see what God has to say about the so-called new morality.

For although they knew God, they never glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles. Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. They exchanged the truth of God for a lie,

and worshipped and served created things rather than the Creator, who is forever praised. Amen. Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones. In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversions. Furthermore, since they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, he gave them over to a depraved mind, to do what ought not to be done. They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed, and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, and malice. They are gossips, slanderers, God haters, insolent, arrogant, and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents; they are senseless, faithless, heartless, ruthless. Although they know God's righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them.

What we call this new moral relativism is nothing but the old immorality, rearing its ugly head and it can destroy your soul quicker than anything I know. The Bible says, "Wherefore come out from among them and be ye separate sayeth the Lord and touch not the unclean thing," II Corinthians 6:17.

What we need in the church and in the ministry today is a Holy discipline. A disciplined life, not because we are under law, but because we are under grace. The truth has made us free. Free to serve God because we love Him. If you love God, you will obey His commandments and you will live clean and pure lives.

Let me sound this warning to each member of this congregation as well as to the candidate you are about to ordain. It is impossible to live a clean and pure life unless Jesus Christ lives inside you.

Sex is a gift from God and there is nothing dirty about it and nothing wrong about it. It is creative energy that you can surrender to Jesus Christ and then be dynamite for God. I do not believe any-

one can be a dynamic follower of Jesus Christ unless his sex life is surrendered to Jesus Christ. I'll guarantee, Tony, that God will do for you what he did for Joseph if you're surrendered to Christ. Joseph would not accept the new morality of his day and so he left his garment in Potiphar's wife's hand and he fled that which is evil. God gave him grace, power, and the strength to do it and God will do the same for you, if you will stand up and preach the right thing.

III. The New Evangelism

There is a third area where the enemies of Jesus Christ are throwing mud upon him. that is in the area of new evangelism. This new evangelism says, according to *TIME* Magazine, that personal soul winning is passé. The new evangelism wants to apply Christian principles to the social order. Its proponents want to make the prodigal son happy and comfortable and prosperous in the far country without leading him back to God, the Father. Of course, Christian principles have to be applied to the social order, but strictly speaking, the social gospel is not evangelism. What is evangelism? To evangelize is to so present Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit that men will come to put their trust in God through Him, to accept Him as their Savior, and to serve Him as their King in the fellowship of His church. Evangelism means to convert people to Jesus Christ.

I agree that we must have a Gospel large enough and adequate enough to meet the challenge of every hour. But we also need an evangelism that is winning men and women to Jesus Christ, then they will have a capacity to love their neighbors and feel compassion to all men. The word evangelist is used three times in the New Testament. The word Gospel is used 76 times. To preach the Gospel is found 24 times. To give good tidings is found in 5 references. To preach is found in 19 more references and it usually refers to preaching Christ. Now this means, there are 120 references in the New Testament to the sounding forth of the saving

grace of Christ to a dying humanity. As you are ordained to the preaching ministry this is your inescapable duty, **PREACH THE GOSPEL!**

Today, there are many preachers that are spending their time on peripheral areas. Maybe they are important, but so far as I understand the New Testament Scriptures, the primary duty of the minister of the Gospel is to preach the word of God and win people to Jesus, and it's sorely needed in our world. There are approximately 5 million undenominational Christians in this world and that's not very many in the world population of 4 billion persons.

But we have a far greater percentage than the early church had on the Day of Pentecost. In that beginning day there were only 120 people, who were praying for the preaching of the word of God. They didn't have any automobiles and they didn't have airplanes, they didn't have a printing press, they didn't even have the written Bible, they had no church buildings, no Bible seminaries, no Christian schools. They didn't even have a well trained clergy; these men had spent three years with Jesus. They didn't have university degrees, but they did have a degree from Jesus' seminary. They were ordinary businessmen, fishermen and laborers, but they had something that seems so missing in the lives of most preachers today. They had commitment and dedication. They were willing to deny themselves and take up the cross and they were willing to die in the Roman arena. That is exactly what they did, they died for the Gospel. They were torn asunder, they were cut apart, but they kept on preaching the Gospel. No wonder they turned the world upside down.

As you dedicate your life to the preaching of the Gospel, I hope you're doing it with the full intention of being a fool for Jesus' sake. I believe we've become too sophisticated and too respectable. Those early men, who followed Jesus, followed Him in the jails and prisons and they were out on the streets and they were among the people working and sitting where they sat. Lloyd Douglas called it a "Magnificent Obsession." The people of Jesus' day accused Him of being beside himself and they said Paul was

mad. I think we need some of that madness in the twentieth century.

Those of you who know me very well know that I'm not much of a sports enthusiast and some people that know me very well wonder how in the world there was ever a sportsman like Tony that came out of the Thomas family. But, occasionally I go to a ball game, if I'm forced into it. I do remember back in November of 1975, I went to a football game at Colorado Springs, Colorado and I watched the Air Force Academy play UCLA. I must confess I was more interested in watching the Blue Angels performing in the sky than I was those men kicking a pigskin around out there in the yard. But one thing I did notice at that football game that was the enthusiasm of the fans. I was sitting around Generals and Lieutenant Colonels and Captains and Majors . . . respectable men, university professors with Ph.D. degrees. You know they were jumping up and down and screaming and shouting and arguing and I think some of them could've almost killed each other before that game was over. Those same respectable people would have been horrified if they have gone over to the Air Force Academy chapel service and somebody would have smiled they would have said, "That is too emotional for a church service."

It seems strange to me that we can get all worked up over sports and pleasure and money, and we can scream like a tribe of wild Indians at some musical show and then we're not supposed to show any murmur of enthusiasm when it comes to winning people to the Lord Jesus Christ. As members of the Harrison Church of Christ, I want to charge you today, on this day of ordination, to reaffirm your determination to evangelize Harrison for Jesus and to evangelize this world in our generation. We could do it, if we were energized and filled with the Holy Spirit and with the Holy Conviction that Christ is the way and the truth and the life and that there is no other way.

In the month of March, I had the privilege of going to the island of Haiti, for the tenth time, to preach the Gospel. While we were in Haiti this time, I got to go to Cap Haitian. Teresa and I

were the only two lucky ones out of the 69 people that went to Haiti. We got to go to Cap Haitian and work there and start a new congregation. Near Cap Haitian is the world famous citadel, and anybody that has ever read about Haiti has read about the citadel. The citadel was started in 1806 by King Henri Christoff, the first king of Haiti. Haiti declared independence from France in 1802 and there was a threat from Napoleon that he was going to come and recapture Haiti. King Henri Christoff built this citadel, which has been named the 8th wonder of the world, to be a fortress that would repulse the forces of Napoleon and the forces of France in case he came to recapture the island. It is one of the most amazing pieces of architecture ever to go up on the face of the earth.

Built on the very top of a very high and imposing mountain that looks over Cap Haitian harbor, it took King Henri Christoff 14 years to build. It cost the lives of twenty thousand slaves to get it built. He brought two thousand cannons from Mexico to put in this fortress and imported 10,000 cannon balls from Mexico. He built a powder magazine in the fortress that is as big as this worship auditorium or bigger. He even got two cannons from Napoleon, himself, and inscribed them with Napoleon's name. It is quite interesting how he got those cannons. When Napoleon's ship came into Cap Haitian's harbor, King Henri Christoff quickly captured that ship, took the two cannons off and set the ship on fire and sunk it and hauled the cannons up to the citadel. So there are 2,002 cannons there and you can see them right to this day. There came a time when Napoleon became quite serious about retaking Haiti. He sent a Captain from his army over on a ship to Cap Haitian and this captain came to King Henri of Haiti with the threat, "You'd better surrender, because if you don't Napoleon is going to come and crush you. Why not go ahead and give up and save all the bloodshed?"

King Henri Christoff was a very, very brilliant man. He entertained Napoleon's Captain royally. Then he brought him out on the wall of the citadel; it's a very narrow wall. When you look over that wall you look hundreds of feet below to nothing but jagged

rocks. It is a very fearful thing to stand on that high wall and look over. King Henri Christoff had this captain from the army of France to be seated there on the narrow wall and then he ordered his soldiers to start marching. It was a military secret, nobody knew it, but at that time King Henri Christoff only had two hundred soldiers in his army. He was so pitifully weak, militarily speaking, that Napoleon could've come and crushed Haiti like you would crush a fly with a fly-swatter, but of course, nobody know this. King Henri Christoff started these two hundred soldiers marching single file down the wall of the citadel. He only gave them one order, "Forward march," and as they began to march, he very quietly made the observation to Napoleon's man, "My soldiers number in the thousands, and they are totally obedient to my every command."

Napoleon's captain sat there and watched, horrified, because as those soldiers marched down the wall, King Henri Christoff never gave an order to halt and neither did he give the order to about face. When they reached the end of the wall they just toppled off, one by one, and they just kept marching off the end of the wall, falling to their death hundreds of feet below. they kept marching off the wall until one hundred soldiers had perished., That left only one hundred and, at that point, King Henri commanded them, "About face." The one hundred soldiers that remained did an about face and as they came past King Henri and the captain, King Henri gave them a secret order this time and they marched through the citadel into the changing room. They changed uniforms and marched back out, marched back in, and they kept this up, and kept it up, and the captain thought he was seeing different soldiers.

After this had gone on for more than an hour, suddenly he jumped up and screamed, "I'm convinced, I'm convinced. I've seen enough. Let me go." He rushed down to Cap Haitian harbor, climbed on his ship and sailed back to France. When he appeared before Napoleon history records that he said, "Emperor Napoleon, forget about Haiti. That King, Henri Christoff, has so many soldiers they are like the stars of the heavens. They are innumerable.

And his soldiers are totally obedient." Then he gave the report of the soldiers marching off the wall to their death, because that's what their commander told them to do. It put fear in the heart of Emperor Napoleon. He canceled all of his plans to send his army to Haiti. Consequently, Haiti has remained a free republic to this very day, because of the brilliance of that old king.

Tony, as you have dedicated your life to Jesus Christ, I would simply remind you that He is far greater than King Henri Christoff of Haiti. Jesus Christ, your commander, is King of kings and Lord of lords and He has only given one command. He said, "Go! Go everywhere, to everybody and preach the Gospel," and Jesus never once has said turn back. May God bless you that you may go and preach His Word!

What Does the Christian Church Believe?

All across this land of ours radio announcers constantly give time for station identification. It is only when they make the regular station breaks that the listening multitudes can identify the station to which we are tuned. I believe that this is a good time to pause in our life for soul identification. It's an opportunity to make our position known to the listening multitudes.

As I propose the question, "What does the Christian Church believe?", I might give a very, very simple answer by just holding up the Bible, and I can say, "This is what the Christian Church believes," because we do stand upon the Word of God. Our motto is this, "Where the Bible speaks, we speak and where the Bible is silent, we are silent."

The scripture text is Matthew 16:18. We read in the words of Jesus, "Upon this rock I will build My church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." When Jesus spoke those words in Matthew 16, the church had not yet come into existence. Christ used future tense, "Upon this rock I will build My church." We know that after Jesus spoke these words, He went ahead to fulfill His ministry. He died upon the cross for our sins. He was buried in the tomb. He arose again on the third day. Following His resurrection, He lived and walked upon this earth for forty more days and

was seen by many, many witnesses. Then He ascended in to heaven and a cloud received Him out of their sight. Following the ascension of Jesus, His apostles waited for ten days in Jerusalem obeying His instructions. Then, according to Acts 2, the church was born on the day of Pentecost in the year AD 30. The last verse of Acts 2 says, "And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved."

Every Denomination Agrees!

The amazing thing is that every denomination in the world that considers itself to be a Christian denomination agrees with what I have said up to this point. The Catholics agree, the Baptists, the Methodists, the Seventh Day Adventists, the Presbyterians, the Episcopalians, you name it. They all agree that Christ established His church in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost. Further more, all denominations agree that in the beginning the church was one, united. We know that this united church, this one church, continued for many, many years to just be the one church that Jesus established.

New Denomination Began

Well, what happened? For the answer to that question we have to look outside of the Bible, because at the time the Bible closed in 96 AD, with John writing down the Revelation, the church was still one. As we turn then to secular history, we find that for many years the church remained one. But then men began to vie with men for power and usually this exercise in seeking power was confined to the elders of the churches. One elder would gain enough power that he would rule the entire congregation and became known as the ruling elder. Then, sometimes that ruling elder would get enough power that he would rule several congregations. So, this vying for

power continued and became worse and worse with single individuals having great power over large numbers of congregations. Until finally, one man emerged as the ruler or the pope over all of God's children here on earth. Most historians date this from 590 AD. Pope Gregory I became the first man, the first individual, to be the absolute dictatorial ruler over all of God's children here on earth. They called him the Pope because he was considered to be the papa or the father over God's children. So, then we had two churches. Beginning with Pentecost AD 30 just one church, but then starting in 590 AD two churches; the churches that Jesus established in Jerusalem and then the church that has come to be known today as the Holy Roman Catholic Church with headquarters in Rome and with a man called the Pope being the head of the church.

The First Pope

In 590 AD, with the election of Gregory I as the pope, the Catholic church gained great power. Political power as well as ecclesiastical or religious power. For one thousand years the Catholic church actually ruled the world, politically and religiously. Everyone studies this when they go through school. You remember from your school books it is called The Dark Ages. The Dark Ages, or the one thousand years of Catholic rule, came to an end in 1517 when a Roman Catholic priest named Martin Luther rebelled against his denomination. Actually, Martin Luther, as a Roman Catholic priest, loved his church, but he disagreed with some of the doctrines of his church that were contrary to the teachings of the Bible. So Martin Luther listed these points of disagreement and he nailed them to the walls of the church building where he preached in Wittenberg, Germany. They were called the 95 Theses. Ninety five objections that this priest had against his own church, the Roman Catholic Church. Because Martin Luther nailed these 95 objections to the walls of the building where he preached, he was excommunicated by the pope at Rome and they sought his

life. But Martin Luther continued to hide and continued to preach and continued to write and because of this protest, the Protestant Reformation Movement was born. Protestant coming from the idea of protest. Martin Luther was protesting those things within the Roman Catholic Church that he believed to be contrary to the teachings of God's Word. Reformation because it was Martin Luther's idea to reform that which was wrong with the church and make it right again.

The Lutheran Denomination

Martin Luther never did intend to leave the Catholic Church. It was never his idea to start another church. But, through the teaching and the preaching and writing of Martin Luther, his followers did that very thing. His followers established the Lutheran denomination. This was over the objections of Martin Luther himself, because it is plainly recorded in the teachings and the writings of Martin Luther, "Do not call yourselves Lutherans, call yourselves Christians." But the followers of Martin Luther disregarded his teachings and followed their human hero and named their denomination after their leader.

About the same time something was happening over in England. King Henry VIII was having his disagreements with the pope in Rome. King Henry VIII could not agree with the pope because he had many different wives. You know this particularly dark part of the history of England. King Henry VIII murdered some of his wives in cold blood. Sometimes he would divorce his wife and get married to someone else immediately. After he had many wives, the pope at Rome spoke out quite loudly against him and King Henry VIII said, "OK. If we cannot agree then I'll start my own church." So, King Henry VIII started the Church of England. He appointed himself to be the head of the church in opposition to the pope at Rome who had declared that he was the head of the church. So, another denomination was born.

The Methodist Denomination

As the years went on, a lot of people could not agree with the Church of England. So, there were more protests and there were more denominations formed. One of the most prominent that came out of this period was the Methodist denomination. John Wesley was the leader of this group. John Wesley could not agree with the formalism of the church of England nor its lack of spiritual life. As John Wesley taught, many people enthusiastically followed him. It was said that John Wesley taught a very methodical religion. So, they nicknamed the followers of John Wesley Methodists. I believe that the Methodist denomination has become the very largest of all denominations in America today, as they have followed after the teachings of this brilliant leader, John Wesley.

In the meantime, there were many other denominations that had their beginnings from these days of the Protestant Reformation period. The Catholic Church had taught sprinkling as a substitute for baptism. There were lots of people who wanted to go back to the Bible way of baptizing. So, this group of people eventually took upon themselves the name Baptist because they immersed people, or, they baptized them according to the teachings of the Bible rather than by the Catholic substitution, which was sprinkling.

All of the modern denominations that we hear so much about today came out of this Protestant Reformation effort until finally there were more than 300 denominations. Each one of these denominations professed to believe that Jesus Christ was the Son of God. Each and every denomination professed to believe that the Bible was the Word of God. Each and every one of these denominations also insisted that they were the only ones that were going to be saved and go to heaven. There were all kinds of arguments, confrontations, disagreements, and divisions. The competition was fierce.

The Restoration Movement

This was the situation that faced the scene in America in the late 1700's, when the Restoration Movement was born. The Restoration Movement came out of all denominations and came out of this background of divisions and competition. There were two preachers that became quite prominent in the Restoration Movement. They were father and son, Thomas and Alexander Campbell. One was in Europe studying the Bible, while the other was in America studying the Bible. Independent of one another and two continents apart they both came to the very same position as a result of studying God's Word.

The position that they came to was that it was wrong to be divided into denominations, that we ought to be united in the Lord Jesus Christ and His Church. When Thomas and Alexander Campbell got together later, here in America, they were both astonished that independent of one another they had both come to this same position. They were from the Presbyterian denomination as a background.

About this same time Alexander Campbell was coming to this position, there was a Presbyterian preacher by the name of Barton W. Stone, who preached in Kentucky. He also came to this very same position and began to preach the restoration of people to the New Testament Church.

About this same time, there was a Methodist preacher in North Carolina named James O'Kelly, who came to this very same position. All of these men studying God's Word, independent of each other, began to preach, "Where the Bible speaks, we will speak. Where the Bible is silent, we are silent." They all began to say, "Let's forget about denominationalism. Let's forget about competing with one another and let's simply restore the church as it was in the beginning on the day of Pentecost when Jesus first established the church."

Dear friends, this is exactly what the Christian Church believes today. I believe that is a valid position. Surely, as we look

around us and see a world divided by denominationalism, we can realize the validity of restoration.

A Funny Story on Unity

I wonder how many of you have heard the very humorous story about the Jew who was injured in an automobile accident. It just so happened that near the accident there was a Catholic hospital. Of course, one of the witnesses to the accident quickly stepped to a telephone and called Emergency at the Catholic hospital and said, "Send the ambulance over quickly, there's been an accident over here on the interstate." Immediately, the Catholic hospital dispatched one of their ambulances and don't you know that a Seventh Day Adventist driver was on duty that day. So, he quickly whisked over to the site of the accident in the Catholic ambulance to pick up the Jew, who had been injured.

Now, when this Seventh Day Adventist driver arrived in the Catholic ambulance with the Jew at the Catholic hospital, it just so happened that a good Methodist doctor was on duty in the emergency room. Of course, he received this Jew, who had been injured in the traffic accident, and this Methodist doctor was assisted by an Episcopalian nurse. As soon as they examined the Jew, they said, "Oh my, we are going to have to amputate his leg." The Jew said, "Oh no, don't do that. I could never afford a wooden leg." Well, the Methodist doctor said, "Don't worry about it. I have a friend, down at the newspaper, who is the editor. He happens to be a good Lutheran and I know that he'll be glad to run an ad in this Lutheran newspaper and we will surely find somebody that would donate a wooden leg."

The doctor contacted the Lutheran editor of the newspaper and sure enough he ran a story in his newspaper about the plight of the poor Jew that was in the Catholic hospital that was going to have his leg amputated and don't you know, a good Baptist man answered that ad and he said, "I have a wooden leg that I haven't

used in a long time and I would be glad to donate it to the cause." Well, the Salvation Army sent a messenger boy down and picked up this wooden leg from the Baptist fellow, who was donating. They rushed it down to the Catholic hospital and there the Methodist doctor and the Episcopalian nurse installed the wooden leg on the Jew. As he went happily walking or hobbling out of the hospital, he said, "You know, this must make me a United Brethren!"

What Must We Restore?

I think you must agree with me that when we consider all the confusion that is caused by denominationalism that restoration is a valid plea. What is it that we must restore if we are going to restore the church that Jesus established on the day of Pentecost?

I. In the first place, we need to restore Jesus Christ to His rightful position as the Head of the church. Under Catholicism, which was the first denomination, they declared, and still do today, that the pope is the head of the church. Under Protestantism, or reformation, each one has their human heroes that they put up as the head of the church. Sometimes they are called bishops. Sometimes they are called state secretaries. It doesn't make any difference what name they wear, the point is that no man here on earth should be looked upon as head of the church, because the Bible says in Ephesians 5:23, "For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the Head of the church, and He is the Savior of the body." In Colossians 1:18, the Bible says, "And He is the Head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the first born from the dead that in all things that He might have the preeminence."

We, who are members of the Christian Church, insist that Jesus Christ be recognized as the only Head of the church. We, who are members of Christian Churches, will not, under any circumstance, recognize the pope as the head of the church, and neither will we recognize any man, be he an elder, preacher, bishop,

director, or whatever, as the head of the church. We insist that Jesus Christ only be recognized as the Head of the church. We believe we should restore Jesus Christ to his rightful position that belongs to Him, and to Him alone.

II. Secondly, if we are going to restore the church to its primitive, pristine purity, then we believe we should restore the name Christian as the name for all members to wear. In Acts 11:26, we find that the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch. In I Peter 4:16, the Bible says, "If any man shall suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this name." When we start talking about the name to wear, denominational people always come up with this argument; they say, "Oh well, there is nothing in a name. Absolutely nothing in a name. We may call ourselves by such and such denominational name, but it really means nothing because actually we are Christians."

Well, if there is nothing in a name, why is it that every wife always takes the name of her husband when they get married? How do you think I would feel if my wife would smile at me very nicely and say, "Reggie, I know that we are married and I know that I am 'Mrs. Thomas' and I really do love you, but somehow or another I don't like that name 'Thomas.' I would rather wear the name 'Snupenagle.' It won't make any difference, I'll still be your wife and wherever we go you can stand up and say, 'I'm Mr. Thomas and this is my wife Mrs. Snupenagle,' and it will be O.K. because there is nothing in a name." What do you suppose I would think? I would think that something had gone wrong with her brain and then if she insisted upon such a ridiculous position as that, I would become angry. I would not be able to stand for something like that. No self-respecting husband could permit his wife to wear some other man's name. A name is tremendously important when it comes to marriage.

If there is nothing in a name, how about signing a check for about \$10,000 and putting your name on it. There would be nothing wrong with that, would there? There is nothing in a name!!

There would be lots of trouble if I tried to sign your name on a check, because a name is tremendously important. Dear Friends, when it comes to the church, the name is more important than any other area of life. In fact, it is so important that in Acts 4:12 it says, "There is no other name under heaven given among men whereby that we must be saved." If we are going to restore the church as it was in the beginning, we must restore Jesus Christ as the Head of the church and we must restore the name of Jesus Christ as the name that the members of the church will wear.

III. In the third place, we must restore the plan of salvation taught by Jesus Christ and His apostles. During the time of Catholicism, followed by the time of the Protestant Reformation, the simple, New Testament plan of salvation became very perverted. It finally reached the point that every denomination had a different plan of salvation. One denomination would say, "You've got to have an experience if you are going to be a Christian." Another denomination would say, "You've got to study our rule book if you are going to be saved." Another denomination would come along and say, "Well, you cannot be saved in our group unless we vote on you." It just goes on and on and on, you could name the different plans of salvation that have been provided by men. But, dear friends, it is up to us to restore the simple plan of salvation taught by Jesus and His apostles. That is faith in God, repentance from our past sins, a confession of Jesus' name, Christian baptism for the remission of sins, followed by living a Christian life faithfully until death. If we study the book of Acts, we find that is the one and only plan of salvation that was presented by the apostles of Jesus Christ, who were guided by the Holy Spirit. Nowhere in the book of Acts do we find anything about experiences being required. No where in the book of Acts do we find anything about creeds or voting or age limits or any of the other impositions that have been made by men. Let us restore the simple plan of salvation as found in the Word of God.

IV. In the fourth place, if we are going to restore the church as it was in the beginning, then we need to restore the simple organization of the New Testament Church. In the Word of God, we find that the first church was simply organized by having each congregation take care of its own business. They had their own elders and their own deacons. There was a plurality in both offices. There was no ruling elder or ruling deacon. These men, chosen by the congregation, carried on the business of the congregation. In the first church, the elders were the spiritual overseers. They were the shepherds. They were the bishops. They devoted themselves to prayer and to teaching the Word of God, to the spiritual life of the congregation. We find that the deacons took care of the financial matters and the business matters of the congregation. This simple organization of the first church was sufficient to convert the world and turn it upside down for Jesus Christ. I think we cannot improve upon that simple organization outlined for us in the New Testament.

V. In the fifth place, if we are going to restore the church that Jesus built, we must restore the worship service of that church. On Pentecost, the birthday of the church, we find that the worship service was outlined quite clearly in Acts 2:42, "And they continued steadfastly in the apostles doctrine, and in fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers." Each Lord's Day in our worship services, we try to imitate or restore the worship we found in the first church. We gather each Lord's Day to pray, to sing God's praises, to preach His Word, to gather around the Lord's Table and remember the Lord's body and blood that He gave so freely for our sins. This is the worship that the New Testament church practiced in the beginning.

VI. And finally, in the sixth place, if we are going to restore the church that Jesus built, then we need to restore the unity of that church. We find that after the church was established, divisions did begin to creep into the church and it was wrong. So, the

apostle Paul wrote to the church at Corinth, where division reared its ugly head and in I Corinthians 1:10 Paul said, "I beseech you brethren by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ that ye all speak the same thing and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment."

If we are to restore the church that Jesus built, we must restore the unity of that church. The Christian Church pleads for unity. Christian Church people do not belong to any denomination. We have no headquarters save those in heaven. We have no creed save Jesus Christ himself. We wear no name except the Christian name that gives honor to Jesus Christ, Himself. We have no church laws except the Bible itself. We bind nothing upon anyone to keep except what the New Testament binds. We who are members of the Christian Churches do not claim to be the only Christians. We do not claim to be the only ones who are going to heaven. We just simply claim to be Christian only, striving for unity and pleading with all people and all groups to unite together as one under the banner of Jesus Christ.

Let's Unite Before It's Too Late!

The wheat had grown very tall in the Kansas wheat field. All of the workers were out in the field harvesting the grain. The wives were quite busy cooking and preparing for their husbands, who would come in at meal time tired and hungry. So, one mother failed to notice her two year old girl had quietly slipped away from her side out into that gigantic wheat field comprising thousands of acres. It was fully four or five minutes before the mother was aware that her child had gone. When she suddenly missed the little girl, she quickly began to search. When she couldn't find her she sounded the alarm and soon all the workers came in from the fields and she excitedly told them that the child was missing. They began searching. It wasn't long before one of the workers found some lit-

the footprints starting out into the wheat field and then everyone was greatly alarmed. They intensified the search and all together, about 100 men, joined in the search, but after looking all afternoon they had not found the child.

Night time came and so they rounded up torches and strong flashlights and lanterns and all night long those men searched through that wheat field, but they could not find the child. At day-break, they gathered back at the house for hot coffee and donuts. One of the men from that group made this suggestion. He said, "Men, we haven't gotten together. You know, if we would unite, we'd find that child. Let's join hands, let's get in a straight line just like a giant comb and with our hands joined together, united, let's walk down through this field and I know we will find the child." Everybody agreed that it was a brilliant idea. Each one had been searching on his own, individually; naturally they had missed lots of the land. But, now with this suggestion in their minds, they all joined hands. They formed one straight line. They started down that field like a big giant comb covering every square inch of the ground. It wasn't more than 20 minutes until a tug was felt toward the center of the line and quickly they closed in.

There they all witnessed the heartbreaking sight; the father kneeling down beside the lifeless form of his little two year old daughter. The previous afternoon as she wandered through that tall wheat, a big snake had bitten her. Without medical attention, the child had died. As the poor, grief-stricken father picked up the lifeless form of his little daughter, he looked into the faces of his friends and neighbors, who had helped all day and night in the search, and he sobbed out this cry, "Oh fellahs, why didn't we unite before it was too late?"

Dear friends, as we look today out into a world divided and torn asunder by denominations, I am afraid that some day lost souls will point their finger and say, "Why didn't you church folks unite before it is too late?" That's what we believe in, we believe in uniting, we believe in getting together, we believe in uniting upon the Word of God. So, we plead with you , if you have not yet united

with Jesus Christ and His church, then we invite you to do so at once!

5 Loaves and 2 Fishes

A young preacher graduated from Bible College and was invited back to his home congregation to preach a sermon. He wanted to make a good impression. He did his best to prepare to preach to his home church. He wrote his sermon word for word and memorized it. He had a very dramatic beginning to the sermon. He started by hitting the pulpit real hard and said, "Jesus took 5,000 fishes and 2,000 loaves and he fed 5 people!" He paused very dramatically and pointed his finger at the congregation and said, "Could you do that?" Everyone roared with laughter and he couldn't imagine what was going on. At that point one man raised his hand. That set the young preacher off. He said, "Sir, you are guilty of blasphemy. How could you claim to do something that only our Lord could do?" This man stood up and began to explain to the young preacher about the big mistake that he had made. The preacher, when he realized what he had done, was so humiliated that he couldn't say another word. He sat down in utter confusion and disgrace.

The home church was very loving, very kind, very forgiving and they all came around and put their arms around him and they said, "Look, everyone makes mistakes. Forget about it. You work on this sermon and next Sunday try it again." They finally con-

vinced him. The next Sunday after working on that sermon another entire week, he stood up in front of the congregation. This time he got all of his fact and figures straight, but he started out the very same way. He hit the pulpit very dramatically and he said, "Jesus took 5 loaves and 2 fishes and he fed 5,000 people. Could you do that?" The same man raised his hand. The preacher was really upset and he said, "Sir, how can you claim to do something like that?" The man said, "With the leftovers from your sermon last Sunday."

I want to do my best to speak to you on the subject of 5 loaves and 2 fishes. I have chosen the text from John 6:1-14.

Some time after this, Jesus crossed to the far shore of the sea of Galilee (that is, the Sea of Tiberias), and a great crowd of people followed Him because they saw the miraculous signs he had performed on the sick. Then Jesus went up on a mountainside and sat down with His disciples. The Jewish Passover feast was near. When Jesus looked up and saw a great crowd coming toward Him, He said to Philip, "Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?" He asked this only to test them, for He already had in mind what He was going to do. Philip answered him, "Eight months' wages would not buy enough bread for each one to have a bite!" Another of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, spoke up, "Here is a boy with 5 small barley loaves and two small fish, but how far will they go among so many?" Jesus said, "Have the men sit down." There was plenty of grass in that place, and the men sat down, about five thousand of them. Jesus then took the loaves, gave thanks, and distributed to those who were seated as much as they wanted. He did the same with the fish. When they had all had enough to eat, He said to His disciples, "Gather the pieces that are left over. Let nothing be wasted." So they gathered them and filled twelve baskets with the pieces of 5 barley loaves left over by those who had eaten. After the people saw the miraculous sign that Jesus did, they began to say, "surely this is the Prophet who is to come into the world."

Introduction

It is quite interesting to me that out of all the miracles that Jesus performed, all four gospel writers record this one. Matthew, Mark, and John had seen Jesus open the eyes of the blind, unstop the ears of the deaf, cleanse the lepers, free the demoniac, heal the palsied, the withered, the lunatic, and the epileptic, and they had seen Him raise the dead. Luke carefully examined the records of Jesus' ministry and then wrote it down. All four Gospel writers did not always record everything that Jesus did or said. But this miracle, the feeding of the five thousand, so impressed all four Gospel writers that they have each given us an account of it. Perhaps when we study it and note its effect upon those who witnessed it, we will understand why.

Jesus' Question

Let us recall the scene: Jesus had just crossed the Sea of Galilee, only to be met by a great crowd, who followed Him because of the great miracles of healing that He had performed. In this crowd there were men, women, and children. Many of them were on their way to Jerusalem to the Feast of the Passover and they had turned aside for a little while to hear Jesus and to see Him. They had been there for three days and three nights. They were tired and they were hungry, because they had nothing to eat. How were so many people to be fed in a deserted place like this? Our Lord knew what He was going to do, but He asked His disciples what they proposed to do about feeding this crowd. He asked them this question to test and develop their faith.

The Disciples' Answers

I want us to note the answers the disciples gave in response to

Jesus' question; "What are you going to do about feeding these people?" Matthew 14:15 tells us the first response, "Send them away that they may go to the villages to buy themselves food." In other words, the disciples said, "These people are not our guests. We're not the ones who invited them here. We are under no obligation to supply their needs. They came here, it's their own affair, not ours." A second response was this, "Well Lord, if we just had the money we would gladly feed these people. But, my lands, it would take a fortune to feed a crowd like this. We don't have that kind of money." A third response, "I have found a lad here with 5 loaves of bread and 2 fishes, but what is this among so many? So little for so much."

A Sad Situation

The real sadness of this situation arises not from the fact that there was so many people, not from the fact that these people were so hungry and weary, not from the fact that there was no food to feed them, but the real sadness arises from the fact that the disciples had no faith in their Lord as a source of supply. They looked at what they had, or in this case, what they did not have. They knew that it was inadequate, and so, their conclusion was that there was nothing that they could do.

Jesus' Attitude

Now I want us to note our Lord's attitude and action. Our Lord was moved with compassion because of the multitude's condition. To the suggestion "Let them go buy their own food," Jesus replied, "They need not depart. You give them something to eat." In response to this came the disciples reply of inadequacy. So, Jesus responded, "What do you have?" Their response was, "5 loaves and 2 fishes." Jesus said, "Bring them to me." He then had

the multitudes sit down in companies, so that nobody would be overlooked. He gave thanks and then gave this food to the disciples and they distributed it to the crowd. The divine fingers of Jesus divided the bread and the fishes so that nobody needed to eat sparingly. The Gospel records state that they ate as much as they wanted. Two of the Gospels state that they ate until they were gorged.

More than 5,000

We talk about the feeding of the five thousand, but actually it was ten thousand or more. There were five thousand men, but most of these men were married, their wives were there and many of the children were there. So, they fed at least ten thousand or more. Then Jesus said, "Gather up the broken pieces, so that nothing will be lost." They gathered up the leftovers and the leftovers filled 12 baskets full. They had over a hundred times more than what they had in the beginning.

What Will You Do?

I want us to apply this lesson of the feeding of the five thousand. I want to ask you as a Christian, what are you going to do about the lost and the hungry multitudes in our world of today? I'm using both words in the spiritual sense. I'm sure that you do not misunderstand what I mean when I speak about the lost multitudes of the world. You know by lost that I mean those who are lost in sin, those who have no Savior, Jesus Christ. They have never known the Gospel of Christ, have never been able to respond to the Gospel of Christ. I'm using hungry in the very same spiritual connotation. I'm not talking about the physical hunger that is in the world. All of us know that multitudes are hungry, that millions of people go to bed hungry every night. But, I am not talking about the world that is hungry for physical bread, I'm talking about the

world that is spiritually hungry for the bread of life. What are you going to do about the lost and the hungry of the world?

144 Unreached Nations

We members of the Christian church have sent missionaries into 94 different nations of the world. That's good, but what about the other 144 nations of the world, where we have sent no missionary? There are 238 countries of the world. Jesus said, "Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to everybody." We have gone into 94 nations only. What are you going to do about the other 144 nations of the world, where the Gospel is not being preached?

What about China for example? China has a population in excess of one billion souls. More than one fourth of all of the people in the entire world live in the one nation of China and we have not one missionary in China. What are you going to do about those one billion souls?

What about Iran, Iraq, Saudi Arabia and many other Muslim nations where there is not one missionary?

What about India? India now has a population in excess of 900,000,000. There are so many Indians that one out of every seven people on the face of this planet is an Indian. The Indian government is against missionaries coming in. Thank God we do have a handful of missionaries in India. They were there before the government enforced this policy of not allowing new missionaries to come in. What are we going to do about all those souls in India that do not know the gospel, that don't even have the chance to hear the Gospel and respond to the Lord Jesus Christ?

There are two nations with nearly one half of the total population of the world, China and India with more than 2,000,000,000 of the 5 billion souls on this planet and they do not have the chance to hear the Gospel of Jesus Christ. How are these souls going to be fed the Word of God?

I. Send Them Away!

Some of you will, no doubt, give the same response that the disciples of our Lord gave when He first asked that question. I'm sure you are probably saying, "Send them away, forget about it, those people are not our responsibility. Their lost condition is of no concern to us, why should we worry about it? If they are hungry, let them go and find their own food." I want to ask you something, could a mariner sit idle if he heard the cry of a drowning person? Could a doctor sit in comfort and ease if one of his patients needed his help and was in a dying condition? Could a fireman sit idle and allow a building to burn and lives be destroyed and give no hand? Can you, my brothers and sisters in Christ, sit and take your ease in Zion while the world around you is condemned and headed straight for hell? I know it will be very easy for you to say, "But Reggie, those countries that you just named will not even allow Gospel preaching. We cannot send a missionary to China. The door is closed. We cannot send a missionary to India. So, why worry about those people. There's nothing we can do. Send them away." It's very easy to pass it off with an answer like that.

But, my friends, that is not true!! There are many things that we could do. For example: It is possible to go to India as a tourist. I've been there 21 times and as Art Morris always told us, "If you come to India as a tourist and do what the government want you to do, and that's to do a little touring, look at the Taj Mahal, view the Hindu temples a little bit, then the government will allow you to do what you want to do. And that's to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ." I've gone 21 times as a tourist and I've done my bit of touring, but I've also, thank God, had the privilege of preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ to thousands and thousands of the people of India. One day I was in a small village in India holding a revival and there was an old, old man at the services, who came forward and accepted Jesus as his Savior. He was so old in appearance that I got up the courage to ask him his age. He told me that he was 120 years old! I believe he was! He was nothing but skin and bones. He

was all bent over. He had on the typical white garment that the Indian men wear. His name was Chellam. I said, "Mr. Chellam, why have you waited so long to give your life to Christ. You are 120 years old. Why didn't you do it a long time ago?" This is the answer Chellam gave me, "I have heard many preachers preach in this village. I've seen preachers come and go." You'll have to understand the situation in India to appreciate what Mr. Chellam was telling me. The people in India are very religious. The Hindus worship millions of gods. They have all kinds of idol gods. Of course, this is what Chellam was talking about. He had seen many preachers come to that village and preach about their idol gods. But he said, "I knew in my heart that there had to be one true and living God. I've been waiting all these years for somebody to come to my village and preach to us about the one, true and living God. When you came here today with that message, I knew that the time had come that I must give my life to the one true and living God and to His son, Jesus Christ, that you have taught us about today." I am so glad that I did not adopt the attitude that the disciples adopted when they said, "It is not our responsibility. We cannot do anything about it. Let them feed themselves." If we adopt that attitude toward India, toward China, toward these other 144 nations, where Christian Churches have never been heard of and where nobody has ever gone to preach the true gospel of Jesus Christ, how are those people going to know about God?

Are the Borders Closed?

We cannot excuse ourselves by saying the borders are closed. We can write letters to these people. Every one of us can freely travel as a tourist to Russia. We can freely travel as a tourist to China. We can freely travel as a tourist anywhere we want to go. We Americans are the luckiest people in the whole world, we can go anyplace we want to go, anytime we want to go. As you go as a tourist, why not write down the name and address of your taxi cab

driver, why not write down the name and address of the bellboy at the hotel where you stay, why not write down the name and address of the waitresses or waiters that serve you in the restaurants where you eat? When you get back home you can start writing those people and preach the Gospel to them by the means of mail. The postal system is open to anybody and we can mail Bibles and Gospel tracts, we can write personal letters of Christian witness anyplace that we want to write in the entire world. There are no closed borders when it comes to the postal system.

Balloons? Radio? Migration?

Another thing that we ought to be doing is sending the Gospel to these closed nations by means of balloons. Brother Gorden Patton, in Korea, has sent balloons across the border into North Korea with Bibles attached to the balloons. He would do this all the time if he had the funds to do it. We ought to be ingenious and do things like that. We ought to be sending the Gospel by means of radio. It's possible to reach many of these people by means of radio broadcasts. It's also possible that we can migrate to these countries and they would welcome us, not as a preacher, not as an evangelist, not as a missionary, but as a medical doctor, or a nurse, or a school-teacher, or a technician. Christian people have got to start considering those who have not the Word of God. We have to devise ways and means of getting the Gospel to them. So, I ask you once again, what are you going to do about all the multitudes that need to be fed?

II. If We Had the Money . . .

The second response of the disciples was "If we had the money, we would gladly do it. But, Lord, it would cost a fortune. We do not have that kind of money." I'm sure you are saying,

“Well, what do you expect us to do, preacher? It would cost a fortune to evangelize the 144 unreached nations. We don’t have that kind of money. We are already giving every penny that we can possibly afford.” Are you?

I Don’t Believe You!

I don’t believe you. I say that respectfully. But, I don’t believe you if you say that you are giving all you can and are doing your best. I can prove it with a simple illustration. How many of you go to a restaurant and eat out once a week? We know people that go to the restaurants for recreation. They don’t have anything else to do, so they go to the restaurants so they can see people and be with people and they eat, and they don’t even need to eat. None of us do, all of us are digging our own graves with our forks. Not a one of us has ever known what it is to be hungry in our entire lifetime. We are so fat and overfed, we don’t need to go to the restaurant to eat! All of us could fast lots of meals and it wouldn’t harm us. But we go and we eat and we spend this money. How much do we spend when we go to the restaurant? Let’s suppose you went out to a restaurant every Sunday at noon following church service and ate prime rib, that’s \$4.95. That’s you and your wife. You also have to tip the waitress. Depending on how generous you are, you probably leave \$2-\$3 tip each time you go out to eat at the restaurants. That means at the end of one month you have spent \$50 doing nothing but eating Sunday noon meals at the restaurant.

Support Your Own Missionary!

Do you know what \$50 could accomplish? Fifty dollars would pay the full time salary of a preacher in India. It would pay the full time salary of a preacher in the Philippine Islands or in Ghana, Africa, or in Nigeria, Africa, or in Zimbabwe, Africa, or Guyana,

South America, or Haiti, or the Cayman Islands, or Trinidad, or Jamaica. I could keep on naming countries of the world where \$50 a month would pay the full time salary of a preacher. You cannot tell me you are giving all you can give and that you couldn't give a penny more. Every single one of you could support your own personal missionary in some foreign country if you wanted to do it. I'm not talking about supporting American missionaries, I'm talking about supporting the natives. "If we only had the money," you say, "we could do something." You have the money and I'm challenging you do something with that money.

Haiti

One of our children is Tony. In 1975, Tony went with me to Haiti. Haiti is the poorest country in the western hemisphere with an annual average per capita income of \$100. Now that is so little that you cannot even imagine it. Your children waste more than a hundred dollars a year on Pepsi Colas, peanuts, popcorn, cracker Jacks, and bubble gum. Just think of what it would be like to try to raise your family on \$100 a year. Tony's wife, Christie, was with us on that trip to Haiti in 1975. The nation of Haiti, at that time, was experiencing a drastic famine. While we were there a quarter of a million people died of starvation. We established several new churches during that trip to Haiti and Christie, Tony's wife, kept looking at me saying, "Dad, what are you going to do about feeding these people after we are gone?" She wasn't talking about physical food either, she was talking about the Bread of Life. I had been, and was at that time, a full time evangelist. As a full time evangelist I would go somewhere and hold a revival meeting and then I would leave and someone else was in charge. I never worried about what happened after I left. I simply said to Christie, "That's not my responsibility. I am an evangelist, I'm here to preach the Gospel and win souls to Christ. It's up to them to feed themselves after I am gone." Christie kept saying, "Dad, I don't see

how you can do that. How can you just go off and leave them? They're not educated. They don't know the Bible. They're not going to be able to carry on by themselves. What are you going to do for them?" Finally I didn't know what to tell Christie. But, I decided that I could do something. So, I personally began to sponsor one preacher. That gave me the idea that I could tell other people about this. Since that time I have told other people about it everywhere that I have gone. Today there are 182 evangelists being supported around the world by friends of mine. I'm serving as the forwarding agent. Each month this money is sent out to these 182 people around the world. These 182 individuals that support them have a personal, living link relationship with the native they are supporting.

Mapou Christian Home and Orphanage

Something else happened on that trip to Haiti. The mother of a little girl, who was starving to death, came up and said, "I want to give you my child." Her name was Maria. Tony and Christie wanted to adopt little Maria, but they could not. That gave us the idea of starting an orphanage in Haiti. Since then the Mapou Christian Home and Orphanage has been developed. We now have 50 little children there that are being fed and clothed and educated. The thing that I'm trying to show you is this, I'm like you, I'm just one person, I cannot do everything, but I can do something! My attitude was, "My little bit is not going to amount to anything when the needs are so great." But I did the best that I could do and other people are doing the best that they can do and as a result something really significant is being accomplished. 'What I am trying to tell you is this; everyone of you can also do something. You could support a preacher. Everyone of you could. Everyone of you could support an orphan on the foreign field.

You Give Them Something

You see the real sadness is not that there are millions of people without the Gospel, the real sadness is not that the church is not made up of millionaires, the real sadness arises from our lack of faith in God. We forget that this is God's work and not ours. We forget that God is the chief partner in the concern and that God has pledged to see the enterprise through. We forget that all the treasures of the universe are in God's hands. He is abundantly able to finance His program of world missions.

We take stock of our little resources and we say, "It's impossible!" But, we need to rethink our Lord's attitude as we view today's cause of evangelism. Now, as then, our Lord has compassion on the multitudes. He died for every one of the five billion people in this world. He is not willing that any one of them should perish, but that all should have life everlasting. When we are tempted to say, "Send them away, they're not our responsibility," our Lord responds, "You give them something to eat."

Rhodesia

In 1972, our family had the great privilege of going to Rhodesia to preach the Gospel for three months. God granted a bountiful harvest during those three months. There were 3,781 souls baptized into Christ. You can imagine how thrilling that was. The last night of our campaign in Rhodesia was in Bulawayo. The old African preacher, Brother Sithole, had us to stand against the wall of this African church building and the big African choir stood up to sing to us a farewell song, which went something like this:

Goodbye, Brothers, goodbye, Sisters, if I don't see you anymore,
I'll meet you in heaven, in that blessed kingdom, if I don't see
you anymore. We'll part in the body, we'll meet in the spirit, if I
don't see you anymore. So now God bless you, now God bless
you, if I don't see you anymore.

I noticed that every member of the choir was shedding tears. By the time they had sung their song, all of us were weeping, too. It was really a heart touching moment. But, I want to tell you something, I was not crying because of having to say goodbye to those Christian folks in Rhodesia. Of course, we loved them and, of course, it was difficult to tell them goodbye, but I believed the words of the song if we never see them again in this world, we're going to meet them in heaven. So, my tears were for the others, those who were not Christians, those who had attended the services, but they had never accepted Jesus, they had never been baptized, they had not committed their lives to the Lord Jesus. It was thrilling that more than three thousand did, but it was heartbreaking that thousands and thousands of others did not.

Today, that is still my concern, those who are not saved. What about those of you who have not yet accepted Jesus as your Savior? You have not yet been buried with Him in Christian baptism. You have not experienced the joy of having Jesus wash away all of your sins. If you were to die right now, you would not be able to go to heaven. Oh, dear friend, won't you come and give your life to Christ and be saved today? Now is the time, today is the day of salvation. Would you do it while we stand together and sing the invitation?

The Measure of the Cross

So that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge — that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

Ephesians 3:17-19

Over in Europe a number of years ago, there was a man who had been condemned for a terrible crime. When the sentence was pronounced, he was placed in an underground dungeon cell. His tongue was cut out. He was placed in solitary confinement and even the entrance way to the cell was sealed off with bricks and mortar so there could never again be any contact with the outside world. A small opening was left at the bottom of the entrance way where a tray of food could be passed underneath once each day, so that the prisoner could be fed. Except for the sound of the guards coming down the hallway each day to bring his tray of food, he heard nothing from the outside world. He spent the rest of his life in that very miserable way.

One day, when the guards came down with the food, they found that the tray of food that they had left the day before was

untouched. They reported it, but the officials did nothing. Again, the next day when they returned, no food had been eaten and again it was reported and nothing was done. The third day, when the guards came with the food and still their prisoner had not eaten, it was reported and the officials decided that they would break in and find out what had happened to their prisoner. They brought down heavy sledge hammers and broke away the bricks and mortar that had sealed the entrance way.

Once they gained entrance to the cell, they found that their prisoner had died. Among his possessions was a Bible on a reading stand and it was open to the third chapter of Ephesians. The guards paid no attention to the Bible, but began rummaging through the prisoner's effects. One of the guards noticed that on the wall the prisoner had drawn a crude picture of the cross of Christ. Up at the top of the cross he had written the word, height, down at the bottom, the word depth, on the left hand arm of the cross, he had written, breadth, and on the right hand arm of the cross the word, length.

The guards began to talk among themselves as to the possible meaning of that picture and why the prisoner had labeled the four extremities of the cross in that way. They couldn't figure it out and then one of them said, "Why don't we read where he has left the Bible open? Maybe we would find the clue someplace there in the scriptures." So, they began to read the third chapter of Ephesians until they came to the 17th and 18th verses and then they began to understand what he had in mind with that picture, when they read, "That Christ may dwell in dwell in your hearts by faith that you be rooted and grounded in love may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and depth and height and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge that you might be filled with all the fullness of God."

I. The Left Arm

I want us to trace those four dimensions of the old rugged cross and try to understand what that prisoner had in mind when he wrote those four words at the four extremities of the cross. I'd like

to begin at that left hand arm of the cross, where the prisoner wrote the word breadth. How far back of Calvary does the old rugged cross reach with its power to forgive sin?

Back of the Cross

We know that long before Jesus came people lived on this earth and they were all sinners, because the Bible says, "All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God." We know that the wages of sin is death according to Romans 6:23. What is going to happen to all the people back of the cross, the millions of people who lived on this earth from the time of Adam and Eve right up to the time of Jesus on the cross? Are they all going to have to go to hell simply because they lived before there was a Savior? If that's true, it's contrary to the love of God and the forgiveness of God and the mercy of God. What is the explanation then? What about those who live back of the cross?

God Had a Plan

As we study the sacred scriptures, we find that God has always had a plan for forgiving sinners. Back of the cross, God had a plan. That plan began to be unfolded with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. You remember that Adam and Eve sinned against God in the garden. But even at the time of their sin, God killed the animals and He took the skins of the animals and clothed the naked bodies of Adam and Eve. Then God made a prediction that the seed of the woman would crush the head of the seed of the serpent. While the seed of the serpent would only be able to bruise the heel of the seed of the woman. Genesis 3:15 is the first prophecy of the coming of a Savior to redeem the world from sin. This first prophecy was made at the time when the world's first man and woman had sinned against God.

As we go on in the Old Testament scriptures we come to that

promise found in Genesis 17, God's promise that through the seed of Abraham, a Savior would come and all nations of the world would be blessed. Next we come to the time of Moses, the children of Israel, and the building of the tabernacle with its three altars; the altar on the outside, the altar on the inside, and the altar where the blood was placed once a year. We find that through these blood sacrifices the sins of the people were rolled forward one more year. Notice that the sins were not forgiven; they were rolled forward one more year. The blood sacrifice of animals was placed on the altar. This looked forward to the coming of Jesus, the Lamb of God, who would die upon Calvary's cross shedding His blood once for all.

The Plan Revealed in the New Testament

We see the plan of God unfolded as we turn to Hebrews 10. We read in verses 1-4, "The law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming — not the realities themselves. For this reason it can never, by the same sacrifices repeated endlessly year after year, make perfect those who draw near to worship. If it could, would they not have stopped being offered? For the worshipers would have been cleansed once for all, and would no longer have felt guilty for their sins. But those sacrifices are an annual reminder of sins, because it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins." In all the worship and sacrifices and the blood that was shed under the Old Testament dispensation there was no forgiveness. Their sins were merely moved forward one year at a time, but in verses 9-10 it says, "Then he said, 'Here I am, I have come to do your will.' He sets aside the first to establish the second. And by that will, we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once and for all."

Back to the Beginning

How far back of Calvary does the old rugged cross reach with

its power to forgive sins? The cross reaches back, the Bible says, back of Calvary, back, back, back, all the way back to the very beginning, even to Adam and Eve. Yes, Christ died for everybody back of the cross, just like he died for everybody this side of the cross. When Christ died then the sins of the people back of the cross were finally forgiven if they had kept the law of God that they had in the age in which they lived.

II. The Right Arm

What about that right hand arm of the cross, the length of the cross? How far forward does the cross reach with its power to forgive sin? I want you to notice that it is the blood of Jesus Christ that gives remission of sins. We find this in so many passages, but I would like to refer especially to Revelation 5:9, "And they sang a new song: 'You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation.'" It is the blood of Jesus Christ that saves from sin. But, how far forward does that blood reach with its power to forgive sins? Well, it reaches forward to us today. We know this because according to Acts 2:38, as Peter concluded his sermon on the day of Pentecost telling those people what to do for the remission of sins, he said to them, "Repent, be baptized everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, for the promise is to you and to your children and to all that are afar off, for all whom the Lord our God will call." The length of the cross is such that it reaches forward to us this very day. Those who are willing to accept Jesus and obey Him can be forgiven of their sins.

How to Contact the Blood

How then do we contact the precious blood of Jesus Christ that gives remission of sins? The Bible is quite clear in answering

that question. I want you to look at John 19:34, "Instead, one of the soldiers pierced Jesus' side with a spear, bringing a sudden flow of blood and water." Please mark that verse in your Bible. It is a most significant verse. When Christ died upon the cross what came out of His heart? Blood and water. All through the scriptures, blood and water are joined together when it comes to forgiveness of sins. In the Old Testament dispensation, God required the blood of an animal. Blood mixed with water and the ashes of a heifer were used in the rites of purification that God required under Old Testament worship or Jewish dispensation. As we come over into the New Testament we find that as Christ died upon the cross, the scriptures positively state blood and water came out of His heart.

The Blood and Baptism

That shows me why Jesus Christ taught us to be baptized. It's not because the water washes away our sins, but it is because we contact the blood of Jesus when we are baptized into Christ. How do we contact the blood in baptism? The Bible teaches us quite clearly in romans 6:3-4, "Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with Him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life." What happened when He died? John 19: 34 says that blood and water came out of His heart when He died. If we are baptized into the death of Christ, we know we are baptized in water, because the scriptures quite clearly teach that, Jesus was baptized in the waters of the Jordan River. We follow His example in being baptized, so we are not going to be baptized in air or in dust, we must be baptized in water, just like Jesus was baptized in water. And we are to be baptized into His death. When Jesus died, it was water and blood that came out of His heart. Therefore, as we are baptized in the water it is into the death of Christ. We are buried with Him by baptism in death that like as

Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father even so we should walk in newness of life. As we are baptized in the water, it is not the water that washes away our sins, but it is the blood of Jesus that we contact when we are baptized into His death. Please compare all of these scriptures that we have studied with I John 5:5-8, "Who is it that overcomes the world? Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God. This is the one who came by water and blood, Jesus Christ. He did not come by water alone, but by water and blood. And it is the spirit who testifies, because the spirit is the truth. For there are three that testify: the Spirit, the water and the blood; and the three are in agreement."

Spirit . . . Water . . . Blood

When we reach the point that we have real faith in Jesus, we are willing to do what Jesus commands us to do. We are baptized into His death, buried with Him in Christian baptism. That is we have faith enough to go with Jesus right down into the water, not that we believe that the water washes away our sins, but to be buried with Him in the likeness of His death that we might contact His blood. It was water and blood that came out of His heart. As we are baptized in the water, into the death of Christ, it is to meet His blood that we might receive the Holy Spirit. I John 5:5-8 teaches that the blood and the water and the Spirit all bear witness together. As we are baptized into the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit in the water to contact the blood so that we might receive the Holy Spirit, it is the blood of Jesus Christ that cleanses us from every sin. So, the cross reaches back to the very beginning and the cross reaches forward to us.

III. The Bottom of the Cross

What about that third dimension of the old rugged cross? Down at the bottom of the cross the prisoner had written the word depth. How far down does the old rugged cross reach? Isaiah 1:18,

in his prophecy, says, "Come now, let us reason together sayeth the Lord. Though your sins are like scarlet they shall be white as snow. Though they be red like crimson yet shall they be like wool."

I Am Too Bad!

The cross reaches right down into the depth of sin. I've talked to some people who have said, "I am too bad to ever be saved. If you only knew the sins I have committed, then you would know why I cannot go to Heaven." If you are one of those who think you are hopeless, because you have sinned too greatly, I want to ask you, "Have you sinned as much as the people who murdered Jesus? Are you as guilty as the ones who put Jesus to death?" They weren't too great of sinners to be forgiven. It was the murderers of Jesus who heard the first Gospel sermon. It was the murderers of Jesus who were told what to do to be forgiven in Acts 2:38, "Repent and be baptized for the remission of sins." In Acts 2:41 it says that they gladly received the Word and were baptized that same day.

Let me ask you this, if you think you are too bad to be forgiven, are you any worse than Simon Peter, who betrayed Christ, who cursed and swore and said, "No, I wasn't one of them, I wasn't with them." Simon Peter had not sinned too greatly to be forgiven. Jesus did forgive him and allowed him to preach the first Gospel sermon. You say that you have sinned too much and God could never forgive you? Are you any worse than the woman in John 8, who was taken in the very act of adultery? Jesus spoke to that woman and He said, "Neither do I condemn thee. Go and sin no more." You say that you have sinned too much and God could never forgive you. Are you any worse than Saul of Tarsus, who persecuted Christians, who held the garments of those who stoned Stephen to death? He was such a great sinner that Jesus met him on the Damascus road and called out to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute Me?" Are you such a bad sinner that you persecuted

Jesus like Saul did? Saul was not too great of a sinner to be forgiven. He heard Ananias speak to him that commandment from the Lord found in Acts 22:16, "And now what are you waiting for? Get up, be baptized and wash your sins away, calling on His name."

Have I Really Sinned?

I don't really think that the problem is that you have sinned too much to be forgiven, I think that the real problem is that you may not recognize sin for all the evil it really is, and for the eternal damage, that unforgiven sin can do to your soul.

We are living in times when the devil is deceiving people as never before. For example, do you know what preachers have to face if they are going to preach on the sin of drunkenness today? They have to face a hostile crowd, who comes out the door afterwards or calls up on the telephone during the week, and says, "Preacher, what's wrong with you? You are really old fashioned. You are behind the times, Preacher. Don't you realize there is nothing wrong with drinking? Don't you realize that we are just having a good time? The devil has even changed the name. It's no longer called a bar room, it is called a club. All of that is the devil's attempt to deceive you and to try to convince you that sin is not really sin. It's referred to not as drunkenness, but as social drinking and that is supposed to make it all respectable and decent!!

If It Feels Good . . . Do It!

If the preacher has the nerve to stand up and preach about adultery, you can be sure that people are going to come up to him afterwards and say, "Now, look Preacher, even the law courts of our land say that it's O.K. as long as it is between two consenting adults. What's the matter with you, Preacher? Don't you realize that we are liberated men and women?" You can see it in the

movies and on the television and in all the slick magazines. "Everybody is doing it!" Yes, and I've even noticed a bumper sticker advertising it. It says, "If it feels good, do it!" I was really horrified when I saw that one. "What's the matter, Preacher, adultery is not wrong?"

The young people come around and say, "Oh, Preacher, don't talk to us about fornication. After all, you are being a prude. Why are you old fashioned? You are behind the times. If I want my girlfriend to sleep with me, what's wrong with it? Everybody's doing it!"

The Filipina Girl

I was in the Philippine Islands in February 1977 holding an evangelistic meeting on the island of Mindanao. One night after the church service there was a young Filipina girl who came to me and asked if we could have a talk. She was deeply troubled. I said, "Certainly!" We were scheduled to go out and eat supper after the service, but I canceled. I thought it was more important to talk to her than go and eat. I am so glad I did.

The girl was really troubled. She said, "Brother Reggie, I want to talk to you because I cannot talk to anybody else, I'm too ashamed. But, since you are a stranger and you are only here for a short time and you are going to be gone and I will probably never see you again, well, I've got up my courage and I've just got to tell you what my problem is." I said, "Well, go ahead and tell me." She said, "You see, I've got a boyfriend and I love him very much. There is no doubt that we are deeply in love with each other. There is just one problem."

I said, "What is it?" She said, "Well, he's married. But it's not like you think. His wife has deserted him and they haven't lived together for several years and she's not going to come back. So, you see, really it's O.K. for me to have him as my boyfriend, because he doesn't actually have a wife. Legally he does, but not

really. I know we really haven't been behaving properly, because sometimes when we are out together on a date, it seems like that we go too far. I think you know what I mean?" I said, "Well, I probably do know what you mean." She said, "Well, don't you think God understands, Brother Reggie? I really do love him and I know he loves me and, in fact, we have a happier, loving relationship than even a husband or wife would have. I know we do. And don't you think God understands? And don't you think that God will still let us go to Heaven?"

She ended up telling me that she and her boyfriend were members of the church. Faithful members of the church. Of course, nobody knew what was going on. It was all a big secret. I spoke to this young Filipina girl and I said, "Do you want me to really tell you the honest truth? Are you wanting to know what the Bible says or are you just wanting someone to tell you that what you are doing is O.K.?" She said, "It is more important for me to go to Heaven than anything else and I want to know honestly what does the Bible say. Can I go to Heaven living like I am or not?" And I said to my young Filipina friend, "I don't want to hurt you, but you have asked for the truth and I've got to tell you. You claim that you have a love partner, but really you don't have a love partner; the devil has deceived you and you have a lust partner. I'm sorry to tell you, but according to the scriptures you will not be able to go to Heaven if your are going to continue to live like you are living. You need to repent and break off this adulterous relationship that you have with this married man." The girl left me that night weeping. She really had a heavy heart.

I came back to America and about a month went by and I got a letter from that Filipina girl. She said, "Brother Reggie, I want you to know that after you left the Philippine Islands, I read every scripture that you gave me to read and I really studied what the Bible had to say about my situation. I showed all of these scriptures to my boyfriend and he read them too. We decided that I should write you this letter to let you know that we have broken up our sinful relationship and we both rededicated our lives to Jesus

Christ. I want to thank you for taking the time to tell me the truth." I was really thrilled. I suppose that girl is one in a million, because, usually, when you tell people the truth, they won't believe it. They won't accept it and they won't do anything about it. That is one time when someone did do something about it and I'm so glad that I took the time to talk to that Filipina girl.

Yes, the cross of Jesus Christ does reach down, way down, into the depths of sin, all kinds of sin. Even the sins you are guilty of. I have no idea what your sins are, but the cross will reach down and lift you right up out of your sins if you will be honest with God.

IV. The Top of the Cross.

What about the height of the cross? Up at the very top the prisoner wrote that word height. How high does that cross reach? The Brocks and their little chorus put it like this:

"Reaching up to God, reaching out to man, reaching down into the depths of sin and shame, the cross of Christ, it reaches me. Oh glory to His name!"

The Death of Bob McGee

I was preaching years ago at the Church of Christ in Catlin, Illinois. There was a wonderful man in that congregation named Robert McGee. I really learned to love Robert McGee. He was a deacon in the church. He was a soloist, a choir member, he had a beautiful singing voice. He was just 33 years old when he died. I loved that man and respected him so much that we named our fourth son after him. Our fourth son is Robert Timothy Thomas and he is the namesake of Robert McGee, faithful deacon and servant of the Lord. When Robert McGee was 33 years old suddenly without any warning he discovered he had melanoma cancer and within a few weeks he was dead and buried.

The Night of His Death

I'll never forget the night he died. It was 5:00 a.m. when his wife JoAnn telephoned me to tell me the news. She said, "could you come out immediately?" Of course I told her, "Yes," and I jumped up, shaved, dressed, and drove out to their farm house. When I arrived, JoAnn was not crying, which didn't surprise me, because she and Bob were two of the strongest Christians that I've ever known in my life. She welcomed me inside the home and she said, "The reason I asked you to come is because I don't know what to tell Bobby and Curt." Bobby and Curt were 8 and 10 years old, respectively. She said, "Would you tell the boys? I really resented that at the time. I thought, 'What a difficult thing to do. Why has she asked me to do this? What can I tell those two little boys?'" Of course I didn't tell JoAnn how I felt. I just simply said, "Well, I'll do my best." I went into the boys' bedroom and awakened them. And as simply as I knew how told them that their daddy had died. Neither boy shed a tear. They sat up in their beds and they looked at me and Curt, the oldest boy, spoke up first. He said, "Does that mean that Daddy is not going to be sick any longer?" I smiled and said, "That's right, Curt, your Daddy is never going to be sick again." Bobby spoke up and said, "Daddy's gone to Heaven hasn't he?" I said, "That's right, Bobby." He said, "He's going to be happy isn't he?" I said, "Sure he is." Then one of the boys said, "But will we ever see Daddy again?" I said, "Why sure you will. You boys are Christians and your Daddy is also. You are all going to be together in Heaven forever." Those two boys were just perfectly at ease. They laid back down and went back to sleep within a short while.

The Funeral Plans

I went back into the living room and sat down to talk with

JoAnn further. She said, "Reggie, I want you to preach an evangelistic sermon at Bob's funeral service. It will be Bob's last time to have a chance to win anybody to Christ. It's got to be an evangelistic sermon. I don't want you to get up there and tell a lot of things about his life. You just get up there and preach the Gospel and invite people to be saved." I said, "OK. I'll do it, if that's what you want." She said, "the boys and I are going to walk in smiling and we are going to walk out smiling, because we want everybody to know that we are glad that Bob could go to Heaven." I thought to myself, "Is it possible that they can do it?"

The Funeral

The day of the funeral came and the biggest crowd ever to assemble in the whole history in the Catlin Church of Christ came that day. More than a thousand people gathered in that sanctuary for Bob McGee's funeral. He was a family man, a community man, a church man, everybody loved and respected him. The custom in Illinois is that the family walks in last. When the family walks in, everybody can look into their faces. It is a very difficult moment. When they walked in, JoAnn, Bobby, and Curt faced that big crowd and all three of them were smiling. It was one of the most powerful testimonies I've ever seen. They sat down and I preached an evangelistic sermon and invited people to follow Jesus. Then, as is the custom in Illinois, the family gets up and they walk out first, facing the crowd again. They walked out smiling!

Goodbye

After the crowd was all gone, JoAnn, Bobby, and Curt came back and they stood beside the casket for just a few moments. Then Bobby and Curt reached their hands inside and they laid their hands on the hand of the lifeless form of what was once their

Daddy and they said, "Goodbye, Daddy, until we can see you again in Heaven." JoAnn reached over and kissed the cheek of what had once been her husband and she said the same thing. It was really beautiful. In the days that followed there was a great revival that swept the Catlin community. It was the greatest revival in the history of the Catlin Church, a congregation that is more than 100 years old. There were more than 120 additions to the church.

They tell of that city far up in the sky.

I want to go there, I do.

'Tis built in the land of the sweet by and by.

I want to go there, don't you?

There Jesus has gone to prepare us a home.

I want to go there, I do.

Where sickness and sorrow and death hath no power.

I want to go there, don't you?

When Jesus is crowned King of all Kings

I want to be there, I do.

With shouting and singing 'til all Heaven shall ring.

I want to be there, don't you?

We'll all shout "Hallelujah," again and again.

I want to be there, I do.

And then we'll close with that chorus, "Amen and Amen."

I want to be there, I do.

I want to be there. I want to be there.

I expect to be there, I do.

I want to be there, I want to be there.

I expect to be there, do you?

If you do, it's the way of the cross that leads home. And the height of that cross is Heaven itself. Let's bow our head to pray.

Our God in Heaven:

We are thankful that you do love us and that you have proven your love by giving your Son Jesus upon the cross. As we have examined again the four reaches of the cross, we do pray that it may reach into the hearts and lives of men and women and boys

MY FAVORITE MISSIONARY SERMONS

and girls, who need to walk in the way of the cross, following Jesus, that they might be saved. Bless each one who needs to make this decision. We pray that they will do it now without delay, so that they can know the joy of having all their sins forgiven by the blood of Jesus. So that they can live for Christ in such a way as to attract others to follow Him.

We pray this in Jesus' name.

Amen

Heaven

I think this is the right place and the right time to say the right words and that makes me think of Albert Schweitzer, the great doctor, missionary, musician, who built the hospital in the jungle of Africa. One time this great missionary, public speaker, adventurer, traveler was here in America touring around, speaking at different lecture halls across the country, and he told this story on himself.

A Joke!

One night he came home from his hospital very late. Much, much too late for a married man to be coming home. As he approached the house, he began to worry about what he was going to say to his wife, because he knew she would be up and waiting on him and there would be trouble. He thought maybe she might be asleep. As he approached the house he turned off the engine and silently let the automobile glide into the yard. He listened and there was not a sound except for a few monkeys that were awake and a few night birds that lived in the jungle. He thought, "Oh good! Maybe she is asleep." He got out of the car and tip-toed up to the porch and listened and he thought he could hear her snoring. So, he

removed his shoes and tip-toed up on the porch, silently opened the door, crept inside the house, listened again, and sure enough he could hear the sound of snoring. He thought, "Oh, everything is going to be okay! There won't be any trouble tonight!" He silently slipped into the bedroom, got on his pajamas, and just as he was ready to crawl into bed . . . it happened! She rolled over in her sleep and began to call the dog. Dr. Schweitzer said, "This is the right time and the right place to do the right thing. So, I got down on my hands and knees very quickly and licked her hand."

I've never been blessed with that ability to do the right thing at the right place at the right time. If that would've been me, I probably would've barked! Maybe worse than that, I might have even bit her hand. But, I'm convinced that it certainly is the right place and the right time to say the right word and I hope you will pray for me so that God will put the right words upon my lips.

Homecoming

What do you think of when you think of a homecoming? Most of us think of going home. We think about our father, our mother, our brothers, our sisters, our grandpa, our grandma, our aunts, uncles, and cousins. Some of those wonderful times we've had. Maybe Thanksgiving or Christmas or birthdays or other occasions that calls the family home. But, in relationship to the church, what do we think about? We think about our brothers and sisters in Christ, old friends. We think about the grand old hymns of the church that we love to sing and about one of those delicious church dinners. We all have fond memories that we think about as we think about homecomings that we have experienced at the church.

The Greater Homecoming

I want to speak to you this morning about the greater homecoming. The homecoming that many of our loved ones, our broth-

ers and sisters in Christ have already experienced. That greater homecoming that each one of us is looking forward to as a Christian. I am referring, of course, to that heavenly homecoming. The scripture is from Revelation 21. In addition to that scripture I want to use these words of Jesus found in John 14. "Let not your heart be troubled, you believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions, if it were not so I would've told you. I go to prepare a place for you and if I go to prepare a place for you I will come again and receive you unto Myself that where I am, you may be also."

Why I Believe in Heaven

If you were to ask me why I believe in Heaven, I would have at least five good reasons. First of all, I believe in Heaven because the human soul has always longed for just such a place. You can go as far back as history will take you and you will find that has always been true. I do not believe that God would permit such a universal longing in the hearts and souls of all mankind without making some provision for its realization.

Secondly, I believe in Heaven because the human soul has always felt that there was such a place. Whenever people get tired of their doubts, when they get tired of arguments that are presented by science and philosophy and psychology, one can go off and commune with nature and there comes that small, still voice from within which says, "It must be so. It just must be so." That is the universal instinct of Heaven that God has placed within everyone of us.

I believe in Heaven, thirdly, because the human soul needs such a place. The best developments of this life are only fragmentary. The soul needs a place where it can go on to the perfection that God intended for it.

I believe in Heaven, fourthly, because justice demands there be a Heaven. Things are not right here on this earth. God made

them right in the beginning, but then man, like the fool he's always been, committed sin and ruined everything. So, from the beginning things have not been right. Is it right that the Apostle Paul should receive stripes beyond measure and be shipwrecked and suffer all that he suffered for the sake of the Gospel and then someday not be rewarded for his efforts for Jesus Christ? Is it right that Nero and Diocletian should wade in the blood of innocent Christians and then one day not be punished for their crimes? Just as justice demands a Hell, even so, justice demands a Heaven. Shall the Son of God be crucified and then one day not be glorified?

My fifth reason for believing in Heaven, and the best reason of all, is simply because God tells us there is a Heaven right here in His own Holy Word. If there were no other reason for believing in it that would be reason enough for me.

What Will Heaven Be Like?

What is Heaven going to be like? If we are going to spend all of eternity there I think that it's only natural that we would be interested in understanding what this grand and glorious homecoming is really going to be like.

I. First of all, we learn that Heaven is going to be a place. A real place. That is important to me. Jesus said, "I go to prepare a place for you." The reason that is important is because some people claim that Heaven is only a hope in the back of your mind, just an ideal, just a figment of the imagination. But on the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, I'm so glad to say to you that is not true. Jesus did not say, "I'm going to prepare a hope for you or a figment of the imagination for you." Jesus said, "I'm going to prepare a place for you." Jesus did go somewhere, someplace. He couldn't have gone nowhere, because where is nowhere? Wherever He went and wherever that place is, there He is preparing a place for you and for me.

Mansions

He says, "In My Father's house are many mansions." Every one of us have seen beautiful mansions in this world. I remember one time on one of my trips I had a little extra time, so I took a boat tour out of Miami, Florida down south along the coastline. I saw the Smith Brothers cough drop home, Elizabeth Taylor's winter home, and a few little mansions like that. But, the one that really blew my mind was the Deering Estate. When the boat came to this mansion it stopped and the guide began to describe this mansion. First he pointed out all the luxurious gardens surrounding that estate. He described the different exotic plants that were grown there. He told us how many full time gardeners it took to manage all those flowers and shrubs and hedges and plants and all that they had there. Then he began to describe the mansion itself. He told us how many rooms were in that mansion. He told what was in each room. He told all about the Persian rugs on the floors, the works of art hanging on the walls, the tapestries, and what they cost. He just went on and on until it defied description.

When he finished and the motor on the boat started up we began to slowly drift out into the ocean to continue our journey, I suppose everyone on that boat had the same feeling that I did. "Wouldn't it be nice to live in a place like that!" Just then, the guide astonished every one of us saying, "You can have this mansion free if you want it." I know my mouth fell open as did everyone else's. Almost at once everyone was saying, "How? How could we have this free?" The guide said, "Yes, it is a fact. The owners are offering to give it away free of charge, because they cannot pay the taxes. The State of Florida has refused it as a free gift because they would rather have the taxes. The United States Government has refused it as a little White House in Florida because they would rather have the taxes." Then the guide told us what the taxes were on that piece of property. It was in excess of \$1,000,000 a year. It must be nice to live in a place like that. But, did you ever stop to think that when we get to Heaven, even the Deering Estate will be

like a shack in comparison to what God has prepared for us up above. For He is the divine architect and builder of all the ages. Heaven is going to be a place. A real place of many mansions.

II. Secondly, I want to point out that Heaven is going to be a prepared place. Jesus said, "I go to prepare a place for you." In the preparation of Heaven, He is making it very commodious. God has plenty of room. I have often heard of people speaking of Heaven critically. "Oh, I don't know if I want to go to Heaven or not. There might be a housing shortage. We might be all cramped like a bunch of sardines." I hate to hear someone talk like that. I think it is sacrilegious and secondly, they are showing their ignorance of the Word of God and of the power of God.

Our World is Small!

Talk about size, space, and distance, did you ever stop to realize that this little earth that we live upon is actually so small that if reduced to a liquid you could pour 1,200,000 earths of this size into the sun and still have room for 4,900,000 moons to lay around the inside edge. Talk about space, how far away is the sun that warms the earth? Well, it is so far that if you chartered the Chattanooga Choo-Choo and took off at 60 miles per hour and traveled day and night, it would take 177 years to ever reach the sun, because it is 93,000,000 miles from the surface of the earth. Thinking of time and distance and space and travel, how many of us stop to realize that the entire solar system, sun, moon, stars, planets, and all the rest, is sailing ahead through space right now at a speed 400 times faster than a bullet. Where are we headed? The astronomers say we are headed straight for the constellation of Lyra. Every second that the clock ticks off, we are ten miles closer to it. That means that we have all traveled 150 miles since I just mentioned that 15 seconds ago. When are we going to get there? Nobody seems to know. The scientists do not seem to know. The astronomers don't know.

Because we have been traveling that way ever since the world was created. Who conceived this magnificent universe? Who brought it into being? Who sustains it? You know as well as I that the answer is God. That is why it makes me warm under the collar every time I hear one of these pitiful, puny, infidels disputing about God, finding fault with God, criticizing the Word of God, even having the audacity to say, "There might be a housing shortage in Heaven."

The Size of Heaven?

Did you ever stop to figure out exactly how large Heaven is? In Revelation it says that an angel took the measurements and found that it was twelve thousand furlongs. As we measure that is eight million feet, but then Revelation says cubed, that is eight million feet cubed. That is 512 quintillion cubic feet of space. Can you even imagine it? We have come to talk in terms of thousands, we can imagine that. We can even imagine millions, because we have been faced with a federal deficit for many years now in terms of trillions. Several years ago the Senate was engaged in a debate over one trillion dollars debt. Everyone says that is just beyond the imagination. Beyond trillion comes quadrillion and then beyond quadrillion comes quintillion, so it is beyond anything we can imagine, the room that there is in Heaven. Heaven is 512 quintillion cubic feet of space.

To try to help us realize how much room there really is in Heaven, let us suppose the world would stand for 100,000 years. Already the earth has been 6,000 years according to many Bible scholars. Let's suppose that the world goes on for another 94,000 more years before the end, and let's further assume the death rate continues as it is right now with approximately one billion people dying off each 100 years. That means that at the end of 100,000 years three hundred trillion people would have lived and died on this old earth. Suppose they all went to Heaven, which is ridiculous because Jesus has already said, "Straight and narrow is the way

that leadeth to life eternal and few there be that find it. Broad is the way that leadeth to destruction and many there be that go in after." But, for the sake of the illustration let's suppose everyone went to Heaven. Divide three hundred trillion people into the 512 quintillion available feet of space and what do you get? You find that God would be giving each one of us 177,000 cubic feet of space to live in. Brothers and Sisters, if that is not enough room for you to move around in and feel comfortable then I believe that God has enough power to send down His heavenly surveyor and increase Heaven a few sextillion acres more for your personal comfort, because we know that Heaven is going to be a comfortable place!!

Beautiful!

Yes, it is going to be commodious and it is also going to be beautiful in Heaven. God loves beauty. This we know or He would not have given us the many beautiful things in this world. When we see the dogwoods in the springtime in the South, we know God loves beauty. When you see the azaleas, you know God loves beauty. When you see the Smoky Mountains of Tennessee in the fall with all their color that results because of 500 varieties of trees and plants in those mountains, you know that God loves beauty. But, there is just one thing wrong with the beauty in this world and that is the fact that sin has marred the perfect picture. But, in Heaven there will be no sin and therefore the beauty will be absolute perfection. The Bible tells us in Revelation that the walls will be made of jasper, the foundation will be garnished with precious stones, every gate of the city will be a pearl, and the city itself will be paved with pure gold. But, after all, those are finite words, employed in an effort to describe that which is infinite.

The Little Blind Girl

To try and describe the beauties of Heaven reminds me of the

story of the little girl that was blind since birth. She had never seen springtime or fall. She had never seen the ocean or people or automobiles or anything. The only thing she knew is what her mother told her. One day a noted surgeon came to town and operated on the eyes of this little girl. After the operation, the day came when he led her to the window of the hospital room and removed the bandages and she was able to see with her own eyes for the very first time. She gazed out the window at trees. She saw automobiles moving up and down the streets. She saw people walking, flowers, the clouds in the sky, the blue sky itself, the sun, and as she took in all of this, suddenly she burst out in tears and she ran sobbing to her mother and said, "Why didn't you tell me how pretty it was, Mommy? Why didn't you tell me?" The mother was upset and she said, "Child, I did tell you. I've been spending all my life telling you how pretty everything is." The little girl objected and she said, "No, Mommy, you never did tell me how beautiful it was." Then it dawned on the mother what was happening and she said, "My child, I guess that you have to see it with your own eyes in order to understand it." That is the way it is with Heaven. No doubt when we get there we may object to the Apostle John and say, "Why, when you were writing there in the Revelation, why didn't you go ahead and tell us how really beautiful that it was going to be? John will say, "I did. I used every word that could be found in written language to describe it, but the beauties of Heaven are infinite."

Comfortable

Yes, it is going to be beautiful, it is going to be commodious, and it is going to be comfortable. There will be no grinding toil up there. No blast furnaces to swelter over, no heavy burdens to break down tired shoulders. Rising up early in the morning, toiling all day long, coming home at night so tired that you cannot even go to sleep, these things are not going to take place in Heaven, because the very words toil, poverty, misery, hunger, anxiety, and sickness

will not be found in Heaven's vocabulary. There will be no trouble in Heaven. It's hard for us to imagine, isn't it? Because the very first thing we do in this life is to cry and the last thing that most people ever do is to groan. But there will be nothing like that in Heaven.

No Death!

There will be no death in Heaven. There will be no undertaker to call. There will be no broken hearts as the dirt is thrown over the casket, because there will not be any cemeteries up there. I Corinthians 2:9 says, "'What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived, what God has prepared for those who love Him,' God has revealed to us through the Spirit." I am so glad that God has revealed to us just a little bit about Heaven.

Busy Place!

It's going to be a place, a real place, commodious, beautiful, comfortable, and then as we read a little bit further in the scriptures we understand Heaven is going to be a busy place. It's going to be busy with intellectual activity. Heaven will be a place of never-tiring thoughts. There will be no stagnation of learning up there. We will be able to learn as much in five minutes in Heaven as it took a whole lifetime to learn down here. In this world, some of us have been too poor to obtain a good education. Others, like myself, have been too stupid to learn all that we should have learned. But, in Heaven, God will touch our brain so that we can wrestle with the infinite mysteries of the universe. The Bible says that "we shall know even as we are now known" I Corinthians 13:12.

Heaven will also be busy with social activity. There will be a reception room. Not like the reception rooms that we have among earth's society. For here we have backbiters, gossipers, and trouble

makers. But no one like that will inhabit Heaven's society. Down here we have the gang that sells liquor and drugs and all the rest of it, but in Heaven not even the smell of alcohol or drugs will be available. As we step into Heaven's society room, Jesus Christ will be the first one to greet us.

What Will You Do First?

Someone has asked me, "What do you think you will do when you get to Heaven?" I said, "Well, when I get to Heaven I think I will first of all look at Jesus." I want to have a good long look, maybe about 500 years, just to admire Him and to thank Him for saving my soul. After I have had a good long look at Jesus then maybe there will be time to look around and see if there is anybody else I know. How do you feel about it? What do you think you will do when you first get to Heaven?

3 Surprises?

Somebody once said there will be three surprises when we get to Heaven. First of all, we are going to be surprised not to see a lot of people there that we thought would be there. Secondly, we are going to be surprised to see some folks there that we didn't think would be there. The greatest surprise of all will be to see that we made it ourselves! I don't know what you think about that, but I disagree. I think that we probably will be surprised to see some folks there that we didn't think would make it. I think we might be surprised not to see some folks there that we did think would make it, because we are not the judge. God is the judge.

But I truly do not expect to be surprised about myself. I'll tell you why. God has revealed in His Holy Word, the Bible, just exactly what we can expect. God has told us in His Word that if we put our faith in Him, according to Hebrews 11:6; if we repent of all of

our sins, according to Acts 13:3; if we publicly confess the name of Jesus Christ, according to Matthew 10:32; if we are baptized into Christ, according to Mark 16:16; and if we are faithful in living for Jesus, according to Revelation 2:10 that we will be in Heaven. No doubt about it. I know in my heart whether I have done what Jesus has asked me to do and whether I am continuing to do what Jesus asks me to do, therefore I do not expect to be surprised about where I spend eternity. You also know in your own heart whether you have obeyed the Gospel and whether you are continuing to live the Gospel faithfully. If you have obeyed and are being faithful then you are not going to be surprised to be in Heaven. If you are not obeying, you are not going to be surprised to be left out of Heaven.

Other Activities

There are going to be many other activities in Heaven besides the ones I have named thus far. For example, in Revelation 7:9-12 we get a good idea about how busy we are going to be in Heaven. "After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no man could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothes in white robes, with palm branches in hands, and crying out with a loud voice, 'Salvation belongs to our God who sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb!' And all the angels stood round the throne and round the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, saying, 'Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God for ever and ever! Amen.'" The point is that we are going to be so busy in Heaven serving our God, praising His Name continually. Yes, that will be our chief joy, to serve God in His temple.

III. Heaven is going to be a place, a real place, a prepared place, commodious, beautiful, comfortable, a busy place. And,

finally, we know that Heaven is going to be an eternal place. Paul says here, "We have no continuing city, but we seek the one to come." Nineveh, Babylon, Rome, Tyre, Sidon, all the great cities of the past have crumbled and passed away, but Heaven is a city whose builder and maker is God and the foundations will never crumble. We shall be there in that great and grand homecoming forever and forever and forever.

Prisoners in the Philippines

Many of you can remember the dark days of World War II and the Christian Church missionaries who were imprisoned by the Japanese in Manila, Ray Carlson and his wife Imogene, who are still on the battle line for God. Many years ago we had the privilege of being with Ray and Imogene Carlson on the island of Cebu in a thrilling evangelistic meeting. We had the additional thrill of hearing them tell this story first hand that I want to relate to you about our other missionaries, Brother and Sister Leslie Wolfe, and some others that were in the prison camp on the island of Luzon in the Philippines. They were held there for over three years. The Japanese had them on a starvation diet. They did not want them to live, they wanted them to die. They had a terrible, terrible time.

Toward the end, they were all so weak that it was even hard for them to walk. Brother Leslie Wolfe was down to less than 100 pounds. He was nothing but skin and bones. The others were not in much better shape than he. Then the Japanese decided on a most horrible plan. They decided that they were going to execute the prisoners. One of the Filipinos who worked there at the prison was able to read Japanese. When he was cleaning up the Commandant's office he noticed that order on the commandant's desk. So, he spread the word among the more than 2,000 American prisoners in the prison camp and the Filipinos that were also held there. Of course, the prisoners began to try to figure out a way that they could escape.

One of the Americans had managed to put together a home-made radio with different pieces and parts that had been smuggled into the prison camp. Over that homemade radio, he had been listening and he found out that General MacArthur had kept his promise and had returned to the Philippines and he was not really too far away from this prison camp. The prisoners held a meeting secretly at nighttime and asked for volunteers who would try to escape and get through to General MacArthur. There were four single men who volunteered. They slipped out at nighttime and somehow, miraculously, managed to slip through the Japanese lines and they got back to General MacArthur and told him of the horrible plans of the Japanese to execute the Americans and the other prisoners. General MacArthur sent the men back with this encouraging word, that he would come and rescue them before the date that the Japanese had set for the execution.

They managed to slip back into the camp and the word spread among all the prisoners. They were greatly encouraged. But as the time went on and that execution date drew near, suddenly the Japanese changed their minds and they decided to move the date up two days. All hope of rescue failed. But, very, very early one morning, just before daybreak, some of the prisoners heard the drone of airplane motors in the sky. For almost four years they had not heard the sound of an airplane motor. Some of them jumped up and ran out into the courtyard to look up and see what was happening. But others said, "Down! Down! You must get down!" They managed to keep all the prisoners laying flat on the ground or else inside their prison quarters.

Then all at once it happened. Filipino guerrillas had surrounded that prison camp during the darkness of the night and they arose instantly as one man and they stabbed all the Japanese guards and they dropped without a sound. At that same time those airplanes appeared overhead and opened their door and hundreds of paratroopers leaped out. Soon the sky was filled with the white, silken chutes as the soldiers floated down to the rescue. Just then, those who were there tell how poor, old, brother Leslie Wolfe, nothing

but skin and bones, tottered out there in the open, along with his wife, and when he looked up at the sky and saw the sky filled with those beautiful white parachutes, he began to cry for joy. He grabbed his wife and hugged her and he said, "Oh, Darling, just look up. Look up! isn't it beautiful! The angels are coming to take us back home!" *That's how much freedom and homecoming meant to those who had been in prison for such a long time!!*

My dear friends, I often think in my mind of how it's going to be one day when the trumpet sounds and we look and what will we see? We will see our Lord Jesus Christ coming to the rescue. Oh, how our hearts will shout for joy because that is the moment that we are living for . . . when our Jesus will descend with His holy angels to gather us up and take us home.

They tell of that city far up in the sky.

I want to go there, I do.

'Tis built in the land of the sweet by and by.

I want to go there, don't you?

There Jesus has gone to prepare us a home

I want to go there, I do.

Where sickness and sorrow and death hath no power.

I want to go there, don't you?

When Jesus is crowned King of all kings,

I want to be there, I do.

With shouting and singing 'til all Heaven shall ring.

I want to be there, don't you?

We'll shout hallelujah again and again.

I want to be there, I do.

And then we'll close with that chorus, "Amen and Amen."

I want to be there, I do.

I want to be there. I expect to be there, I do.

I want to be there. I want to be there.

I expect to be there, do you?

If you do, Jesus Christ is the way, the truth, the life. No man cometh on the Father except by Him. As we extend this invitation

would you then make that all important decision? Would you step forth to give your life to Jesus, to accept Him as your Savior and Lord, to obey Him in Christian baptism, to unite with Him in His church? You are invited to do so.

Lift Up Your Eyes

I want to bring you a very special message from the words of Jesus in John, chapter four. "Lift Up Your Eyes."

"My food," said Jesus, "is to do the will of him who sent me and finish his work. Do you not say, 'Four months more and then the harvest'? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest. Even now the reaper draws his wages, even now he harvests the crop for eternal life, so that the sower and the reaper may be glad together" John 4:34-36.

My First Missionary

I thank God for Christian parents. Because of the teachings of my mother and father from the Word of God, I was led to accept Christ as my Savior at the very early age of eight years and was baptized into Christ at the South Joplin (Missouri) Christian Church. When I was 14 years old, I saw my first real life missionary. His name was Vernon Newland. Brother Newland had been a missionary in China and with the Communist takeover had gone to the Philippines. There he and his family fell into the hands of the Japanese and were held as prisoners at the infamous Santa Tomas

Prison Camp in Manila all during the dark days of World War II. When General Douglas MacArthur came with the US soldiers and the prisoners were liberated, the Vernon Newland family returned to America to report to their sponsoring churches. One of those churches was my home church, South Joplin Christian. I shall never forget how thrilled I was that Lord's Day morning as I heard him tell his missionary stories and experiences.

Vernon Newland's Story

One of the stories he told was about another missionary in Africa. This missionary had labored for five years in the Congo. He found himself to be homesick and physically ill. With a great deal of joy, he boarded the little river boat that would take him downstream to the seaport town, where he was to catch the ocean liner back to America. As this little riverboat made its way downstream, it stopped at various villages along the way to let off cargo and take on supplies. During one of these regular village stops a group of curious pygmies gathered around the little boat and started chattering noisily. Someone noticed the white man on board and recognized him as the missionary from upstream. Soon all the pygmies started to shout, "White man, you come and preach to us and tell us about your God." The missionary explained that he could not do it because he was on his way home for his furlough. This excuse meant nothing to the pygmies and they shouted all the louder, "NO, white man, you must come today and tell us about your God."

Patiently the missionary tried to explain his problem. He tried to explain to the pygmies that the great ship at the port wouldn't wait and he had to get there to catch it and return home. To reassure them, he made them a promise. "When I return next year, I will come to your village first and preach God's Word to you." But this did not satisfy the pygmies and they only shouted all the louder and insisted that he come at once. By that time the cargo had been transferred and the captain gave the orders, the ropes were loos-

ened from the dock, and the little ship quietly slipped out into the Congo stream, and the engines started. When the pygmies realized that he was not going to come and preach to them, the leader of their group angrily shook his finger at the white man and he shouted, "*White man, I'm going to tell your God on you!*"

I Forgot the Story

Perhaps you can imagine how that story, as Vernon Newland related it, really convicted me in my heart as a young teenager for foreign missionary service. But, I am sorry to say, as the years went on I forgot about it. I even grew cold and indifferent towards overseas missionary work. Whenever I thought about Vernon Newland's story it was only for a moment, because, to excuse myself I would say, "Oh well, that story probably wasn't true anyway. It was probably just another one of those stories that preachers tell when they are trying to make a point." But, during the past 28 years God has made it possible for me to go into 66 different countries of the world. I have found out that Vernon Newland's story is definitely true. I have experienced it in Asian countries like India, Burma, Vietnam, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Japan, Korea, and China. I've experienced it several times on the Australian continent and islands of the sea like New Zealand, Barbados, Jamaica, Haiti, St. Lucia, and St. Martin. In South American countries like Guyana, Surinam and Chile. In African nations like Rhodesia, Zambia, Benin, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Ivory Coast, and Nigeria. I've also found it to be true in Europe and Russia. Around the world I find that the hands of the people are outstretched and they are actually pleading, "Come and preach to us. Tell us about your God."

I. The first point I want to try to make in my message is this: there is a great work to be done for Jesus. I know that is true right here in America. It is also true everywhere else. I pray that God will use my message to try to challenge you to obey Jesus

Prayer Meeting

We entered into a season of prayer asking God for help. Right away a very, very tall and skinny African man came to us and introduced himself. "I am Kouame Sylvestre, the second soul you baptized here." We visited with Brother Kouame and learned he was a professor at the local University. He spoke nine different languages, including perfect English.

I asked Kouame, "Would you serve as minister of this new church?" Kouame replied, "I will do whatever God asks of me!"

Putting Kouame to Work

We gave Kouame three books, *The Church in the Bible*, by Don DeWalt, *So You Want to Preach*, by Don DeWalt, and *13 Lessons in Christian Doctrine*, by Denver Sizemore. I asked, "Kouame, will you study these books and teach the lessons to the church?" "Yes," Kouame solemnly promised.

One year later, in August 1988, Brother Tom Mullenix traveled to the Ivory Coast and taught Kouame and the Church leaders. Tom Reported:

Kouame Adjoumani Sylvestre was a man hand picked by God for church leadership in Africa. He can speak fluently French, English, German, and seven African languages. He is presently learning Arabic, because his heart is burdened to win Moslems to Christ. Kouame has endured persecution for his commitment to Christ and His church. His employers (the leaders of a Catholic college in which he teaches) gave him the ultimatum to discontinue holding church meeting in his house (provided by the college) or move out. Kouame moved to a different house, not nearly as nice and began paying rent from his own pocket so the church can continue to meet.

The church in Abengourou has more than doubled in size in the one year. Kouame expanded his ministry to include Bible

in an even greater way than you ever have before. Jesus has commanded us, "Lift up your eyes and look on the fields, they are white unto the harvest." If I were to tell you about all the 66 different countries where we have been during the past 28 years, we would be here all night long and all day tomorrow. So, I'm not going to try to tell you about all 66 countries as much as I would love to do it. I'm not even going to try to tell you about a few of them, just one.

Ivory Coast, Africa
Kouame Adjoumani Sylvestre

In August 1987, we began the fulfillment of a vision of long standing when we departed for the Ivory Coast in Africa. We had made many plans and had sent a Ghanaian evangelist ahead of us to make all advance preparations. We even had a preacher available who was eager to serve as minister of the Christian Church which was to be established in the Ivory Coast.

The Devil Interferes

But, we faced many unexpected obstacles. We had spent three weeks evangelizing in Ghana and had planned a border crossing into the Ivory Coast. We were stopped about 26 times by unscrupulous, money hungry border police. Because we refused to pay bribe money we spent nearly 24 hours traveling a little over 40 miles. We had no food or water during this stressful experience.

We faced further difficulties as we entered the Ivory Coast. We were unable to exchange money into the local currency. The preacher we brought with us was unacceptable as the local minister because of cultural problems and visa problems.

We ended our church planting effort with a new church of 28 members, but with no minister!! It was a low moment!

studies (evangelistic) in four other towns. Again, he paid traveling expenses out of his own pocket.

While I was in the Ivory Coast, I was able to spend much time teaching and encouraging Kouame. I taught the church and also baptized 21 people into Christ. Some of the men who were baptized desire to study and become church leaders.

We traveled to a new area, Asseutry, with the goal of reaching souls for Christ and establishing a church there. This area, like much of the Ivory Coast, has a very strong Catholic influence (due to having been a French colony). Some denominational groups have entered the area and attempted to condemn the Catholic church; the people rejected them.

The Church in the Ivory Coast Grows

Today, some seven years later, the church in the Ivory Coast continues to grow. More than 2,000 souls have been baptized and 18 congregations have been established in various villages. Truly there is a great work to be done for Jesus and God is able to provide what is needed to accomplish that work!

II. But, my second point is that there is a great price that must be paid. Jesus commanded us, "Lift up your eyes, look on the fields, they are white unto the harvest." Why did He want us to lift up our eyes and look? Because He wanted us to be challenged enough to do something about it, to go, and if we couldn't go, to help somebody else who can go. That takes money. There is a great price that must be paid.

Korea

In 1975 I went to Korea, where we labored during August and September, preaching a six weeks campaign all over the entire nation. It was the very greatest result wise of all our overseas cam-

paigns we've had the privilege of conducting. I want to tell you just a little bit of the background that led up to this crusade, because we are talking about the price that must be paid.

I received a letter from our beloved missionary in Korea, Brother Gorden Patten. He said in this letter, "Reggie, Korea is ripe for Christianity. In fact it is probably the most responsive nation in the whole world today toward the Gospel. There are more people in Korea willing to hear God's Word and more people willing to obey God's Word than any other place on earth. I'm convinced that 1974 is the year that we need to evangelize all of Korea. Will you come?" By faith, I answered Brother Patten's letter and said, "Yes. How many workers are we to bring?" Brother Patten wrote right back and said, "We need twenty. We need ten preaching evangelists and ten song evangelists. There are sixty major cities and populations centers in South Korea and we want one revival per each city or all sixty areas, a nationwide effort." He went on to tell me the army of Korea is very receptive to the Gospel. He said, "We want you to go to all the army camps while you are here because Korea has the fourth largest standing army in the world. It is an unparalleled opportunity to reach people for Christ. Also, the penitentiaries and prisons and jails are all open. The orphanages are open. The fallen women's homes are open. In every way we want this to be a nationwide effort."

6 Tents — 6 New Churches

I was really thrilled and I wrote an enthusiastic letter and told him that we would do it. Brother Patten was baiting me for something that I didn't know about. He immediately wrote me back a very enthusiastic letter and said, "Good. Glad you accept our plans. But there is just one more thing that would make it complete. There are six cities in South Korea where there is no Church of Christ. Wouldn't it be great if we could use these meetings as a launching pad to start six new congregations." That was the thing I was most

interested in; was to go places that nobody else had ever gone. I immediately answered and said, "Yes! Let's do it!" Brother Patten immediately wrote me back and said, "Good! I'm glad you are willing! All we need is six tents to do it. Naturally, we do not have any property, no church buildings in these six towns. Would you purchase the six tents? They only cost \$560 each." When that letter came, I did a flip, because I couldn't imagine where I was going to get that much money. I thought about it for awhile and I thought, "Well, there is a whole year to do it. Surely in a year's time God's people will supply the money. By faith, again, I wrote Brother Patten and said, "Yes! We will do it." He got a letter back so fast that I thought he must have written it before I had ever written mine. He said, "Good! Let me tell what has happened. Inflation has hit Korea just like every other country in the world. The price of those tents will go up 30 percent in December and in February there is going to be another price increase of 30 percent. I know you don't want to pay inflated prices like that, therefore, I have gone ahead and ordered the tents and paid for them with a personal check. Will you please deposit a check with my forwarding agent in Oregon, so my check won't bounce."

Leroy Trulock Helps

My heart bounced, because I didn't have \$3,500. There was no way that I could get it, not even by borrowing it from the banks. I was just about in despair for two or three days, but I prayed about it and somehow God gave me the courage and I wrote a letter to my dear friend, Brother Leroy Trulock. Knowing that Brother Trulock has a weakness for starting new churches, I told him all about the opportunity in glowing terms and then I got around to the bad part . . . money. I said, "Brother Leroy, it is going to cost \$3,500 to start these six new churches. Would you loan me the money until August 15? If you will, I'll pay you back that day, because that is the day before we leave for Korea." Brother Trulock tracked me

down by telephone and discussed the situation further. Then he said, "When will you be home, Reggie?" I said, "Monday." He said, "O.K., you'll have the money when you get there." Sure enough, when I got home he had mailed the \$3,500 interest free as long as it was repaid by August 15.

I thank God that God's people gave the money and we were able to repay Brother Leroy by August 15 the \$3,500. So, we went to Korea and the six new churches were established and we preached for the army, the penitentiaries, for the fallen women's homes, for the orphanages, and for the Churches of Christ in Korea. We were able, God being our Helper, to preach for six weeks, day and night, and the results were so great that I could hardly believe it. There were 12,283 souls that repented of their sins and accepted Jesus Christ as personal Savior during those six weeks. Truly, it was absolutely the thrill of my whole lifetime to see the power of God's Work, of God's Word, at work among the people of Korea. Gordon Patten did not in any way over exaggerate the opportunity there is in Korea. I really believe there is the possibility that the entire nation will turn to the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Price Quadruples

But, I want to point out that there was a great price attached to that campaign. The \$3,500 turned out to be just the beginning. The expenses of that campaign finally amounted to \$12,000. Some people have questioned me rather critically since our return from Korea. Isn't that a lot of money to spend in just six weeks? That is a ridiculous amount of money! \$12,000? But, in my opinion it is a bargain in evangelism. I know of one church in the United States that had a budget of \$1,500,000. I also know that church baptized 35 souls for Jesus Christ. That means that it cost that church \$42,857.14 for each soul baptized. That makes home evangelism very costly, doesn't it? I leave it to you to compare to your congregation locally. I challenge you to do it. You will be shocked at the

tremendous cost of evangelism right there in your home congregation. But, it is worth it, isn't it? Why, of course it is worth it. All of you gladly vote the budget in each year and gladly pay for the budget. You thank God that you can give the money to carry on an evangelistic program in your local congregation. Personally, I thank God for the Christians back in Joplin, Missouri, who paid the budget back in 1936, because that was when I was baptized into Christ. That means everything to me. If the budget of that church was \$1,000,000 that year, it's worth it as far as I'm concerned. I know that you considered it worth it to preach the Gospel in your local congregation, however much it costs. But, somehow we get rally upset when it comes to spending money overseas. We say, "But, doesn't it cost a lot of money?" The only answer I now to give is, "Yes!" It is the truth. Overseas evangelism is very costly. Just as it is costly to preach the Gospel right here at home.

Jesus Paid the Price

But, when Jesus began this Gospel work, He was willing to pay the price. And, He did pay the price, His own' life's blood! Ever since Jesus paid that greatest price of all, those who have chosen to follow Jesus have discovered that there is a price that we must pay. Must Jesus bear the cross alone and all the world go free? No! There is a cross for everyone. There is a cross for me.

III. There is a third point that I want to make in my message and that is the fact that there are great rewards to be enjoyed. Jesus put it like this, "He that reapeth receiveth wages and gathered fruit until life eternal that he that both soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together." Dear friends, we have been partners in overseas evangelism. There are a lot of reasons to rejoice. Let us think about some of the individuals involved.

Guyana

Come with me if you will to Guyana, South America and there I will introduce you to a young lady 20 years old. Her body is horribly scarred and disfigured. When I first met this girl, I gasped and I said, "What happened to you?" The poor girl bowed her head and told me her life story with all the sordid details connect to it. She related how she had reached the end of her rope and she thought life was not worth living. She poured oil all over her body and set herself afire. Fortunately, someone put the fire out and her life was spared. Then the girl dropped her head even lower as she said, "I am sorry to tell you that I had reached the point that I decided to try it a second time. I know that the second time I would've succeeded." At that point she lifted her head and smiled at me. She said, "You know the rest of the story. That's the very day your revival meeting came to Georgetown." That afternoon we took that girl to the Atlantic Ocean and there she was baptized into Christ. I'd love for you to see that young Guyanese girl today. She still has the scars and she always will, but there is a beautiful smile upon her face. A smile that Jesus has placed there, because now she has a real purpose in living. Her purpose is to share her Savior with others. Rejoice, dear friends, for that girl in Guyana is part of the fruit that has been gathered unto life eternal.

Haiti

Would you come with me quickly to the island of Haiti? There on the island of Haiti a young couple were found writhing in agony in the center of a village. One of our overseas evangelists, Dave Manning, found them. He stopped his car and said, "What's going on?" Somebody said, "Oh, these two people have been poisoned and they are dying." Dave Manning would not let them die. He got them into his automobile and he drove over those horrible Haitian roads at breakneck speed, risking his life, and got them to the hos-

pital at Port-au-Prince in time to have their stomachs pumped and save their lives. That's not the best part of the story. The best part of the story is after they recovered, they came back to the village and heard the Gospel of Jesus and they were converted to Christ. They are now serving Him as active Christians. That is not all of the story. As a result of our going to Haiti, we were able to recruit a fine man, he was a denominational preacher, Church of God. We were able to lead that man to the New Testament Church and right now he is one of the major Christian Church preachers in Haiti. Rejoice, dear friends, for these victories on Haiti are a part of the fruit that has been gathered unto life eternal.

Rhodesia

Would you come with me once more to the country of Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe)? One time when John Pemberton invited us to come visit their work, we stayed for three months and helped in meetings all over Rhodesia. God, through His powerful Gospel, reaped a mighty harvest. There were 3,785 souls baptized into Christ during those three months. The final night was in Bulawayu, Rhodesia. The old African preacher, Brother Sithole, was in charge of that final service. He made a beautiful farewell address to our team. At the close of his farewell address the choir stood up, the African choir. They had learned this song in English and they sang it to us through tear filled eyes.

Goodbye Brothers, Goodbye Sisters,
If I don't see you anymore, I'll meet you in heaven,
In that blessed Kingdom, if I don't see you anymore.

We'll part in the body, we'll meet in the spirit,
If I don't see you anymore. So now God bless you,
Now God bless you, if I don't see you anymore."

I don't hesitate to confess that my own eyes filled with tears as

LIFT UP YOUR EYES

I listened to the choir sing those heart-touching words. But, I want to tell you something. I was not crying because of having to say goodbye to those Christian folks in Rhodesia. Of course, we loved them, and, of course, it was difficult to tell them goodbye, but I believed the words of the song, if we never seem them again in this world, we're going to meet them in heaven. So, my tears were for others, those who were not Christians, those who had attended the services, but they had never accepted Jesus, they had never been baptized, they had not committed their lives to the Lord Jesus. They heard the Gospel, but they rejected the Lord Jesus Christ. And, without them having a Savior, we'll never see them in heaven.

To this day, I'm still thinking about others. Not only others there in Rhodesia, but others everywhere. Yes, others right here in my community and others right there in your community who have never accepted Jesus Christ as their own personal Savior. Would you do it right now? Jesus loves you. He died for you. Won't you love Him and come and accept Him and obey Him and let Him save you?

God's Plan for World Evangelism

You can win a soul to Jesus Christ. Yes, you who are listening to this record right now, can be used as of God to lead someone to the Lord Jesus Christ. My heart's desire is to do this.

When I enter that beautiful city, far removed from earth's sorrow and fear, I want to hear somebody say, "I am here because you invited me here." When to welcome me over the river, the loved ones of the earth should draw near I want to hear someone whisper, "I'm here because you invited me here." When at home in those mansions eternal, the saved of the nations appear, I want to have someone to tell me, "I'm here because you invited me here." When the glad harps of heaven are ringing with music so tender and clear, I want to have somebody singing, "It was you who invited me here. It was you who invited me here. It was you who invited me here. To this happy home I might not have come, had you not invited me here."

Wouldn't you, listening friend, like to lead somebody to Jesus Christ?

The Greatest Thing

Someone once asked Lyman Beecher, probably the greatest of

all the Beechers, this one question, "Mr. Beecher, you know a great many things. What do you count the greatest thing that a human being can be or do?" Without hesitation the famous pulpiteer replied, "The greatest thing is not that one shall be a scientist, as important as that is. Nor that one shall be a statesman, vastly important as that is. Or even that one shall be a theologian, immeasurably important as that is. But the greatest thing of all," he said, "is for one human being to bring another to Christ Jesus, the Savior."

Surely, he spoke wisely and well. The supreme ambition for every church and every individual Christian should be to bring somebody to Christ. The supreme method for bringing someone to Christ is indicated in the story of Andrew, who brought his brother Simon to Jesus. The supreme method for winning the world to Christ is the personal method. The bringing of people to Christ one by one, that is Christ's plan. When you turn to the Holy Scriptures, they're as clear as light that God expects every friend that He has to go out and see if he cannot win other friends to the same great side and service of Jesus. "Ye shall be witnesses unto Me," said Jesus, "Both in Jerusalem and all of Judea and in Samaria and unto the uttermost parts of the earth." The early church went out and in one short generation shook the Roman Empire to its very foundation. It was a pagan, selfish, sotten, rotten empire and yet in one short generation, that early church had shaken the Roman Empire from center to circumference and kindled a gospel light in every part of the vast domain. They did it by the personal method. I say that every Christian, no matter how humble, can win somebody else to Christ. I say that you can win somebody to Jesus.

The Poor Seamstress

There is the most interesting and instructive story told of the nobly gifted Boston preacher, Dr. O.K. Gifford, who preached one morning to his congregation, making the insistence that it is the

primary and fundamental business of Christ's people to go out constantly and win others to the knowledge of the Savior. As he brought to bear his message upon his waiting auditors, with words that breathed and thoughts that burned, the minister came on to say, "Every Christian can win somebody to Christ."

When the sermon was done and the people were sent away, there tarried behind one of his humblest auditors, probably the humblest, with reference to this world's goods, for she was a poor seamstress. She tarried behind to make her plea to the preacher, that his sermon was overstressed. Greatly moved she was, the preacher stated. As looking him in the face, she said, "Preacher, this is the first time that I've ever heard you when you seemed to be unfair." "Pray, where was I unfair?" the preacher asked. Then the little widow, seamstress said, "You kept pushing the truth down upon us that every Christian could win somebody to Christ. You did not make any exceptions. Surely, I am an exception. Pray tell me, what can I do? I am but a poor seamstress. I sew early and late to get enough to keep the wolf from the door from my fatherless children. I have no education and no opportunity and yet your statement was so sweeping that even I was included. I think that you were unfair. The first time I ever knew you to be so."

When she had finished her protest, the minister looked down at her in all her agitation and said, "Does anybody ever come to your house?" She said, "Well, certainly a few people come." Then waiting a moment he said, "Does the milkman ever come?" "To be sure," she said, "every morning he comes." "Does the breadman ever come?" "Everyday he comes." "Does the meatman come?" "Everyday he comes to my cottage." Then waiting a moment for his questions to have their due effect, looking down earnestly at her, he said, "A word to the wise is sufficient." He turned upon his heel, abruptly leaving her.

She went away and nightfall came and she went to her bed to ponder late and long the searching message she had heard that morning. She had not even tried win anybody to Christ. She had never made the effort. She claimed to be Christ's friend, and yet,

had never opened her lips for Him at all. She said, "I will try. I'll begin tomorrow morning with the coming of the milkman." Accordingly, she was up before daylight came, there waiting to speak a word to him about salvation. The milkman greeted her and made the remark that he'd never seen her up quite so early before. She stammered out some embarrassing reply, not saying what she had gotten up to say. He left her and the gate clicked behind him as he left. But she summoned her strength and courage and called out, "Wait a minute, I had something to say to you." The milkman tarried to hear it. This little widow lady poured out her heart, "Do you know Christ? Are you a Christian? Are you a friend and follower of the glorious Savior that came down from heaven and died so that you might not forever die?"

Almost dropping his milk pails, he looked into her face, with anguish in his own and he said, "Little woman, what on earth provoked you to talk to me like this. For two nights I have been unable to sleep and the burden of it all is that I am not a Christian. I do not know how to be saved. If you can help me, help me now." So, there in the early hours of that day, this little widow lady led her milkman to a saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. The story goes on that before that year was out this same little widow lady had led six other adults to the Lord Jesus Christ, to the place that they had become active workers in the church. So, I want to repeat, you can do personal work, you can evangelize, you can lead a soul to Jesus, if you will only do it.

Now I want to give you three simple words that spell the success of leading souls to the Lord Jesus Christ.

I. The first simple word is "GO." We find this word from the instructions of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, as they are written in Matthew 28:19. Jesus said, "Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit."

Excuses We Offer

How do we usually read this scripture, which is familiarly called The Great Commission? Ordinarily we read it like this, "Go ye therefore, but if you don't want to go, you can sing in the choir as a substitute and let someone else go for you, teaching all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Sprit." Other people read it like this, "Go ye therefore, but if you don't want to go, you can teach a Sunday School class on Sunday morning as a substitute for going and let someone else go for you teaching all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit." Or, sometimes folks read it like this, "Go ye therefore, but if you are afraid to go or don't want to go, you can paint on the church building as a substitute and let someone else go for you teaching all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit." There's just one thing wrong with all these various renditions of the scripture as the church members ordinarily read it; it's not in the Bible. No matter what you say when you get out your Bible, you will still read Jesus saying to you, "go YE therefore and teach all nations." It does not say anything about if you do not want to go or are afraid to go. It simply says, "GO!" I'm afraid that we in the Christian Churches and Churches of Christ of America have not been going like Jesus Christ told us to go.

Gallup Poll

The Los Angeles Times for December the 25th of 1957 carried an article by George Gallup of Gallup Poll fame. Stating that in 1957, some 25 million Americans made one or more call in the interest of the church. About 30 million homes were visited or about 60% of the homes in America received at least one call. This means that 40% of the homes in America did not receive one single call from anybody. This is the way the various groups showed up in

the survey. Who do you think made the largest number of personal visits in 1957? The Baptists are number one on the list. Does this tell you why they are the fastest growing denomination? This surprised me, the Roman Catholics were number two on the list for personal visitation. The Methodist denomination was number three. The Lutheran denomination was number four. The Jehovah Witnesses were number five. The Presbyterian number six. The Christian Churches were listed as number seven in the United States in the number of total visits made in 1956. What a tragedy. We have the pure and simple truth of the Word of God, and yet, we are so selfish with it. Six other groups were more willing to go and to tell others than we were willing to do.

The Elder was Unwilling

I shall never forget the disappointment that was mine in 1959, when we had a united effort in the Danville, Illinois area for evangelism. Some nineteen congregations came together in one unity effort to lead souls to the Lord Jesus Christ. There were some 35 congregations in the Danville area that should have entered this effort, but many did not. I was personally acquainted with one of the congregations that did not respond, so I contacted one of the elders of this congregation to ask him why. He gave me this sad word. He said, "Reggie, when our elders met together and discussed this program we decided not to enter it because it would take too much work. Our elders were not willing to go and make the calls, the personal visits that would be necessary to be a part of this evangelistic campaign." I was shocked and I said to this man, "I would not call myself an elder in the Church of Jesus Christ, if I were unwilling to obey Jesus' great commission and go!"

The Bible is as plain as the nose on your face. Jesus expects every friend that He has to go and tell somebody else.

It's Murder

What would you think of a person if they had an incurable disease and then all at once they found a doctor, who was able to cure this disease that was formerly thought to be incurable? Then suppose you contracted the same disease and you would go this friend and say, "Please tell me, quick, the name of the doctor that cured you of this terrible disease. I have it and I want to be cured also." Suppose your friend said, "I'm not going to tell you." You can't imagine such a thing, can you? You can't imagine anyone being that selfish. You can't imagine anyone committing murder, because that is what it would be if they had the knowledge that would save you and would refuse to give you that knowledge, it would be murder.

Soul Murder

My Friends, I submit to you that many are guilty of soul murder. Many people, perhaps even you, have the knowledge of Jesus Christ. You know that Jesus can save and yet you have been selfish with that knowledge. You have not been willing to share that knowledge, you have not been willing to go to help save somebody else. Why is it that the best personal evangelists in the church are always the new Christians? The converted drunkards, the converted harlots, the converted liars, these are the people who are most anxious to go and tell others and win others to the Lord Jesus Christ. But those who have been members of the Church for five years and ten years and fifteen years and who have the knowledge are not willing to go.

These are the people who say, "Well, everybody in town knows that the church doors are open. Everybody knows that they can come and hear the Gospel and be saved. If they want to be saved, let them come and hear the Gospel in the church house and be saved." But, my friend, there is not a single verse of scripture in all the Word of God that says that sinners are to come to the church

house and hear the Gospel there and be saved. Every verse of scripture in the Bible that pertains to the subject says that Christians are to go to the sinners and win them to Christ. We see that the word GO is the first word of Jesus Christ on the subject.

We want to come quickly to the second word that will spell success in leading others to the Lord Jesus Christ.

II The second word is the simple word, "TAKE." Take to these people, as you go, the Word of God. Back in the Old Testament in Psalm 126:6, we read what has been commonly called The Great Commission of the Old Testament, "He who goes out weeping, carrying seed to sow, will return with songs of joy, carrying sheaves with him." In Matthew 28:19 again, Jesus said, "Go ye therefore teaching all nations." What are we to teach? We are to teach the Word of God. We are to teach the Gospel of Jesus Christ. As Paul said in Romans 1:16, "I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ for it is the power of God and the salvation to everyone that believes; to the Jew first and also to the Greek." You are to go and you are to take with you the Word of God. If you take with you the Word of God, the Word of God, which is the power of God and salvation, will convict those whom you visit of their need of Jesus Christ. The Word of God will convince them of their need for Jesus Christ. The Word of God has the power to bring them to Jesus Christ.

Winning Souls — Farming

Winning souls to Christ is much like farming. Who has the biggest crop in farming? Is it the smartest farmer? Is it the most handsome farmer? Is it the most talented farmer? Not necessarily. The man who usually has biggest crop in farming is the farmer who works the hardest, who plows up the most ground, who sows the most seed, who cultivates the most soil. This is the man that has the greatest crop. A farmer may be ever so smart, ever so hand-

some and ever so talented, but if he did not work and till the soil and sow the seed, he would not have a crop in spite of all his intellectual ability and his good looks and his talents. I hear people say, "I can't win anybody to Christ, I'm not smart enough. I can't talk good enough. I'm not talented enough. I'm not handsome enough. I'm not beautiful enough." My friends, all these things may be good if you have them, but all these things put together would not be able to lead one soul to Jesus Christ.

A Lesson from Daddy

I remember learning this lesson so well long ago. I was seventeen years old. I was holding a revival meeting in the little town of Afton, Oklahoma. For two weeks I preached the Word of God in this little church. The preacher's name was A.Z. Matthews. He was a distinguished looking, white haired gentleman. He came to this church every other week, just on the weekend to preach. He was known as a half-time preacher. The congregation could not afford more preaching than that. During this revival meeting, I can remember so well how we would go to the nearest creek. I would see this old, white haired minister as he would bury the people in baptism and raise them up to walk in newness of life. At the end of this two week revival, 40 souls had been saved and ushered into the Kingdom of God.

You can imagine how a 16 year old high school boy would feel about something like this. I was on the clouds. The last night of that revival meeting, I remember my father and mother came down to take me back home to Miami, Oklahoma. On the way home that night, my dad spoke just the right words to me. Sobering words they were. Words that brought me back to earth again. He said, "Reggie, remember that your sermons did not save those souls. Some of your sermons were pretty poor. Remember that it was not the arguments that you put forth in your sermons, the logic of those arguments, nor their convincing power that brought these

people to Christ." He said, "Oh, Reggie, whatever you do, please remember that those 40 souls were brought to Christ because of the power of the Word of God. It was the Holy Spirit working through the Bible that brought those people to Christ, not Reggie Thomas." All through the years I have never forgotten those words that my father spoke to me so long ago. As we go, we are to simply take the Word of God.

My friends, we come to that third word that spells success in winning souls to Jesus Christ.

III. The third word is simply, "BRING." I find this word in the Gospel of John, the first chapter, the 41st and 42nd verses. Speaking of Andrew, it says, "He first findeth his own brother Simon." That is Andrew found Simon, his own brother." And he sayeth unto him, 'We have found the Messiah,' which is being interpreted the Christ, and he brought him to Jesus." Notice that Andrew brought Simon Peter to Jesus Christ. His own brother, he brought him to Christ. How did he do it? It was the personal method that worked. There is no substitute for personal work. Every businessman understands this, every politician understands this. Oh, that the church of our Lord Jesus Christ would understand that the personal method will win. Many times I hear people saying, "What's wrong with the church?"

What's Wrong With the Church?

Well, friends, there is nothing wrong with the church. Many times there is something wrong with the members of the church. They have to be patted by the preacher and coddled by the preacher and fed lumps of sugar by the preacher, and I will tell you whenever there is anything wrong with the church members, I know what it is, they aren't out doing personal work. Because, whenever I find a member of the church of Jesus Christ who is out trying to win someone to the Savior then I know that member is not going to

have to be pampered by the preacher. That member will be so busy striving to win somebody to Christ that he will be perfectly happy.

Jesus, Himself, set the example in personal soul winning. He preached His great sermon on the new birth to one man at night time. Jesus preached His great sermon on the water of life to the woman at the well. So, Andrew, following in the footsteps of Jesus, became a soul winner. As he rushed up to his own brother, Simon Peter, and said, "We have found the Messiah."

Winston Churchill's Tribute

During the dark days of World War II, it looked like Great Britain was going to lose out in the fight. Night after night they were bombed by the Germans. Then, a brave handful of men took to the skies and began to fight back. These men were called the RAF of Great Britain. RAF stood for Royal Air Force. There wasn't much royal about this air force, because they only had a few, old, broken-down planes, some of them practically held together by wire. But they were great men, heroic men. Night after night they fought back. Because of the heroic efforts of the men in the RAF of Great Britain, the tide of war turned. At the turning of the war, Sir Winston Churchill gave one of his famous speeches. During this speech he gave tribute to the men in the RAF, "Never in the history of the world did so many owe so much to so few."

If you who are reading, right now, will go out and win somebody to Jesus, you'll never know how your influence will extend. It may be like Andrew, he brought Simon to Jesus, Simon brought 3,000 others on the Day of Pentecost. You can win somebody to Jesus Christ. The somebody you win may win multitudes of others, so that even before the Throne of God someday it may be said in reference to you, "Never in the history of the world did so many owe so much to so few."

Winning the World is Possible

Doctor Andrew Murray has reminded us of this fact. If there were only one Christian in the whole world and that one Christian would work one whole year to win just one other to Christ, and in the second year if those two Christians would go out and work a whole year to win one other each to Christ, and in the third year, if those four Christians would go out and work a whole year and win just one other each to Christ . . . if all that were led to Christ would continue in personal evangelism, taking a whole year to win one other each, to Christ, it would take only 32 years to win the vast population of this earth, more than four billion people, to the Lord Jesus Christ. Oh, can't you see how important it is that you go and win somebody to Jesus. Remember, you can do it if you will.

The Lord once had a job for me, but I had so much to do that I said, "Lord, you get someone else or wait until I get through." I don't know how the Lord came out, no doubt that He got along, but I felt kind of small, and I knew I had done Him wrong. Then one day, I need the Lord and I needed Him right away, but he didn't answer my call at all, and I could hear Him say right down into my accusing heart, "I've got too much to do, you go get somebody else or wait until I get through." Now when the Lord has a job for me, I never try to shirk, I drop what I have on hand and go do the good Lord's work. My own affairs can run along or wait until I get through, for nobody else can do the work God has for me to do and nobody else can do the work that God has for you to do.

You can do personal work and win a soul to Christ.

Faithfulness

In Psalm 119:89-90, the Bible says, "Your word, Oh Lord, is eternal; it stands firm in the heavens. Your faithfulness continues through all generations; you established the earth, and it endures." The Bible presents our God as being a faithful God. Then I want to call your attention to Revelation 2:10, the Words of our Lord Jesus Christ, "Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer. I tell you, the devil will put some of you in prison to test you, and you will suffer persecution for ten days. Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life." From this scripture we learn that God loves faithfulness. He want each one of us to be faithful to Him. In Matthew 25:23, Jesus said, "His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness.'" In this passage we learn that God will reward faithfulness.

Unfaithfulness is a sin among us that plagues us. Unfaithfulness is the sin that has broken more hearts than any other sin. Unfaithfulness has wrecked more homes than any other sin. Unfaithfulness has destroyed more churches than any other sin. Unfaithfulness has condemned more souls to hell than any other sin. Unfaithfulness is the sin that breaks the hearts of young wives

and husbands. Unfaithfulness is the sin that breaks the health of a mother. Unfaithfulness will destroy the effectiveness of the church. Unfaithfulness will hinder the growth and the progress of the church. Unfaithfulness keeps missionaries from the foreign field. Unfaithfulness kills soul winning efforts at home. Unfaithfulness steals money from God.

Some preachers are constantly waging war against drunkenness and we should wage war against drunkenness. Some preachers constantly wage war against gambling and we should wage war against gambling. The same could be said of any sin that you want to name. Every preacher, I suppose, has his pet peeve. If there was one pet peeve of mine it would be the sin of unfaithfulness. That is what I would like to wage war on more than any other sin that I can think of.

A Question to Married Men

I would like to ask all of you married men a question. What would happen if tomorrow morning when you got up and prepared to go to work, kissed your wife and your children goodbye, and you walked out the door and said, "See you this evening." But then suppose tomorrow evening you did not come home and you did not come home all night and you did not come home the next day, in fact, you did not come home all week, then two weeks, three weeks, four weeks? During all this time there was no communication. You did not write. You did not telephone. You did not send any money. You simply disappeared. Suppose after four weeks you would walk in one morning, about breakfast time, and say, "Good Morning, everybody. Is breakfast ready?" What would happen at your house? I dread to even think what would happen at our house! I don't even dare to think what might happen if I were to do a thing like that! Of course, I wouldn't do a thing like that, because I don't believe in acting like that. I don't even desire to act like that. There would never be a thought in my mind of treating my family like

that. And I don't believe that there would be a thought in the mind of any married man here this evening to treat your wife or children in the manner that I have just described. But, I think you see the point.

Church Members Walk Out on Jesus

I know church members and you know church members and you may even be one of the church members, that has treated Jesus in the manner that I have just described. They simply walk out on the Lord and are absent week after week. Nobody knows what is wrong, there is no communication, then suddenly they reappear and say, "Howdy everybody!" Oh, my friends, that really troubles me. I've talked about this a lot, so you know it is my pet peeve. You know how this does break my heart, but just think how much worse God must feel if we treat him like this. I hope if there is one thing that I can be remembered for, that I might be remembered as a preacher that urged you to be faithful to Jesus Christ.

Teachers in My Life

When I first accepted Jesus as my Savior, I was eight years old. I shall never forget the words my father spoke to me. He said, "Son, do you realize you are making a decision that is going to last all the days of your life?" I said, "Yes, I do!" He said, "Is it your intention to always live for Jesus?" I said, "That's what I intend to do." He said, "Well, you'd better, because that is what this decision means." So, from the earliest days of my childhood I knew from the teaching of my father that to be a Christian meant to be faithful to Jesus Christ. Then I went to the Cincinnati Bible Seminary. The president of the Seminary was Ralph Records. As he spoke to those of us who were Freshman students, I shall never forget his words. He said, "Boys, the motto of the Cincinnati Bible Seminary is

‘Loyalty to Jesus Christ and every teaching of His Word.’ We expect you to be loyal to your alma mater, but beyond that God expects you to be faithful to Jesus Christ and every teaching of His Word.”

Faithfulness is essential to the success of any movement. Kings rise or fall depending on the faithfulness of their subjects. Public figures rise or fall depending on the faithfulness of their supporting public. Athletes depend on the faithfulness of their teammates. Officers in the Army depend upon the faithfulness of the men who serve under them.

Levels of Faithfulness

Faithfulness is the backbone of life. It’s the backbone of the home. And, it is the backbone of the church. But, to simply be faithful is not enough. Because, actually, there are levels of faithfulness. I want to present to you from the word of God the three levels of faithfulness.

I. First of all, I call your attention to Genesis 28, where we read about the “if” level of faithfulness. There is that little, two letter word, I-F. Reading from Genesis 28:20-22, “Then Jacob made a vow, saying, ‘If God will be with me and will watch over me on this journey I am taking and will give me food to eat and clothes to wear so that I return safely to my father’s house, then the Lord will be my God and this stone that I have set up as a pillar will be God’s house, and of all that you give me I will give you a tenth.’

Sounds good, doesn’t it? How many times have you heard preachers take this for a text and then preach a stewardship sermon and exhort everybody to be a tither. They say, “Look, Jacob made a vow to be a tither to God. He promised that he would serve God all the days of his life and give a tenth to God. That is what we ought to do.”

I don’t see it that way!! And, if you will read the scripture I

don't think you'll see it that way, either, because Jacob made a conditional promise. Jacob said, "IF God does such and such."

Jacob Cheats

You remember that Jacob and Esau were twins. Jacob was the deceiver. He deceived his father and cheated his twin brother out of his father's blessing that by rights belonged to the oldest boy. Since Esau was first born, he should have had the father's blessing, but Jacob was very crafty and deceitful and he got the blessing. He cheated his twin brother, Esau. He went out and disguised himself as a hunter, which his brother Esau was. He put hairy skins upon his arms and hands. He came in and had his mother fix a delicious meal. It was nothing but goat, but she disguised it to taste like venison. His poor old father, who was blind, thought it was his eldest son. He gave Jacob the blessing, gave him the birthright, the inheritance, and then, when it was too late, realized the mistake. Esau, of course, was furious. He was ready to kill his brother. Then Jacob's mother told him that he would have to flee for his life. Jacob took off for another country, there to live with his Uncle Laban.

If

Jacob made this conditional promise to God as he was on his way to this far away, foreign country; after having lied to his father, after having cheated his brother out of the birthright and the blessing. And, now, Jacob comes to God in prayer and he makes this conditional promise. "If, if," he says, "If God will bless me. If God will watch over me and help me make this journey safely. If God will give me food to eat. If God will give me clothes to wear. If God will bring me back to my father's house and make peace again between me and my brother that I have treated so wrongfully. If God will do all of this, well then, I'll serve God and I'll give a

tenth to God.” Well, who wouldn’t under those conditions? I find that so many times, we Christians want to make a bargain with God. We’ll say, “God, here it is. If you will bless me. If you will give me a job, where I can make the kind of salary that I feel I need to make. If You will give me the house that I want. If you will do this and do that, then God, I will serve you.” It is very, very bad to bargain with God. I’m sure of one thing, we will never get to Heaven if we try to get there on the IF level of faithfulness.

II. There is a second level of faithfulness that is mentioned in the Bible. This level is found in Psalm 116:1-2, where the Psalmist says, “I love the Lord for He heard my voice; he heard my cry for mercy. Because He turned His ear to me, I will call on Him as long as I live.” It seems to suggest that **BECAUSE God answered prayer, therefore, the Psalmist would trust God and would serve God and would live for God.** My question is this, what if God did not answer his prayer like he wanted? Then what? Would he still trust God? Would he still serve God? What I am trying to get you to see is that there is no credit for being faithful only **BECAUSE** God answered my prayer in the way I wanted Him to answer. Because, if you haven’t experienced it, there will come a time in your life when God will say, “No,” to your prayers. There will come a time in your life when God will say, “Wait awhile,” when you pray. And you might have to wait a year or you may have to wait five years or you may have to wait ten years, because God doesn’t always say, “Yes!” He may give a different answer then what you are expecting. So, if your faithfulness is just going to be based upon the times that God said, “YES,” then you are in trouble. We will not make it to Heaven on the **BECAUSE** level. And, we will not make it to Heaven on the IF level.

III. There is a third level of faithfulness, which is found in Habakkuk 3:17-18. “Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food, though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle

in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will be joyful in God my Savior." Is it clear what the prophet is saying here? It's so clear to me. The prophet is saying, "**Regardless of what happens.** Maybe everything will go wrong. Maybe the crops will fail and there is no food to eat. Maybe there is no job, no income, no house to live in. Sickness comes, trials come, disappointment overwhelms me, the bottom drops out, everything goes wrong. But, regardless of that, I am going to serve the Lord and I will joy in the God of my salvation." This is the kind of faithfulness that God is asking for. This is the kind of faithfulness that God will bless. This is the kind of faithfulness that will take us to Heaven.

The Fiery Furnace

It's the kind of faithfulness that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego possessed. The king said for them to bow and worship the idol or else he was going to throw them in the furnace of fire. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego refused to worship the idol. The king said, "Maybe you fellows didn't hear me clearly. I said, 'Bow and worship the idol or I'll burn you up.'"

Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego gave one of the most courageous answers of all history, when they said, "Oh king, you may throw us in the furnace of fire. We don't know what is going to happen to us, but we want you to know something that we know; we never will bow down to any idol, regardless of what you do to us." The king threw them in the furnace of fire, but God protected them from the fire and they came out alive, because they were **REGARDLESS** servants of the Lord.

Job

Job possessed this same kind of **REGARDLESS** faith. Job lost his children, but he still had faith in God. Job lost all of his wealth

and became a pauper, but he still had faith in God. Job lost his health and his body was covered with boils, but he still had faith in God. Job lost the love of his wife and she said, "Why don't you just curse God and die?" but Job kept his faith in God. Job lost his best friends, who came and falsely accused him and said, "Why, you are suffering so much because you have committed some big, terrible sin." Job still kept faith in God.

Job said, "regardless of what happens, even if God kills me, I will still love Him and serve Him." That is the kind of faithfulness that we must have.

W.R. Walker

Many many years ago, it was my great privilege to meet a marvelous minister of the Gospel, who had a great effect upon my life. His name was W.R. Walker. He used to be the Editorial Counselor for the *Christian Standard* and in the latter years of his life, he wrote a meditation for the Lord's Supper every Sunday that appeared in the *Christian Standard*. I heard Brother Walker speak on several occasions. He lived to be 96 years old. Shortly before his death I heard Brother Walker relate this experience.

His wife, Mrs. Walker, became very ill when Brother Walker was 90 years old. The last six years of her life, which led right up to almost the time of his own death, were spent ministering to her needs. Brother Walker never left his wife's bedside in six years. Day and night he was right there helping her, ministering to her. I'm sure many of you are thinking, "Well, that is no more than what is expected." When we get married, it is until death separates us. So, if in the latter years of our life there is an illness, that is what we are expected to do. We are going to be right by the side of our loved one.

Let me tell you something else that makes this story more amazing. Mrs. Walker lost her mind. She didn't know anything. There was no communication between them. She couldn't talk. It

was like she was a vegetable. It really wouldn't have made a difference, he could have left. She wouldn't have known the difference. But, he didn't leave. He stayed right there with her day and night for six long years.

Then, the most amazing, wonderful thing happened. One day, shortly before she died, Mrs. Walker suddenly, miraculously, regained her mind. She was able to speak again. She looked up at him as though she had been asleep for about five minutes, and she said something. He was astonished. So, they began to converse. He said they had the most lovely visit, It lasted for about two hours. They talked over everything just as though she had not even been ill. Then, just as suddenly as her mind returned, it went away again. But, just before that happened, Mrs. Walker said to her husband, "I'm getting tired. I think I'm ready to go to sleep." She reached up her arms, so Brother Walker bent over the bed and she grabbed him and she hugged him close to her and she kissed him and said, "Darling, I love you more right now than I loved you when we got married more than sixty years ago."

Brother W.R. Walker said, "That conversation that we had and those loving words that she spoke to me and that sweet, tender embrace that she gave me made it worth the six long years that I sat by her bedside and tried to help her."

When I heard Brother Walker relate that story, I thought to myself, "What a wonderful testimony as to what a Christian marriage is really like. What a wonderful testimony about a faithful wife and a faithful husband. Two faithful Christians, two faithful servants of our Lord Jesus Christ."

My prayer for each one of you is that you will be so faithful to Jesus that when it comes time for you to go to Heaven, whether it is right away or 50 years from now, that you will be able to say, "My Jesus, I love You more now than I did when You first became my Savior." Because Jesus loves you so much that He gave Himself and His life's blood to save you.

If there is one soul here tonight that has not accepted Jesus as your Savior, would you do it right now? Would you come and give

MY FAVORITE MISSIONARY SERMONS

Him your life with this idea, "I'm going to be faithful to you Jesus, forever and ever and ever!" May God help us all to do that.

One More Night with the Frogs

The subject I want to speak on is One More Night With the Frogs. That is right out of the Bible. It is a very scriptural subject. I'd like to read from Exodus 8:9-10, "Moses said to Pharaoh, 'Be pleased to command me when I am to entreat, for you and for your servants and for your people, that the frogs be destroyed from you and your houses and be left only in the Nile.' And he said, 'Tomorrow.' Moses said, 'Be it as you say, that you may know there is no one like the Lord our God.'"

Frogs Everywhere!

There were frogs everywhere; frogs in the bedrooms, frogs in the kitchens, frogs in the parlors, frogs in the ovens; because God keeps His word. God said to Pharaoh in the second verse, "'But if you refuse to let them go, behold, I will plague all your country with frogs.'" Pharaoh would not let the people go, so, God sent the frogs.

Look at that Egyptian woman opening her oven as she makes preparations to start dinner. She screams, because out of that oven jump frogs. Look at that Egyptian housewife as she starts to make

up the beds after the children have gone off to school. She pulls back the sheets and out jump frogs. Look at that Egyptian husband getting ready to go to work in the morning. He reaches in the closet to get his clothes out and out of the sleeves in his shirt jump frogs. Look at those Egyptian boys walking to school. They are squishing between their toes. It's not mud and not tar! No, it's frogs that they are squishing between their toes! There were frogs everywhere.

Frogs in Pharaoh's Palace

There were frogs in Pharaoh's Palace. Little frogs and big frogs. Croaking frogs, the noise was deafening. There were thousands of dead frogs piled in great heaps everywhere and the smell was terrible. Finally, Pharaoh could stand it no longer. Pharaoh called for Moses and for Aaron. He said, "Pray to the Lord, Get rid of these frogs!" Moses was overjoyed. He thought, "Oh, at last, Pharaoh is going to let the people go." That is what he said, "Moses, pray to the Lord to take away these frogs and I will let the people go." Oh, how happy Moses was. He said, "Pharaoh, when do you want me to ask God to get rid of these frogs?" Pharaoh gave one of the most amazing answers to be found anyplace in all of history. Pharaoh said, "Moses, I want you to give me one more night with these dirty, croaking, stinking frogs." Isn't it astonishing? One more night with the frogs." Imagine it. Frogs in the food. Frogs in the closets. Frogs in the beds. Frogs in the ovens. Frogs everywhere. It was driving everybody crazy. God was ready to take away the frogs immediately, but Pharaoh said, "tomorrow. I'll take one more night with the frogs."

Pharaoh a Sinner

Pharaoh was a sinner and therefore is used in the Bible as a type of all sinners. He was rebellious, proud, fleshly, and godless. God warned Pharaoh that if he did not let the people go, frogs

would come. The frogs came because of Pharaoh's sin. God loved Pharaoh, just like God loves all sinners. He was ready to remove the plague of frogs instantly, but Pharaoh said, "Just give me one more night with these frogs."

Tomorrow!

We are famous for what we are going to do tomorrow. God says, "Today!" The Holy Spirit says, "Today!" In Hebrews 3:7-8, "Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says, 'Today, when you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, on the day of testing in the wilderness.'" Yes, God says "today," but we say "tomorrow." We preach to people about making a full surrender of themselves to the Lord Jesus Christ. As it states in Hebrews 12:1-2, "Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God." We exhort people and we plead with people, "Today, give your life to Christ. Make full surrender of your life, your talents, your money." What is the response that people give to a plea like that? Most people say, "I know I should. I'm planning to do it sometime. Maybe I will do it tomorrow." We plead with backsliders, who have lost their first love, who have drifted away from God, who are living in sin away from the fellowship of the church, "Return to the Lord. Come and seek God's forgiveness." They say, "I know I should. I'm going to do it sometime. Maybe tomorrow."

A Runaway

I was reading a story about a 15 year old boy who ran away from home. He was living in an old, abandoned sewer pipe in New

York City. He was living among the filthy rats when the police found him. As they interviewed this boy, they said, "Don't you have a father and a mother?" He said, "Yes." "Where do you live?" He told them. "Boy, why aren't you at home with your parents?" He said, "I cannot go home." The policeman said, "Why can't you?" He said, "I stole \$10 from my dad. I took it out of his pocketbook while he was asleep. I wasted the money. I have no way of paying it back. I knew that my dad would kill me and that is why I ran away from home." The policeman said, "Son, your dad would not kill you." He telephoned the father immediately. He told him, "I have your son here at police headquarters. I found him living in an old, abandoned sewer pipe with the dirty, filthy rats. Would you like to come get your son?" The father was absolutely overjoyed. He thanked the policeman again and again. He said, "I'll be there just as quickly as I can get there. I have just nearly worried myself to death as to where that boy was." The policeman stood there and watched as the father and son had such a happy reunion. The policeman thought to himself, "Isn't it a shame that boy spent the last two weeks living in a sewer pipe when he could've been staying at home with his parents, sleeping in a nice, comfortable bed and eating good food."

God Will Forgive the Backslider

Isn't the story of that boy just like the story of many a backslider in the church. They run away from God. They live back in the world of sin. They are miserable. They are afraid. They are anxious. They have no peace. You say to the backslider, "Why don't you return to the Lord?" They say, "Oh, I'm ashamed. I've disobeyed God. I don't see how I can ever be saved. God can never forgive me." God is ready all the time to forgive, just like that father was ready to forgive his son. We are promised in John 1:9 that if we will confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us of our sins and to cleanse us of all unrighteousness. We plead with

people to repent of their sins and to come to Christ and to be saved. But, they always have excuses. "Tomorrow, give me one more night with the frogs."

What Jesus Said

Jesus was very familiar with these tomorrow people. He had lots of experiences with them. In Luke 9:57, we read, "As they were going along the road, a man said to him, 'I will follow you wherever you go.'" That is a big promise, isn't it? Doesn't it remind you of yourself, when you once made a promise to the Lord? You said, "I'll do anything you want me to do, Lord, I'll go any place you want me to go, Lord. You just show me the way. I'll do it." That is what this man said.

In Luke 9:58 the Lord answered this man, "And Jesus said to him, 'Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.'" In other words, Jesus said, "If your are going to follow me, you've got to be willing to sacrifice." The moment Jesus mentioned sacrifice this man turned away and he was ready to talk about tomorrow. He didn't want to make any sacrifice today. He was willing to make a daring promise, but when it came to fulfilling this promise we hear no more from him. He became one of those "tomorrow people."

In Luke 9:59, "To another he said, 'follow me.' But he said, 'Lord, let me first go and bury my father.'" That sounds like a reasonable request, doesn't it? It would have been reasonable if the father was dead and it was time to bury him. But, the fact is that the father was not dead and what the boy was saying was this, "Let me go home and live with my unspiritual father, who hates God, who has nothing to do with the kind of life that You want me to live. And sometime in the future, when my father dies, and I have buried him, then I'll follow you." That is why Jesus gave this answer that sometimes seems so strange to us in Luke 9:60, "But he said to him, 'Leave the dead to bury their own dead; but as for

you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God.’”

Don't Wait Until You Bury Them!

I have met so many people like this man. You talk to them about following Jesus and they will say, “Well, I can’t, because my father is not a Christian. I can’t, because my mother is not a Christian. I can’t, because my parents belong to some other religion. I don’t want to disappoint my parents. Let me first bury my father. Let me first bury my mother. Let me wait a few years when my parents aren’t living anymore and they don’t know anything about it, why, then I’ll become a Christian.” I have seen that sad thing come to pass. I have seen some people delay and put off their decision for Christ and they would wait until it was too late . . . until they had to literally bury their parents before they would ever think about following Jesus. That is a shame. You should come ahead and accept Christ as your Savior so that you might win your parents to Christ.

If you are married to a man who is not a Christian, you should go on and become a Christian and then try to live so you could win your husband to Christ, rather than say, “Oh, I can’t be a Christian, because my husband is not a Christian.” If your husband isn’t a Christian you should be a Christian and try to win him to Christ. If your children aren’t Christians, you should be a Christian and try to win those children to Christ. Don’t wait until you have to bury them, when it is too late for their soul to be saved before you finally make up your mind.

Wicked Relatives Cause Delay

In Luke 9:61-62, “Another said, ‘I will follow you, Lord; but let me first say farewell to those at my home.’ And Jesus said to him, ‘No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God.’” What was wrong with this man’s

excuse? That sounds reasonable, "First let me go home and tell them goodbye." You see, Jesus knew that man's family was living for the devil. And Jesus knew if he went home to say goodbye to his family that his family would talk him out of his decision. And his family would pull him down in the goat pen instead of coming with him to the sheep fold. That's exactly what some people would say today. "I would sing in the choir, but . . ." "I would teach a Sunday School class, but . . ." "I would go calling on lost souls, but . . ." "I would accept Christ and be baptized, but first let me go back and talk it over with my relatives." They know all the time that their relatives are ungodly, their relatives are wicked and sinful. If they go and talk to their wicked, sinful relatives that the relatives are going to talk them out of the decision. When Jesus calls, it is up to us to answer and follow him and not say "tomorrow."

I. I want to give a few reasons why you must not spend one more night with the frogs. **First of all, the frogs may not leave tomorrow.** You remember that story in the Bible about the rich young ruler, who came to Jesus, "Good Master, what good things shall I do to have eternal life?" Jesus told him all the commandments and he said, "Oh, I've obeyed all these from my childhood up. What do I lack?" Jesus said, "Just one thing. You go get rid of your riches and give them to the poor and then you come and follow me." This man was very wealthy and he loved his riches more than he loved God, so he turned and walked away sorrowfully. "Tomorrow I'll do it!" But, we never see that rich, young ruler again. The frogs did not leave when tomorrow came.

Bob the Drunkard

I remember during my ministry at Catlin, Illinois, there was a man who used to get drunk quite regularly. His wife would always call me and ask me to go to the taverns, where he was drinking, and pick him up and bring him home. If she would try to get him,

there would always be trouble and he would end up in jail. So, to try to keep him out of jail, she would have me go to get him, because he always respected ministers. No matter how drunk he was he would never fight or cause trouble if the preacher would go and get him.

Many a night I'd be called out at 2 or 3 o'clock in the morning to go get Bob. I'll never forget one night. She called and Bob had been drinking and he had gotten in a big fight and somebody cut him up and they called the police, so he was in jail. She called me about 3:00 a.m., crying and wanting me to go to the jail and get him out and bring him home. I went down to the county jail in Danville. I went inside and looked and it was absolutely sickening. Bob had thrown up all over himself. He was lying there on the jail floor, lying in his own vomit. He had been stabbed at least 17 times, nothing serious, of course, just little cuts here and there. But he had bled some and he was lying there in his own blood. He was a dirty, filthy mess, a wretched looking piece of humanity.

I walked in and spoke to him. He kind of roused himself up out of his drunken stupor and looked at me. I said, "Bob, would you like to go home?" Oh, yes, he'd like to go home, he was so sorry. He cried a few tears. I had been through it so many times with him that I admit that I was kind of disgusted in the wee hours of that morning, so I spoke to him a little bit harshly. I said, "Bob, I want to know right now, I want your decision. Will you promise me that you'll repent of your sins? Do you promise to come and accept Jesus as your Savior? Are you ready to go right now and be baptized into Christ? Do you promise you'll never ever touch another drop of whiskey?" He looked up at me. He sobered up. Here he was all cut, bleeding, he'd thrown up, he was lying there in his own vomit, just a dirty, wretched piece of humanity. He looked at me and he said, "Well, I don't know if I'm quite ready yet to do that. I'd better think about it a little bit longer."

Can you imagine? Oh, how horrible! He had sinned and sinned and sinned and thrown his life away time after time. Here he was in jail and he says, "Give me one more night with the frogs!

I'm not ready just yet. I want to think about it a little bit longer." I knew that he meant, "I want one more Saturday night to go back to that tavern and drink and get in one more fight. Not just yet!" I'm sorry to say that the frogs did not leave tomorrow for that man. Last Christmas we received a card from his wife and she said, "I'm sorry to tell you that Bob passed away this last year and he never did accept Jesus." He never did change. The frogs did not leave.

II. The second reason I want to suggest that you must not spend one more night with the frogs is because something worse may come in place of the frogs. That certainly happened to Pharaoh and the Egyptians. After the frogs there was lice, after the lice there were flies, after the flies there were locusts, after locusts there were boils, after boils there was fire and darkness and finally death; the death of the first born of every family in Egypt. As bad as sin is something worse than sin is coming. That is the Judgment Day.

A True Example

I was holding my second revival meeting in Caldwell, Idaho. The first time I was there was 1958. There was one man who was quite outstanding in this congregation. He was one of the elders in the church. In 1968, ten years later, I noticed that this man was no longer an elder of the congregation. In fact, he always sat on the back row, very inconspicuous. No longer was he joyful, no longer did he mingle among people, laughing and talking as he had before. It went on like this for almost the whole revival meeting.

Finally, toward the end, he came up and spoke to me one night. He said, "I guess you noticed that I'm not in the mainstream of the church life anymore. That I take no part in the activities, that I'm no longer an elder. You surely must have noticed this." I said, "Yes." He said, "I want to tell you what has happened to me since you were last here, because I would like for you to use my life as an illustration to warn other people not to do like I did." He pro-

ceeded to tell me the story of his life. He had been a very wealthy man. He was in partnership with his father in the cattle business.

It seemed like everything that they did turned into money. He said, "You know, it reached the point that I could just make a phone call and I could make \$200 a day easy. Making money was no problem to me. I just made more and more, got richer and richer. I couldn't possibly spend the money, I was making so much. I just loved doing that. I just loved making money. It got to the point I couldn't think about anything else. I just wanted more money. I dropped out of the church activities. I quit coming to prayer meeting. I quit going to Bible School. I dropped out on Sunday night. I just attended on Sunday morning. It wasn't long before they dropped me as an elder of the church, because I wasn't doing the work of the office. Shortly after this my father became ill and he died. My father and I were not only father and son, we were business partners and we were also like brothers and we were also like real good buddies. We also did everything together. My father was my pal, my friend, by business associate, my confidant. It just tore me and I didn't know how I could continue living without my father. I knew that I should repent. I realized with the death of my father that I had not been putting first things first.

"After a while I seemed to get over it and I went right ahead making money. It was an obsession. I thought about it twenty-four hours a day. I could hardly even sleep at night because I was always scheming how to make more money. Then my mother became ill and she died quite suddenly. It tore me up and I did not know how I would be able to go on living without my mother. Somehow I managed and again the thought came to my mind that I was doing wrong, that I was neglecting the Lord, that I should repent, but I didn't. I just went on making money. Suddenly, without warning there came an unexpected business reversal. In a matter of just a few short months my financial empire vanished. I lost everything. It is almost unbelievable because I was a millionaire at the height of my success, but I lost everything." He said, "Reggie, it got so bad that I couldn't even feed my family. The church came

to our rescue. The church actually brought food to our house. They brought used clothing for my children to wear. I couldn't clothe them. I couldn't feed my family. When I finally got down to rock bottom, I repented. I have returned to the Lord. God has forgiven me, but I've lost my influence. Nobody had any confidence in me. I cannot lead in the church any longer and so I take a back seat. I've lost the joy of my salvation. I want you to tell my story wherever you go so that other people will not make the mistake I made." You see, he kept saying, "Just give me one more night with the frogs." But something worse came in place of the frogs.

III. I want to give you a third reason why you must not spend one more night with the frogs. That is because tomorrow may not come!

Sudden Death

America is known as the land of sudden death. Six hundred people or more are killed in an average year in America by lightning bolts. That is a sudden death, isn't it? I was reading in the newspaper the other day and a sixteen year old boy in Chattanooga, Tennessee was changing a big truck tire and that tire exploded right in his face and killed him. We are a land of sudden death. I was reading again in the paper in Birmingham, Alabama. I read about a lady who was out in her front yard picking up the newspaper. The TV antenna on top of the house just suddenly crumpled, fell on top of this lady and killed her. I was reading about a truck driver coming through Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Suddenly, without warning, his trailer truck jack-knifed and it squashed him, like he had been a giant accordion. He was killed instantly.

A Lion Eats Him!

It not only happens in America, it happens other places, too.

We were in Rhodesia, Africa. One day there was a man asleep in his mud hut and while he was asleep a lion came. That lion jumped right through the door and grabbed the man and ate him alive. When that African man went to sleep, within the safety of his hut, he didn't think a lion would get him. That doesn't happen. But, it did! The lion killed him just like that.

Maybe tomorrow!

I was holding a meeting in Bedford, Indiana and there was a couple who had a restaurant right near the church. I used to go over there and eat before services each night. I became acquainted with this young couple. I pleaded with them to accept Christ, because we became good friends. But, they did not. We came right down to the closing service of that revival and I went there to eat my last meal before leaving town. I pleaded with them to accept Jesus. Finally, they said, "We will do it soon, maybe tomorrow. We'll have our preacher write you a letter just as soon as we are baptized. We promise you we'll do it!" I said, "There may not be a tomorrow! Please come to our meeting right now and make your decision." "No! No!" they said, "Not right now, but soon. Maybe tomorrow." In less than two weeks I received a letter from the preacher. That couple started traveling on Highway 50 East. There was a dip in the road and a great big semi truck bounded across that dip and hit them head on and they both died instantly . . . less than two weeks after that meeting. They had not become Christians.

Tomorrow may not come, so I plead with you. Not one more night with the frogs, but today if you hear God's voice harden not your hearts, repent of your sins, come to Jesus and accept and obey him that you may be saved while there's yet time.

What Does the Christian Church Believe About Worship?

The Balloon Salesman

A man was selling balloons at the county fair. As he held his big hand full of balloons, all filled with helium, once in awhile he would release one of the balloons and it would sail off over the heads of the people on the fairgrounds. It would attract the attention of all the children and then, of course, they would start begging their parents to buy them a balloon. It would increase his business each time that he would release one of the balloons.

A little black boy was at the fair and started searching for the man that was selling the balloons. When he found him, he said, "Sir, do you have a black balloon?" "Sure I do, Sonny. Why?" said the balloon salesman. "I would like for you to turn loose one of your black balloons and I would like to see how high it will go." The man cut loose one of the black balloons and it shot straight up into the air. The little boy stood there clapping his hands for joy as he watched that black balloon go higher and higher. He said, "Just look at that black one go." The balloon seller said, "Son, it is not the color of the balloon that makes it go up high, it is what is on the inside."

Externals are Unimportant

That is the way it is with true worship. The building could be a barn, a house, or a cathedral. It could be made out of stone or wood or it could be a mud hut with a thatched roof in Africa. Neither are we concerned about the clothing the worshippers wear. Worshipers might come dressed in blue jeans or overalls or a cotton dress or they might wear silk and satins. Dress makes no difference. It is what is on the inside that really counts.

The Woman at the Well

John 4:1-26. Jesus approached this well. He was thirsty. There was a woman of Samaria who had come there to draw water for her own needs. Jesus spoke to this Samaritan woman and said, "Give me a drink." The Samaritan woman was startled because Jews and Samaritans had nothing to do with each other. She spoke to Jesus very boldly and said, "Why are you asking me for a drink when Jews don't even speak to Samaritans?" Jesus answered by saying, "If you knew the gift of God and if you knew who had asked you for a drink, why you would have in turn asked Me for the Living Water." The woman was very puzzled by what Jesus had said and she said, "You don't have anything to draw water with and the well is very deep. What are you talking about, Living Water? Are you greater than our father, Jacob, that gave us this well and who even drank of this water himself and gave water to drink to his cattle and to his children?"

Jesus answered this woman by saying, "Whoever drinks of this water from Jacob's well is going to get thirsty again, but whoever drinks of the water that I will give will never be thirsty again and there will spring up within him a well of water into everlasting life." The woman was extremely curious by now and she said to Jesus, "Please give me some of this water so I will never be thirsty again and will never have to come to this well and draw water

again." Jesus said, "Go call your husband." We can almost see this woman growing red in the face; filled with embarrassment and shame. She said, "I have no husband." And Jesus said, "Yes, you have told the truth. Because you have had five husbands and the man that you are living with right now is not your husband."

She Changed the Subject

Immediately the woman realized that Jesus was a prophet of God and so she changed the subject. This is what people always do when they don't want to live like Jesus taught. Have you ever called on someone and tried to win them to Christ? What happens the moment you talk to them about repenting of their sins and turning their life over to Jesus? They change the subject. Jesus was talking about her sins. She started talking about worship.

She said, "Where is the right place to worship? The Samaritans say that we are supposed to worship on this mountain. You Jews say that we are supposed to worship in Jerusalem. Just where is the right place for worship?" Then Jesus pointed out to the woman that place is not important because God is a spirit and we must worship the Father in spirit and truth.

What is Worship?

That leads me to pose the question right now, what is worship? A simple answer is "*going to church*." That could be and it might not be worship. It is possible for someone to go to church for 50 years and never really worship God.

I. The place is not important. The fundamental thought of worship is bowing down. Worship would be seeking God's blessings upon God's terms. The Samaritan woman said it is very important to worship on that mountain. Jews teach that it is

extremely important to worship in Jerusalem. But, true worship can be practiced in Bomili, Africa; Catlin, Illinois; London, England; or Chattanooga, Tennessee. The place is unimportant because God is everywhere.

Worship in a Beer Hall

I have had some very unusual experiences. For example, I had the experience of preaching a revival meeting in a beer hall. That was the only place that was available. It was in Guyana, South America, and the owner of the beer hall closed down his business and allowed us to meet there for one full week. We had a successful revival meeting and many people were led to Jesus Christ and the church grew in that community even though we met in such an unlikely place. In the Philippine islands on one occasion we had an evangelistic meeting in the front yard of a house of ill repute. The results were tremendously great. The inhabitants of that house of ill repute accepted Christ and the place closed down. We Americans find that it is very difficult to worship when the place is not very attractive, but in God's sight the place is really unimportant.

II. People are very important. Private devotions are necessary for spiritual growth, but many times people want to use private devotions to substitute for public worship. We must emphasize that we are talking about Lord's Day worship and Lord's Day worship necessitates more than one person. How many times have you heard someone say, "I can worship God on the river bank while I am fishing or I can worship God out on the golf course while I am golfing or I can worship God out in the woods on a picnic"? It is true that you can worship God on a river bank, or on the golf course, or anyplace else. But, the sad thing is that people will use this argument to excuse themselves from worshipping on the Lord's Day. They want to go fishing, hunting, or golfing instead of worshipping God.

In Lord's Day worship, people are important. We are to gather together. In fact, the Bible prohibits the neglect of the assembly in Hebrews 10:25.

III. In the third place, worship must be regular. When God gave His Ten Commandments to the people in the olden days, the fourth of the Ten Commandments was "Remember the Sabbath Day and keep it holy." We are a New Testament church and we do not worship on the Sabbath Day, because the Sabbath is the 7th day of the week. The Sabbath Day was given to the Jews as the day of worship. Christians who live under the New Testament have been given a new day to worship God. It is the Lord's Day; the first day of the week. Not Saturday, but Sunday. The Lord's Day, the first day of the week, should be kept regularly. Every Sunday is the Lord's Day and we are to assemble in the Lord's house around the Lord's Table. Some worshippers only attend church occasionally and that robs them of many spiritual benefits that are available.

Suppose you went to the doctor because of an illness and the doctor gave you a prescription. You would be instructed to take the medicine regularly at stated intervals in order to get well. Some people disregard the doctor's orders and they rob themselves of the benefit that they would otherwise derive from the prescription. Regular worship is just as necessary to spiritual health as the regular partaking of prescriptions is to regular health.

If we are going to maintain strong, physical bodies we must eat our food at regular stated intervals, and people who do not eat their food regularly impair their physical health. It is necessary, regularly, weekly, on the first day of the week that we gather together to worship God so that we might be receiving spiritual strength he has for us.

IV. In the fourth place, worship is something that is taught. You should start bringing the children to church the moment they are born. I was brought to church the first time when I was eight days old. I have never missed since, except on a few rare occasions

when I have been ill. My parents believed that children are a gift from God not to keep us away from church, but that we might bring the children to church and teach them the ways of the Lord. Start teaching the children from the time they are babies. Each Lord's Day bring the babies to church and they will grow up believing, by example, that it is the right thing to be in church to worship God. We need to teach the babies to fold their hands and bow their heads when we pray. We need to teach them when they go to worship service or the Sunday School that they are to listen attentively to the teacher or preacher or to the one who reads God's Word at scripture time. We need to do our very best to teach the children to take care of God's house just like we take care of our own home. We would not allow our children to scratch on the walls of our home and we should not allow them to scratch on the walls of the church, or in any way mar or disfigure the house of God.

V. In the fifth place, worship must be prepared for. Long before Sunday morning arrives we should be prepared for that morning of worship in God's house. Serious preparations should begin on Saturday evening. I always recommend to people that they not be out late on Saturday night. Don't work hard on Saturday. Spend Saturday as a day of preparation. Take it easy, be calm, and go to bed early so that you will arise Sunday morning refreshed in body and mind. Lay out your clothes on Saturday so that there won't be any upset getting dressed on Sunday morning. Take your bath on Saturday night so that if you sleep a little bit late on Sunday morning, you won't have to rush. I know from many bad experiences how wrong it is to be out late on Saturday night, how wrong it is to get up grumpy on Sunday morning, how wrong it is to get up late Sunday morning and bring the children to church crying all because you have been selfish and stayed out late on Saturday night and because you haven't properly prepared for the worship service on Sunday morning.

VI. In the sixth place, worship does need the right atmo-

sphere. I have experienced worship services in Africa when there would be 500 or 600 babies in the audience. That is real competition to try to lead people in worship when you have children crawling, fighting, and fussing and about 10 or 15 at a time running back and forth to the restroom. It is difficult to worship in a mud wall, thatched roof hut where all of the curious neighbors can come and peek in the doors and windows and make their comments that are heard just as loudly as if on the inside. If the building is dirty and uninviting and dark and gloomy, no one feels like worshipping God.

I remember a church in England where I preached one time. The building must have been 500 years old and I think it had not been painted once in the 500 years since it had been built. It was black, dirty, dark, and dingy on the inside and as you entered, a feeling of gloom and depression came upon you. It was difficult to worship God. What a difference it would have made if they were to have brightened up that building by just putting on a coat of paint.

Equipment and comfortable surroundings are important as well as friendly people. What a difference it makes if you walk in and everybody smiles and they shake hands and greet you as if they were really glad to see you.

A church building located by a railroad yard where the trains whistle and groan and grunt is terribly distracting. A church building built by an airport where jets zoom in and out every minute of the time that you are trying to worship shaking the building with their roar, is tremendously distracting.

It is important to have ushers to watch the temperature of the building and not let it get too hot or cold. Ushers need to be available so if someone gets ill in the service they can quickly assist them to make an exit without disrupting the service. If someone arrives late, the usher is right there knowing where the available seats are so they can help that latecomer to be seated quietly, without disrupting anybody.

VII. Worship itself consists of many elements. *First of all,*

we must not overlook the element of quietness. We are reminded in Habakkuk 2:20, "The Lord is in His holy temple, let all the earth keep silence before Him." How wonderful it is to have a quiet sanctuary; a place where you can come and there are no noises and people don't make noise and you can just quietly think about God and worship him and bow your head for prayer and know that you are not going to be distracted by somebody whispering or by loud, unusual noises going on.

Second, music is certainly a tremendously important part of the worship hour. How beautiful to hear the tones of the organ calling us to the hour of worship. How wonderful to lift our voices in joyful hymns of praise to Almighty God and then to listen quietly to the beautiful message of the choir or the soloist.

Third, prayer is so important for prayer offers us a time to confess our sins. It is a time of thanksgiving when we can really thank God for the many ways that He has blessed us and the many answers He has given to previous prayers. It is a time of intercession when we can pray on the behalf of others who need help; spiritual help, mental help, or physical help.

Fourth, stewardship is also a great part of worship. As we bring God's holy tithes into the storehouse, whether it be the widow's mite or a large amount of money, the reward for the worshipper is the same.

Fifth, there is the time of communion. We come around the Lord's Table as His invited guests to remember His death upon the cross with love. The sacrifice of His body and blood so that we might have life everlasting.

Sixth, there is the preaching of God's Holy Word. I Corinthians 1:18 says, "The preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness, but to those of us who are being saved, it is the power of God." The world on the outside can laugh and say that it is ridiculous that we meet here every Sunday and listen to a half hour of preaching, but we who are saved know that the preaching of God's Word is the power of God. I Corinthians 1:21, "For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it

pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." Those of us who are Christians, who have surrendered our past sins to Jesus and have allowed Him to wash them all away with His cleansing blood, have reached the point that we realize that we are saved now by preaching. It is tremendously important to all Christians that they assemble around the Word of God every Lord's day to hear God's message. The Word of God is important to lost sinners. That is the way that lost sinners are brought to conviction and are brought to the point of decision that they will surrender themselves to Christ, but we must never forget, those of us who have been saved, that it is the preaching of the Word of God that keeps us in a continually saved condition. Doubtless there is much in every sermon that is of no interest or help to you, but just remember that there are many people around you that are being helped and then part of the time, once in a while, there may be something in the sermon that will help you.

VII. Finally, I will make this observation, true worship can only be practiced when one has chosen the One whom he worships as his Father. If you are not converted, if you have never confessed the Savior's Name, if you have never been baptized, then you see, really you are not worshipping God fully as you could and as you should because in order to truly worship you must choose the one that you desire to worship as your Heavenly Father. The only way that you can choose Him, that the Bible has revealed, is to make that public confession that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and to submit yourself fully to Him by being buried in Christian baptism so that your past sins might be forgiven that you might receive the Holy Spirit.

Margaret Higgins won the Pulitzer Prize in literature for one line. During the Korean War she visited the battlefield where there were 18,000 marines of the 5th company on one side of the mountain and 100,000 Chinese Communists on the other. It was 42 degrees below zero. Margaret Higgins interviewed a sergeant who had been there for 14 days. He'd endured cold, eaten out of cans,

and been unable to bathe. She asked that sergeant a question and with his one line answer she won the Pulitzer Prize. She asked, "If I were God and would give you anything you asked for, what would be your request?" He thought long and hard, and simply said, "I'd ask for tomorrow."

Man can live over a month without food, two days without water, over a minute without air, but man cannot live without hope.

A Plea for Unity

Essentials—Non Essentials

The Restoration movement has been famous for several mottoes. A motto is a guiding principle. One motto says, "No Creed but Christ, no book but the Bible, no name but the divine name." Another motto is "We are not the only Christians, but we are Christians only." Another is, "In faith . . . unity, in opinions . . . liberty, and in all things . . . love." Then there is the motto I want to speak about which brings to light essentials and non-essentials, or faith and opinion. That is the motto for which we are probably the most famous, "Where the Bible speaks . . . we speak. Where the Bible is silent . . . we are silent."

This motto did not begin with Thomas or Alexander Campbell. Neither did this motto begin with Barton W. Stone. Neither did it begin with the Waldensians, who spoke out against the authoritative, dictatorship of Rome four centuries before Martin Luther. This motto, "Where the Bible speaks . . . we speak. Where the Bible is silent . . . we are silent," actually began when the Apostle Paul called the church at Corinth back to the beginning of its foundations in the Christian faith. In I Corinthians 3:11 Paul insisted, "For no one can lay any foundation other than the one

already laid, which is Jesus Christ." Apostasy began at Corinth. And this was less than ten years after Jesus Christ established His church in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost.

Already the church had wandered from its beginning principles. The church had drifted into unspeakable immorality at Corinth and the membership had merely winked at it. So they needed to be restored to the essentials. In I Corinthians 3:18 Paul said, "Do not deceive yourselves. If any one of you thinks he is wise by the standards of this age, he should become a fool so that he may become wise." In Galatians 1:8-9 Paul said, "But even if we or an angel from Heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned! As we have already said, so now I say again: If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let him be eternally condemned!" Paul had received the Gospel directly from the Lord Jesus Christ, therefore, it is not a surprise to us that when Peter and John examined the Apostle Paul that they found that his teaching was pure and unadulterated. It was according to the Word of God.

Purity vs. Pollution

Over in the hills of central Pennsylvania there's a marvelous spring. This spring issues in a crystal clear pool of water at the foot of a cliff. Around this pool of water people have built a city called Belfont. They tell us that 11 million gallons of pure spring water flow down Spring Creek everyday from this spring high up in the hills. The temperature of that water has never varied more than 4 degrees, spring, summer, winter or fall. One hundred yards downstream from the source of the spring the water begins to be polluted. You can see a film of oil spreading over the water. Two miles downstream from the source it spreads into a dismal, gloomy, polluted swamp. The amazing thing is that all over those hills of central Pennsylvania there are many source of pollution. But nobody has ever found any pollution whatsoever in the spring water itself

at the source. Man does not know where that water comes from, but it has always been perfectly pure at the source.

The Pure Source . . . The Word of God

I think that the application is perfectly clear. The Bible is the pure source of the Word of God because the Bible comes from God Himself. All around there are many pools of polluted water. From denominational sources we have creeds written by men, books written by men, and church laws written by men. If you want the pure water itself you must go back of denominationalism and back of all books and back of all creeds and all laws written by men. We must go all the way back to the Word of God.

Today we are constantly interested in the current newscasts, but the Bible is really the latest and greatest newscast of all, because it comes from God. The books that are popular today fade away and are forgotten tomorrow, but the Word of God is unchangeable and continues year after year to be the best seller. Let us make it clear that the Bible is God's Word and as the Bible says in II Timothy 3:16, "All scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correction, and training in righteousness." There is not so much evidence that John Milton wrote *Paradise Lost* or evidence that Shakespeare wrote *Hamlet* or evidence that Mark Twain wrote *Huckleberry Finn* as there is evidence that God Almighty, through His prophets, apostles and evangelists, wrote His Holy Word, His divine Word, the Bible!

The Church is One

The Bible makes it very clear that in the beginning that Christ established one church. In Matthew 16 we read the words of Jesus, "Upon this rock I will build My Church," possessive, singular. Jesus Christ did fulfill that promise and established His church in

Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost. And for many years the church was one. It was united. All people who followed Jesus claimed simply to belong to His church. But then the divisions began to rear their ugly heads.

Division Begins

In the church at Corinth there was division, so Paul had to write to the Corinthians condemning them for this division. He said in I Corinthians 1:11, "My brothers, some from Chloe's household have informed me that there are quarrels among you." When divisions first reared their ugly heads in the church, it was over men. Men vying with men for popularity. Down through the years men have continued to divide the church over their personalities. Men have divided the church over their human teachings, human doctrines, human practices.

The Plea for Unity

By the time of the 1700's there were already more than 300 different denominations competing among themselves to try to be the biggest and the best and the most popular. Each one insisting that they were, indeed, the only ones who were going to Heaven. Therefore, shortly after the turn of the nineteenth century, in many religious circles there was a striving for restoration. Men wanting to restore themselves to the original church and to the original teaching of the Church.

Within the Methodist denomination there was James O'Kelly. In the Baptist denomination there was Abner Jones and Elias Smith. In the Presbyterian denomination there was Barton W. Stone, Thomas Campbell and Alexander Campbell.

On August 4, 1794, the Methodist denomination held a meeting at Old Lebanon, Virginia. A committee of seven men had been

appointed to devise a plan of church government. Finally, they decided to lay aside every manuscript and go by the Bible alone. Rice Haggard stood up and said, "Brethren, the Bible is a sufficient rule of faith and practice. By it we are told that the disciples were called Christians and I move that, henceforth and forevermore, the followers of Christ be known as Christians simply." Following Rice Haggard's suggestion, a Brother Hafferty, of North Carolina, stood up and moved that they take the Bible itself as their only creed.

Just a little bit later in 1808, near Washington, Pennsylvania where Thomas Campbell lived, were some of his friends from Scotland. There was General Atchinson, Lt. Col. of the Twenty-second Regiment of the Pennsylvania Militia, James Foster and Thomas Hodgins, each of whom had come to this country from Ireland. In the houses of these friends, Thomas Campbell preached. His voice was also heard in Mable Groves, where they held open air services. In due time it became evident that many of these listeners were in sympathy with Thomas Campbell's views. He proposed one of the principal ones among them to have a meeting at his home to give more definite form to the movement. The house of Abraham Walters, located between Mt. Pleasant and Washington, Pennsylvania, was chosen. And it was here that one of the most famous meetings of the Restoration Movement was conducted. Thomas Campbell's speech closed as he quoted this famous motto, "Where the Bible speaks . . . we speak. Where the Bible is silent . . . we are silent."

This idea that Thomas Campbell embodied in the motto was not new. Many, many years before, in 1659, Edward Stillingfleet, who later became Bishop of Worcester, had said, "For the church to require more than Christ Himself required, or to make conditions of her communion more than our Savior did, is wholly unwarranted."

Chillingsworth had written his book, *The Religion of Protestants: A Safeway to Salvation*, in 1637. And in this book he had argued that the Bible was the sole authority in matters of salvation. In this book, his conclusion read like this, "The Bible, I say, only is

the religion of Protestants.”

When Thomas Campbell quoted this motto it was not new, but it was revolutionary. Because, you see, prior to the time Thomas Campbell quoted the motto the Protestants applied it solely to Roman Catholic traditions. But when Thomas Campbell quoted the motto, people now realized that it struck with equal force against human Protestant creeds as it did against Catholic traditions. Quite naturally then, when Thomas Campbell first quoted these words and paused, there was a solemn hush that fell across that assembly showing the intensity of the emotions of the hour. Thomas Campbell sat down. A Scottish book seller by the name of Andrew Monroe was the first to break the silence. With great emotion he said, “Mr. Campbell, if we adopt that motto then that means there is an end to infant baptism.” Thomas Campbell replied, “Of course, if infant baptism is not found in the Bible we can have nothing to do with it.” Thomas Atchinson then stood up with tears in his eyes and he cried out, “I hope that I may never see the day when my heart will renounce that blessed saying of the scriptures, ‘Suffer the little children to come unto me and forbid them not for of such is the Kingdom of heaven.’” Having said that, he burst into tears. James Foster, who even in Ireland had opposed infant baptism arose and cried out, “Mr. Atchinson, I would remark that in that portion of scripture that you have just quoted, there is no reference whatever to infant baptism.”

We who are presently members of the Christian Church stand upon this principle. We believe with all our hearts that the Bible is the Word of God and that we must practice scriptural teaching. Wherever the Bible has spoken, that’s where we must stand and we must speak.

I. The Essentials

Have you ever had someone approach you and say, “What denomination do you belong to?” If you understand the principles of the Restoration Movement and if you know why you are a member of the Christian Church, you will immediately respond to that

question by saying, "I don't belong to any denomination." Immediately they're going to say, "Oh now, don't pull my leg, everybody belongs to some denomination. Now come out with it, what group do you belong to?" And then you will say, "I don't belong to any group. I just belong to Christ. I'm just simply a Christian." Then the questioner will say, "Well everybody belongs to Christ, everybody's a Christian. What creed do you believe?" You'll turn to Matthew 16 and say, "This is our creed, 'I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of the Living God, because you see, we have no creed, but Christ.'" And he'll say, "Come on, what book do you have that separates you from other religions." "The only book that we have is the Bible. We believe that the Bible is God's Holy Word." Then he'll say, "Everyone believes in the Bible. What name do you wear that distinguishes you from other followers of Christ?" Of course you say, "We don't have any name at all to wear to differentiate ourselves from other followers of Christ. We just simply wear His name because in Acts 11:26 the disciples were called Christians first at Antioch and I Peter 4:16 says, 'If any man shall suffer as a Christian let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this name,' and in Acts 4:12 it says there is no other name under Heaven given among men whereby we must be saved." The questioner will say, "I know you must belong to some denomination. Surely you must have headquarters someplace. Where are your headquarters located?" "In Heaven. That's the only headquarters for the Christian Church."

We who are members of the Christian Church are not trying to be difficult. We are not trying to be argumentative. We are simply trying to stick true to our motto, "Where the Bible speaks . . . we speak. Where the Bible is silent . . . we are silent." In things essential we must look to the Bible for thus sayeth the Lord. We must call Bible things by Bible names.

In denominational circles they may refer to the Lord's Supper as the "Eucharist" or they may refer to it as the "sacrament" or the "wine." Of course those are all unscriptural terms for the Lord's Supper. We simply call it the "Lord's Table" or the "Lord's Sup-

per.” We don’t refer to it as the “wine” because no place in the Bible is the Lord’s Supper called “wine.” It is referred to as the “fruit of the vine,” the bread and the fruit of the vine representing the broken body and the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We are very particular to insist upon referring to Bible things by Bible names, even down to the preacher of the church. Sometimes people will ask, “What is your title?” Of course, I don’t have any title. I don’t want any title. You can just call me by my name or you can call me “Preacher,” because that is what I am; a preacher of the Gospel. Or you can call me “Brother,” because I am your brother in Christ. But I am not the Reverend. You know how it is in denominational circles, they call the preachers, “Reverend.” Well, we insist on calling Bible things by Bible names. There is only one time in the Bible that you read that word Reverend and that is in reference to God. The psalms say, “Holy and Reverend is His Name.” No man here on earth can be equal to God therefore we, as preachers, will not call ourselves Reverend. We will simply be called “preachers of the Gospel” or “Ministers of Christ,” which means servant, just like any Christian is a minister of Jesus Christ.

These are the essentials . . . belief in God, belief in Jesus Christ as the Son of God, belief in the Church of Christ that Jesus established in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost, the belief in the ordinances of the church—the Lord’s Supper and Christian baptism as they are taught in the Bible. And “Where the Bible speaks . . . we speak. Where the Bible is silent . . . we are silent.”

There’s not much difficulty when we appeal to the essentials because scripture backs up every point. Now let’s come to the difficult part . . . the non-essentials.

III. The Non-Essentials

“Where the Bible is silent . . . we are silent.” Another way of saying it is, “In matters of opinion . . . Liberty.” Each member has the right to their own opinion wherever the Bible has not spoken. Isn’t it tragic the number of divisions that have been brought into the church over things that are not even found in the Bible?

What did Thomas Campbell mean when he said, "Where the Bible is silent . . . we are silent"? The first part of the motto was a declaration of loyalty to Jesus Christ and every teaching of His Word. The second part of the motto asserted human freedom in matters of opinion. It was a declaration of independence on the part of Thomas Campbell from religious dictators. It's a very true principle and it applied correctly brings wonderful results, but if applied wrongly brings disastrous results.

Interesting Stories

From the early days of the Restoration comes a very amusing story about a pioneer who was going out west. At the evening time he was tired and worn out, so he stopped at a farm home and asked if he could spend the night. The Christian people who lived there very graciously said, "Yes. Welcome to our home." He ate supper with them. As it came time to go to bed, the host spoke up and said, "As we are a Christian family, we always have family devotions at our house before we retire for the night. We would like to invite you to join in our family devotions." This early Restoration pioneer got very nervous and said, "Now see here, I believe that we must follow the Bible and the Bible is silent on the matter of family devotions. I do not find anywhere in the Bible where the New Testament Church had family devotions. Because nothing is mentioned in the scriptures about family devotions, I will have you to know that I'm against it and I'm not going to join in with you in any family devotions, because we ought to keep quiet where the Bible is silent."

The fellow had misunderstood the motto. It says, "Where the Bible speaks . . . we speak. Where the Bible is silent . . . we are silent," but he said, "Where the Bible is silent, that is where I'm going to preach." He caused a division in the Body of Christ over something that the Bible doesn't even mention.

One of the earliest editorials of J.H. Garrison was to refute a

letter that had been written in over the matter of church baptisteries. It seems as though one dear brother got all upset and he wrote in and he said, "What is this business about having a box in the church in which to baptize people? When you read in the New Testament you find that Jesus was baptized in the flowing stream in the Jordan River. No one read anything in the Bible about a box in the church, where you would baptize people and therefore I'm against these baptisteries." He caused a great big division over having a baptismal pool in the church building simply because you don't read anything about it in the Bible. His motto was, "Where the Bible is silent . . . I'm going to preach and cause a division in the church."

The story goes on. There were those who caused divisions over the Sunday School. The argument goes "you find nothing in the New Testament about the Sunday School, therefore, we're against it." And then some churches divided over the question of music in the church. They said, "Where do you read anything in the New Testament about instrumental music in the church? Therefore, we're going to preach about it." They caused a great big division over it. Then there were those who said, "Where do you read anything in the New Testament about Bible Colleges? It's not there, therefore, we're going to be against the Bible Colleges." They started another denomination over that. Then, of course, we get down to the subject of women. Some people said, "Where do you read anything in the New Testament about women putting lipstick on their lips?" So they started preaching against lipstick and you have whole denominations built on anti-lipstick. And, then in more modern times, there's been a great division caused over women wearing slacks to church. Some churches have actually split over that and they've said, "There is nothing in the Bible about it, therefore, we're going to be against it." I even heard about one church that divided because they read that verse in the Bible, where Paul says, "Let the women keep silent in the churches." Now, of course, it would take a whole sermon to deal on that one verse alone and we cannot get into that now, but the point is that

somebody took that verse literally without understanding what Paul was talking about. And, so, whenever a woman comes forward in that church to accept Christ as her Savior and to be baptized, they take her outside the church building and let her confess Christ outside the building because it says, "let the women keep silent in the church." It is completely ridiculous when you find the harm that has been done to Christendom by the abuse of such a noble motto, "Where the Bible is silent . . . we are silent."

Restoring the Original Property Lines

There was an old pioneer who moved from North Carolina to Central Tennessee. He staked out his homestead. He cleared the land. He built his cabin. He farmed the land for many years. Then the old pioneer died. He had a will and he left his homestead to his children. But his children had scattered far and wide. They were living in many different places in America. They were each busy with their own lives, with their own families. They did not have time to go to central Tennessee to lay claim to their rightful possession, their father's homestead.

So, as the years came and went, other homesteaders moved in and they encroached on the property lines of the old homestead. One man on the north began to farm part of the land. Another man on the south began to farm this part of the land. Another man on the west began to farm this part of the land and pretty soon the old fences were torn down and new fences were erected and eventually all former traces of that old homestead disappeared.

Then one day the children decided to go to central Tennessee and claim the homestead that was rightfully theirs. You can imagine the trouble that erupted as they tried to re-establish those original property lines. There were all kinds of arguments that developed with the neighbors. The man on the north wasn't happy because he had developed an orchard on the land that was disputed. The fellow on the south wasn't happy because if the original prop-

erty lines were restored it would cut out a spring out of his property. This fellow in the west wasn't happy because he had built some buildings on the land.

Finally, the state of Tennessee had to appoint a state surveyor. He came with the original papers outlining the homestead. The original lines all started at a certain oak tree which was very prominent in that section of Tennessee. So, the first job of the state surveyors was to find that very oak tree. As you might have guessed, someone had cut that tree down. However, the stump of the tree remained. Because of the description of the geography that was in the original papers, there was no doubt in anyone's mind. They were able to find the stump of the original oak tree where the original lines were drawn. Using their surveying instruments, they were able to re-establish and restore the original property lines of that homestead and the heirs of the property were able to claim what was rightfully theirs.

The neighbors continued to fuss. One lost his orchard. Another lost his creek. One lost the buildings he built. And another lost some valuable pieces of land that he had been farming. But the point is that the original lines were restored. Therefore, the owners claimed what was rightfully theirs.

The Holy Spirit—The Heavenly Surveyor

Many, Many years ago beginning in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost, Jesus Christ staked out His claim of the Church of Christ. He left His church for each one of us. But down through the years denominations came along and they erected denominational fences. They wrote their denominational creeds. They put up their denominational rituals and church laws until finally people were so confused that no one could find the original church.

That was the situation in the 1700's when the early restorers came on the scene and they said, "What we have to do is go back of the denominationalism. We've got to cut down the brush that has

grown up and has obliterated the original property lines. We've got to go back of the Roman Catholicism. We've got to go all the way back to the original oak stump at Pentecost. We must allow the Holy Spirit, the Heavenly surveyor, to restore the original lines of the church by going back, directly to the pure source of the truth, the Word of God, the foundation of the original church. It was there all the time. You see, what each one of us must make up our minds to do is to restore ourselves to the truth of God's Word, to restore ourselves to the old church that Jesus Himself built on the Day of Pentecost. It is there for us to be a part of. All of its promises are there for us to claim if we are willing to put ourselves into the glorious work of restoration. But to do it properly we must distinguish between things essential and things non-essential. Where the Bible speaks . . . we must be willing to submit ourselves to God's Word in obedience. When the Bible is silent and it's a matter of opinion, we must allow everybody the right to their own opinion. We must not make any church laws governing people when they have a right to their own opinion."

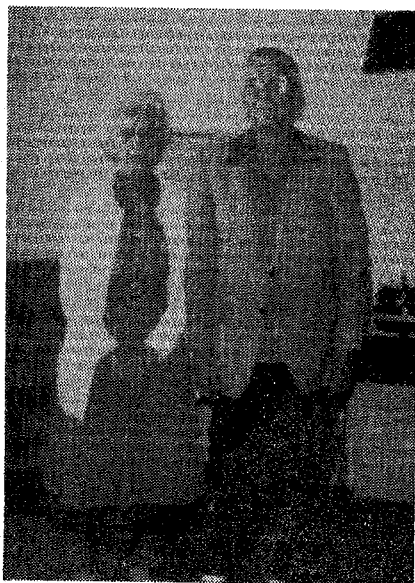


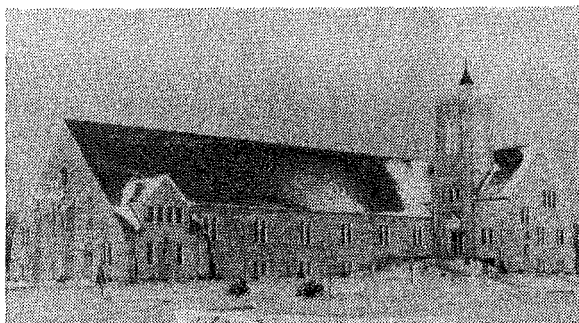
above: Reggie, 12 years old, won the blue ribbon at the Missouri State Fair, Sedalia, MO 1941.



top right: A.R. and Florence Thomas, Barbara, and Reggie

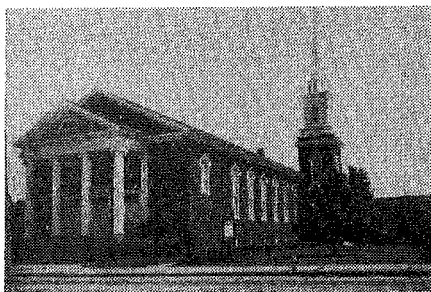
right: A.R. and Florence Thomas



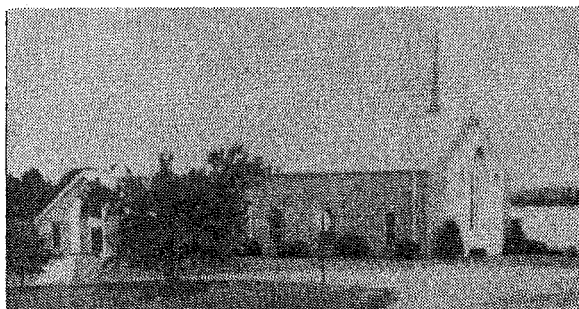


Catlin Church of Christ, Catlin, IL.
This beautiful building erected and paid for in full during Reggie's ministry 1955-1961

East Point Christian Church, East Point, GA. Reggie Thomas, minister 1961-1966



Sugar Tree Ridge Church of Christ, Sugar Tree Ridge, OH. Reggie Thomas, minister 1947-1951

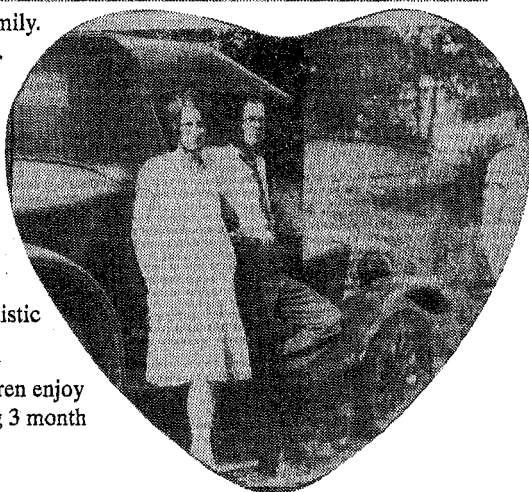


Hickory Valley Christian Church, Chattanooga, TN
Reggie Thomas, minister 1979-1987



above: The Reggie Thomas Family.
Christmas family reunion 1994.
8 children, 25 grandchildren.

right: A.R. and Florence
Thomas in 1928. Reggie was
still "inside" his mother!



below left: The Rosvitt twins
and Arthur Morris, long time
missionary to India, pose with
Reggie during 3 month evangelistic
campaign in India in 1971

below right: The Thomas children enjoy
friendly giraffe in Africa during 3 month
evangelistic campaign in 1968





Reggie Thomas
at 9 months--1930

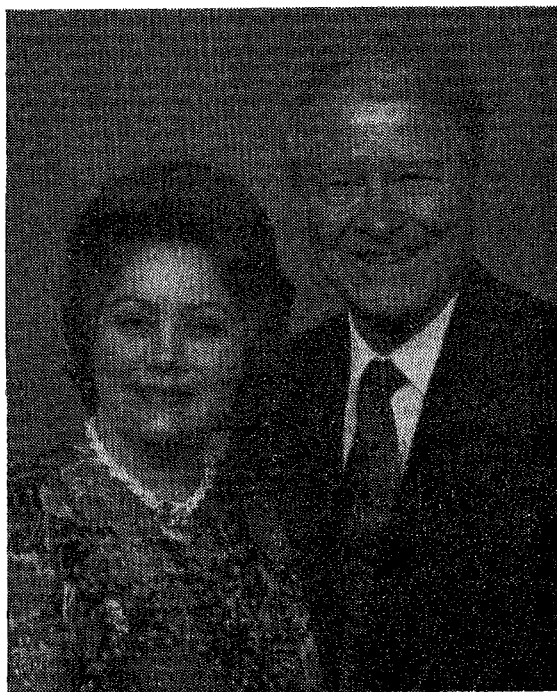


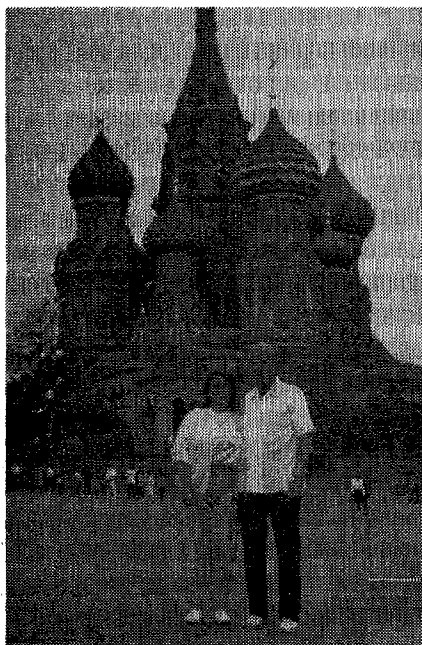
Reggie, 18 yrs. old--1947
Minister, North Miami
Christian, Miami, OK



Reggie, 26 yrs. old--1955
Minister, Catlin, IL
Church of Christ

Reggie and his
"beloved" Esther
Reggie's 50th year in
the ministry--1995





Love from Moscow—
Reggie and Esther

With love from the
Great Wall of China—
Reggie and Esther



ISAAC ERRETT
Founder

STANDARD

DEVOTED TO THE RESTORATION OF PRIMITIVE CHRISTIANITY, ITS DOCTRINE, ITS ORDINANCES AND ITS FRUITS

Teen-agers Did It in Oklahoma

The appealing story of how Minister Russell L. Martin, of Miami, Okla., led his young people into greater service right at their own doorstep



Above: Lloyd Cameron.
Right: Reggie Thomas.



REGGIE THOMAS and Lloyd Cameron, members of the teenage group of the Miami (Okla.) First Christian Church, had long worked in the youth department of the local church until Minister Russell Martin outlined a greater task for them. He suggested that they and the other members of their group reopen the closed Christian church in North Miami, a village of about five hundred people, located a mile out of Miami. The church had been closed for some time and was used only as a voting place, location for second-hand sales by civic groups, etc. The roof had a number of holes in it, the ceiling had broken loose in a half-dozen places, the walls were weather-streaked, and only two windows were not broken.

The Miami congregation agreed to supply the necessary funds to reopen and to maintain as a mission the North Miami church, but assigned the work in the young people. They accepted the challenge and, with Mr. Martin, went to visit the families of North Miami who were still interested in the church. Two weeks were spent in making a door-to-door canvass, and a few days were devoted to the distribution to every home in the community of hand bills announcing the reopening of the church.

First service was held the second Sunday of July, 1946. Despite the hot, sticky, Oklahoma weather, the attendance averaged from forty to fifty during July and August, and that average has been maintained all through the past year, during which twenty-three have been added to the membership.

Reggie Thomas does the preaching and Lloyd Cameron directs the singing and arranges special music at the two o'clock Lord's Day afternoon services. The Lord's Supper is spread each Sunday, and there is a Bible school following the preaching service. Mrs. Louise Lacy, of the Miami church, teaches the adults, and Billie Rogers, the young people. Sarah Kraybill, another Miami teen-ager, is the faithful piano player, and other members of the youth group serve as ushers, at the registrar's desk, and assist with the special music.

Reggie and Lloyd conducted a two-week revival at North Miami during their Christmas vacation last year, and will devote every night of their current summer vacation, with the exception of a single week, to similar activity among outlying churches of the Miami area.

These two seventeen-year-olds, both of whom will begin training for full-time Christian service in the fall, carry their zest for life into their high-school work. Each has won high scholastic honors. Each plays in the band, which Lloyd directs when the music professor is away. They are interested in baseball, basketball, and football, and are kept quite busy by their many activities, but they are willing to cancel almost any engagement for the church. They spend one evening each week making calls in the interest of the North Miami work. Mr. Martin states that through their influence many of the members of the Miami youth group have been won to Christ.

Today the building of the North Miami church presents an appearance quite different from that of a year ago. The roof has been repaired, the interior painted, and glass installed in all of the windows.

Mr. Martin says that the Miami church will sponsor a similar work at Welch before the summer is over. This, too, will involve the complete rehabilitation of the building. It also will mean that many more Miami church members will receive practical experience in soul-winning and church building.



The North Miami Christian Church



50 YEARS IN THE MINISTRY

During 1995, Reggie Thomas is celebrating 50 years as a preacher of the Gospel. He began his ministry as a 16 year old in December 1945. Here is a brief outline summary of his 50 years of preaching:

December 1945-May 1947 Preaching minister, North Miami, OK Christian Church

August 1947-May 1951 Preaching minister,
Sugar Tree Ridge, OH Church of Christ

August 1947-May 1951 Preaching minister, Higginsport, OH Christian Church
(This four year period Reggie served both congregations.
It was known as a "half time" ministry.)

May 1951-March 1955 National evangelist with
Christian Restoration Association

March 1955-April 1961 Preaching minister, Catlin, IL Church of Christ

April 1961-July 1966 Preaching minister, East Point, GA Christian Church

August 1966-Nov. 1979 International evangelist, overseas evangelism

December 1979-May 1987 Preaching minister,
Hickory Valley Christian Church, Chattanooga, TN

June 1987-present International evangelist, overseas evangelism

During the past 29 years Reggie has preached and directed great crusades in six continents of the world. In Africa he has preached to some of the most primitive people on earth and thousands were baptized. In India, he preached to the world's largest leper village. He has criss-crossed Australia and New Zealand and has preached on many islands of the seas. He was preaching in Chile, South America at the time of the attempted coup, June 30, 1973. He has also evangelized extensively in Russia and China. He has traveled over three million miles, preaching the Gospel of Jesus literally AROUND THE WORLD. He has a thrilling story to tell about what God has done in overseas evangelism. Since 1966 Mr. Thomas has traveled in 66 different countries of the world. To date, over 227,000 souls have been baptized into Christ as a part of this overseas ministry.



On January 9, 1988 the Kerala Christian Bible College, Ayoor, India, bestowed the honorary Doctor of Divinity Degree upon Reggie in recognition of 22 years of dedicated evangelistic crusades worldwide. The degree was also granted in appreciation for 22 trips to India.

Many people have shared in these crusades including his family. His dedicated wife, Esther, travels with him in his meetings.

Reggie and Esther are thankful for their eight children and their twenty-five grandchildren.