

WHAT DOES ETERNITY HOLD?

- * Announce Gospel Meeting at Mt. Zion Church of Christ (Mackville)
- * Sunday through Friday July 29-August 3
- *Bible Study 10:00AM, Worship 11:00AM, Each evening 7:30PM

INTRO: What is eternity like? Is it beyond our comprehension? Eternity is like looking out at a horizon which has no end... like the dawning of a new day in which there is no setting sun... It is a concept that boggles the finite, limited human mind.

When we think of eternity we think of illustrations... like if an ant were to walk across a string tied from the earth to the moon carrying in its mouth a grain of sand, and then were to come back and repeat the process until the entire earth was moved to the moon, then the first day of eternity would still not have passed! Boggles the mind doesn't it? The problem with that illustration is that we are still having to think about it in terms of time. God created time to measure life in this world... there ~~is~~ no such thing as time in eternity.

Understanding just what eternity means to our existence should serve as fair warning to us that we are on the threshold of entering just such an existence... and we have two choices as to where we will spend it (Matthew 7:13-14). Those are the choices. Many would like to think that if we are wicked we will just be annihilated and that will be the end of us in an eternal sleep. That is not one of the choices.

Heaven and hell... that's all there is!! Let me tell you about them... then it is up to you to decide which one you are going to prepare for!

I. HEAVEN

A. Heaven Is More Splendid Than Any Place Man Has Ever Seen. Words cannot adequately describe its beauty, glory, and splendor. But without having seen it ourselves, what more than words can even attempt to express it?

1. **Heaven Is A Dwelling-Place With God (John 14:1-3).** There within God's house, a place where we will be in His presence.
2. **Heaven Is A Place Of Eternal Life (Revelation 21:4).** There the pain of death and separation will never again be felt, and the tears we shed in this life will be dried up.
3. **Heaven Holds A Better And Enduring Substance (Hebrews 10:34; 11:16).** It cannot be taken away from us. Whatever treasures this world offers us, heaven has greater treasures which cannot be destroyed or taken away (Matthew 6:19-20).
4. **Heaven Is A Marvelous Place Of Beauty And Holiness (Revelation 21:1-4,22-27; 22:1-5).** No words can describe heaven's glory any greater than those of the apostle John who gives us this view of the vision he saw.

B. Hell Is More Terrible Than Any Place You Can Imagine. Do you frighten easily? If you have seen any horror movies at the theater or at home on video or cable, you have likely been terrified by the evil that is depicted on those shows. Try to think of a place more frightening and terrible than any of those.

1. **Hell Is A Place Of Eternal Torment (Matthew 25:41,46).** Picture a torment and torture that never ends!
2. **Hell Is A Furnace Of Fire (Matthew 13:49-50).** The apostle John, speaking of the eternal state of the wicked, described hell as a lake of fire and brimstone (Revelation 20:11-15; 21:8).
Don't bother concerning yourself with how fire can burn a spirit. If God can change our bodies to dwell in a spiritual place, then He can change fire to burn spirit beings!! Let's not limit God by our own limited comprehension!
3. **Hell Is A Place Of Desolation (Mark 9:43-48).** It is a spiritual dumping ground, a garbage heap of human souls that are defiled and spoiled. It is a place where the worm (maggot) does not die because of the eternal supply of souls to feed upon. It is an outer darkness where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth (Matthew 25:30; 2 Peter 2:17).
4. **Hell Is A Place Where The Greatest Joy Would Be a Complete Extinction.** But it will never happen. There the greatest blessing would be a relief from the pain and suffering. But it will never happen.

CONCLUSION: Dear listener... we don't have to believe in heaven or hell... but that will not make them any less real. There is a heaven and there is a hell and the most important thing we can do in this life is prepare ourselves for our eternal existence in one or the other.

Won't you prepare to be with God in heaven. We must start by believing in Jesus, repenting of our sins, and being baptized in water to wash them away (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 22:16). Then live faithfully the rest of your life and there is waiting for you a crown of life (Revelation 2:10).

ARE YOU WILLING TO DIE THAT YOU MIGHT LIVE?

* Announce Gospel Meeting With Bob Buchanan

* Series on Satanism August 19-24

INTRO: Are you willing to die that you might live? That's right! Are you willing to die in order to gain life? That doesn't seem possible, but one must truly die, to self and sin, before he can experience the kind of life that Jesus brings.

Modern day heroes are those willing to hazard their lives and even die for a cause. How noble are those hearts!! But which is harder? Courageously dying once for our God, country, or fellowmen, or dying every day for God... that we might live in order to die again? The apostle Paul said "I die daily" (1 Corinthians 15:31). Such sacrifice is the crux of discipleship!!

I. DYING FOR CHRIST

A. Jesus' Sacrifice. No greater sacrifice was ever made than the one that Jesus made years ago at Calvary (John 15:13). Jesus lived all His years in anticipation of His eventual death by crucifixion. He died for us and now we owe Him a debt... we must die for Him.

B. Our Sacrifice. Jesus made no apologies when He told us the only way to be His disciple is to die (Matthew 16:24-25).

1. Jesus does not speak of being slain by the sword for His sake. Rather, we must die every hour we live. We must deny ourselves. We must bear our heavy crosses for Him. We must throw away ourselves, leave our sins behind, and fill our hearts with Jesus Christ.

We must become vessels in which He resides and works among men. Then we can have life like man can never experience apart from Christ (Galatians 2:20).

2. That kind of life begins with faith (John 3:16; 1 John 5:1). Faith in Christ and His message help us see ourselves as we really are -- sinners in need of God's grace.

Repentance comes as we reject the life of sin, feeling remorse and making a change (Acts 17:30; 2:38).

Then we submit to baptism... just as Jesus died, was buried, and then arose to a new life, we leave that "old man" the "body of sin" in the watery grave, and are "raised to walk in newness of life", dead to sin and alive to God (Romans 6:3-11). Jesus spoke of such a renewal of life as being "born again" (John 3:3-5).

3. Our hearts die to everything they once beat for. We become dead to our desires (Galatians 5:24). We die to the world and live for Christ (Galatians 6:14). Every breath we take is now wrapped up in Jesus Christ (Philippians 1:21).

Everything we once considered important has lost its glitter

and now the beauty of Christ allures us (Philippians 3:7-8).

4. Jesus has become the focal point of my life (Romans 14:8). He is the cornerstone, the very foundation of our existence. He is our example after whom we should pattern our lives (1 Peter 2:21). Living for Jesus must be a total surrender... not giving Him partial access to the throne of my heart, but stepping down and setting Jesus on that throne.

CONCLUSION: Someone has said "It doesn't take much of a man to be a Christian... it just takes all of him that there is". In essence, Jesus says "You give it all to me. You commit your entire being into my care, and I will give you life like you cannot experience any other way".

He said "I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly" (John 10:10). Quite a challenge, isn't it? Do you seek the "abundant life"? Do you want to bring meaning into your existence? Then are you willing to die that you might live?

WHAT MUST I DO TO BE SAVED?

- * Announce Gospel Meeting With Bob Buchanan
- * Series On Satanism August 19-24

INTRO: The most important question ever asked by inquisitive men is "What must I do to be saved?" The answer is so vital to our spiritual life that no one should ever reject or even question God's answer.

Salvation is the greatest goal of human life (Matthew 16:26). Who can claim that his salvation is deserved? Of course no one can make such a claim!! God does not have to offer us salvation, but by His grace He does (Ephesians 2:8). What terrible ingrates we will be to refuse to meet God's conditions for receiving that salvation!!

If we were to poll a group of generally religious people we would receive various answers to the question "What must I do to be saved?" But what does God say about this matter in the Bible? That is all that matters! Let us cast aside our opinions and listen to the answers supplied by Jesus Christ, His holy apostles and prophets.

How did they answer the question of concerned men when asked "What must I do to be saved?"?

I. WHAT MUST I DO TO BE SAVED?

A. Rich Young Ruler. A rich young ruler anxiously came to Jesus asking the soul-searching question "Good Teacher, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?" (Mark 10:17). One could not find a better moral man than this one — he had kept God's commandments from his early youth. What did Jesus tell him (Mark 10:21)?

Friend, He doesn't ask anything less of us! We must give up everything that stands between us and Christ, then we must bear our own burdens. We must sacrifice our entire being to Christ, holding back nothing if we would receive salvation!! Will you do it?? After examining the alternatives (eternal death and punishment), is there really a choice??

B. Jews On Day Of Pentecost. Peter's sermon on the day of Pentecost convicted the Jews of their sin in killing God's Son, and pricked their heart. They realized their guilt and longed to know how God could deliver them from their dilemma. They asked Peter and the rest of the apostles "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" (Acts 2:37).

The answer to their inquiry should concern us also because we too stand as sinners in God's sight. The inspired apostle told them what to do (Acts 2:38).

These people did not try to earn their salvation, but they did obey God's commands without any reservations (Acts 2:41). If we are desiring the wonderful gift of salvation, should we question or refuse such plain commands of God?

C. Philippian Jailer. Paul and Silas were beaten and imprisoned in the city of Philippi. They prayed and sang hymns while suffering in their cold, damp jail cell. Suddenly, about midnight, an earthquake rocked the foundations of the jail, the doors were opened, and the prisoner's

chains were loosed. The jailer was ready to take his life because he was roused from his sleep and was sure his prisoners had escaped. Paul admonished him not to kill himself. Then, knowing that Paul and Silas served a god greater than his, he asked them "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" (Acts 16:30).

Until that day, this Gentile had probably never heard of God, much less His Son Jesus Christ. He was instructed to believe (Acts 16:31). Paul and Silas proceeded to teach unto them this Jesus who was unknown to them.

The jailer exhibited repentance by cleansing the stripes from the beatings inflicted on these two preacher's backs. The jailer's household was then baptized, just as all the others converted in the Book of Acts. Joy came upon that household after they complied with God's terms of pardon (Acts 16:33-34).

Did the jailer debate with Paul and Silas about what he must do? Salvation was such a tremendous privilege offered to him that he believed, repented and was baptized without question!! Can we expect to do any less?

CONCLUSION: God has done the hard part for us... He has formulated a plan for our salvation (see Romans 3:23-26). His conditions for pardon have not changed since the early days of the church. If God requires each of these conditions for salvation, are any of them optional? Many people tell us they are!!

We can accept God's answer to the question "What shall I do to be saved?" or we can accept man's. Which will you accept (Matthew 15:8-9)? What must you do to be saved?

ATTITUDES TOWARD SIN AND ERROR

INTRO: Sin is the greatest contagion, the deadliest disease in the world. But you don't hear many people getting in too big an uproar about it! You hear about AIDS everyday, and the chances are that one or two people in Mercer County may contract the disease. But you don't hear much about sin which is a cancer that every person suffers and dies from daily.

The time eventually comes when sin and error have become so bad they run free course in the heart of men (2 Timothy 4:3-4). We need to check it, to stop it before it goes that far. And the only way we can actively do that is by developing a proper attitude toward sin and error.

Sin is real... and maybe that is where we need to start. Sin is an integral part of your life! I know you are a good person... I know you have a nice personality... and personally, I like all the people I have met who listen to this radio program... but I also know you have sin in your life and you are a sinner (1 John 1:8-10; Romans 3:23).

Until we come to grips with and accept that truth, it is going to handicap and destroy our lives... sin is your personal problem! (I am a preacher of the gospel. I have devoted my life to doing that for 9 years now. I have learned a lot about the Bible and about life... I understand a great deal about God's will for man... and I have a chance to be around a lot of positive influences... But do you know what my biggest personal problem is? I am a sinner!! I commit shameful and inexcusable acts before God and think the most vile and wicked thoughts... God be merciful to me the sinner!)

What is your attitude toward sin and error? What should it be?

I. DENY THEM

A. Sometimes We Deny Them. We give everyone a right to their own belief and lifestyle, denying that there is even such a thing as false teaching or sin, and if there are then they are very difficult to find except maybe in a crazed degenerate or some cultic false teacher. Denying sin in our own lives or others is absurd!!

1. The Pharisees. Generally, he was quick to see sin in everyone else's life, but was blind to his own sin. He appeared righteous, and to look at his life there were no apparent outward sins (he didn't murder, steal other men's wives, or anything like that). But inwardly the sin was glaringly obvious (Matthew 23:27-28).

He thought he was above sin and denied it in his own life, while freely admitting it in the lives of other people (Luke 18:9-14). And all the time, he was as guilty as anyone else.

2. King Ahab. He was perhaps the most wicked, idolatrous king of Israel's history. The prophet Elijah proclaimed to the king that there would be a drought on the land which lasted three years. Ahab refused to admit his sin but blamed it all on Elijah (1 Kings 18:17-18).

That's what a lot of us do. Show us sin in our lives and we

deny it or shift the blame to someone else. That is a poor response, but a common one!

We cannot deny sin in our lives... it will only make us a greater sinner!! Because then we add to it the sin of lying!!

II. IGNORE THEM

A. **Pretend They Don't Exist.** When we come face to face with sin in ourselves, each other, or the church, what do we do? Ignore them? Sweep them under the rug? Sin is no less dangerous because it is ignored than when it is blatantly committed!

1. Belshazzar. He was the last king of the Babylonian nation. His grandfather, Nebuchadnezzar, had been brought low in his pride and caused to graze the grass like an animal. But he had ignored that lesson from God about the consequences of sin (Daniel 5:18-23).
2. The Jews. Jesus came into the midst of a people who had long before ignored the guilt of their sins and deadened their senses, having closed their eyes and ears to the truth (Matthew 13:13-15).

III. LIVE WITH THEM

A. **We Can Try To Live With Sin.** But that will have one of two effects (neither of which is good).

1. If we remain righteous, it will torment us night and day, living in the midst of the wickedness of sin (2 Peter 2:7-8). We'll have no peace. We'll be torn, caught in the middle between wickedness and righteousness, each pulling us a different way!
2. Or its influence will corrupt us and make us unrighteous (1 Corinthians 15:33). Lot's sons-in-law laughed, his wife looked back, and his daughters committed incest with him.
You cannot work in dirt without getting dirty. If you lie down with dogs, you rise up with fleas.

IV. OPPOSE THEM

A. **We Must Oppose Sin And Error.** That takes courage and love... love for the truth and the souls of men. The sooner we realize that and develop that attitude, the sooner we can do something pleasing to God!

1. Paul. The apostle was not afraid to stand for truth and oppose sin and error. He didn't flinch or falter. At the end of his life he could truthfully say he had "fought the good fight" (2 Timothy 4:7-8).

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2. Jesus Christ. Jesus always loves the sinner but hated the sin. He is also the great champion of truth. He showed mercy, but pulled no punches when pointing out sin.

CONCLUSION: Sin and error are very real and very prevalent. You are going to come in contact with it every day. What will be your response? Will you deny it in yourself and others? Will you ignore it and just let it go? Will you try to live with sin and error? Or will you oppose it and stand on God's side?

The choice is your, but Jesus said "He who is not with me is against me".

FOOLISH THINGS

INTRO: Court jesters were foolish people in medieval times who made their living doing foolish things in the king's court today. Comedians today do the same thing... the Three Stooges are classic examples... Laurel and Hardy... and today we have David Letterman!

This lesson does not concern the foolish things these men, or any of us do. But in this lesson about "foolish things" we will be talking about things God does which people think are foolish. We better be sure we know, by the end of this lesson, that anything God does is a result of His great wisdom (Romans 11:33; 1 Corinthians 1:27). Anything He commands us to do has a good reason whether we understand it or not!!

I. SOME THINGS THE WORLD CONSIDERS "FOOLISH"

- A. Building An Ark.** Now there was a real "bright idea". It had likely never rained before Noah's time (Genesis 2:6). Noah preached to the people 120 years that a flood was coming (2 Peter 2:5).

Then he and his sons began cutting down trees, buying lumber and equipment, and hauling it out into the middle of this big field.

What... has Noah gone insane? He said that God told him to build this ark... Yeah, I'll bet He told him, right after Noah finished off that bottle of wine!

For decades, Noah became known as the "town lunatic". They laughed at that fool for a whole week after Noah and his family held up in that huge boat with all those animals. They laughed and mocked until they felt that first drop of rain fall from the sky... Then who was shown to be the fools??

- B. Smiting A Rock.** The children of Israel were traveling from Egypt to Mt. Sinai. They got thirsty and started complaining about water (Exodus 17:1-7).

Moses cried out for God's assistance and God told him what to do. He gathered the people together and intended to bring water forth from the rock in Rephidim.

"Water from a rock, huh? Right Moses! That's the craziest thing we ever heard of!!" Until Moses struck the rock and water poured out of it like a faucet until the last one had drunk and filled his skins and waterpots.

Striking a rock for water seems foolish, but the man who has faith in God knows to do God's word regardless of the sense. There was no power in Moses' rod... the power was in faith and obedience to God's command!!

- C. Brazen Serpent.** Again the people complained and this time it sparked God's hot displeasure against them (Numbers 21:4-9). He sent fiery serpents among them which bit and killed many of the people.

The people begged Moses to approach God for them with their confessions of sin and bring a remedy.

Moses did approach God with their request, then got busy fashioning a serpent made of bronze for them to look upon -- What a

foolish, crazy solution to this problem!! Some probably didn't look on it.

It may have appeared foolish, but it worked! That is how God separates those who have faith from those who don't!

- D. **Walls Of Jericho.** The nation of Israel, a basically non-military nation, was entering the land that God had promised. "Joshua, what's going to be our battle strategy (Joshua 6:1-7)?
- "Right, cut the clowning, don't be ridiculous". But that was the battle strategy! It sounds foolish. The people on the wall laughed until they couldn't laugh anymore.
- Man's wisdom would say siege the city, batter down the doors, or dig under the walls... God says "March around the city". Faith in God's word rather than man's wisdom brought the walls down (Hebrews 11:30).
- The power came by doing God's will... It may have seemed foolish, but it was the only thing that would have worked!!
- E. **Naaman's Leprosy.** Naaman came to the prophet Elisha to be healed of his leprosy (2 Kings 5:1-14). Dipping in the Jordan River seemed foolish to him. Dipping in any river seemed foolish to him, but if he had to dip in a river, he thought something else would do just as well if not better!
- It was not until he had enough faith to do what he was commanded to that he was healed.

II. SOME "FOOLISH" THINGS WHICH CONCERN US

- A. **Cross Of Christ.** Many look on the cross with disdain. How could a man dying like a criminal save us in heaven? What kind of foolish idea is that (1 Corinthians 1:18).
- Those living in Jesus' day scoffed at the idea of a Savior who must die at the hands of men — sheer foolishness!! Modern man is too "rational" to accept such foolishness. But those of us who know the power of God glory in the cross (1 Corinthians 1:23-24; Galatians 6:14). The cross is not foolishness... it is my hope of salvation.
- B. **God's Word.** Our modern intellectual giants reject the Bible as irrelevant, musty, and outdated. It's stories are old wife's tales and legends handed down over the centuries. They believe it is full of contradictions and only the naive and foolish accept it as truth!
- It is truth... It transforms lives (1 Peter 1:22-25). It is not just a collection of outdated laws and foolish philosophies of the ancient past. It is God's power unto salvation (Romans 1:16)!!
- C. **Preaching.** Some people think preachers are the most foolish people around... and that they are concerned with impressing a foolish religious message and principle on people. But it is God's way (1 Corinthians 1:21)!!

D. **Baptism.** Baptism is one of the most foolish of God's commands in the minds of some. "How can anyone be saved from sin by getting wet?" They say there is no power in the water to save a man... I have to agree!! The power is in the obedience to God's command (Colossians 2:12). It is God's work that saves us when we are baptized!!

There is as much power in the water to save as there was in the water that cleansed the leprosy, footsteps that toppled the walls, and rod to being water from a rock!!

The power is found in the faith that led these men to obey God's command!

CONCLUSION: These things, provided to us in the fulness of God's wisdom are for our salvation. Not one of them is foolish!

But I will tell you what is foolish... Refusing to obey God's commands... now that is foolish (Matthew 7:21-23)!! Don't decide that you are not going to do something because it seems to you to be foolish!! If God said do it, it is the most important thing you can do!!

THE SORROWS OF OLD AGE WITHOUT THE LORD

INTRO: Some of the happiest and most enjoyable people you could ever be around are older folks... and some of the most miserable and bitter people that we could ever encounter are older folks.

Some are obsessed with the idea that every silver lining has a dark cloud, while others see it the other way around.

All of us try to achieve certain things in the hope that they will bring meaning and fulfillment to life. Among those things, men try to obtain wealth, a fine family to carry on his name, and long life. Most think that attaining these things will bring us joy and happiness, but it is a common thing that they do not (Ecclesiastes 6:1-6).

I. A MAN'S ATTAINMENTS

A. Riches, Wealth, And Honor (6:2). Yet, the rest of the verse shows that possessions and the ability to enjoy them are not necessarily joined together! With many, this is the ultimate accomplishment in life... but if one's soul is not filled with good then a miscarried child is better than he.

B. Great Posterity (6:3). His ability to procreate fine sons and daughters means nothing if the Lord is not first in his life and he has not seen the goodness which comes from the hand of God (6:3-5).

C. Long Life (6:6). Longevity is meaningless. Life only has as much value as it yields in enduring joy. Methuselah lived to be 969 years old, but what joy did he have? Methuselah died in the flood of Noah's time, evidently unfaithful to God. Whereas Jesus lived only 33 years. His joy is enduring (Hebrews 12:2).

You see, counting time is not nearly as important as making time count!

D. These Things Alone Cannot Fill His Soul With Good. Even with all of them, there is still something missing. This man's life is still filled with sorrow.

What are some of the sorrows of the man who has passed through life and "his soul is not filled with good"?

II. THE SORROWS OF THE MAN WHO SOUL IS NOT FILLED WITH GOOD

A. He Has Passed Through A Life, That Upon Reflection, Gives Him No Comfort. The bad memories which cannot be shut out, bring to him their load of sorrows. He cannot escape his past (Ecclesiastes 12:1). The faithful can look back with pleasure and serenity but what anguish a person experiences who must look back at a wasted life!!

1. All the neglected opportunities to help someone down on his luck, to talk with someone about the gospel, to show kindness and

appreciation for your mate, to develop a relationship with your children and instruct them in the way of life — these will be there to haunt you.

This is just one of the sorrow of old age without the Lord.

2. A life of reckless living, boozing it up and being sexually promiscuous will bring a person to ill health, regret, guilt, and shame.

Such reckless living often breaks up families and robs a man or woman of the joys of family relationships in old age (Proverbs 17:6). What is really sad is when children have totally lost respect for their parents and won't even come around... all because of the lifestyle chosen when we were younger. No wonder such a person has no honorable burial (6:3). Children and grandchildren no longer care about the one who never cared much about them!!

What terrible loneliness that will be!!

- B. He Is Passing Forward To An Eternity For Which He Is Unprepared.** He already received his reward in his life of indulgence. And now that it is about over, he has not abiding joy... his joy consisted of the time he did such things. They hold no joy for him now (Ecclesiastes 12:1).

Not only has he squandered and wasted his life, but now he is unprepared for death and the judgment which follows (Hebrews 9:27; Matthew 25:1-13).

- C. He Has Experienced The Vanity Of The World And Has Nothing To Show For It.** The world rots, rusts, and corrupts behind him (Matthew 6:19-21). Everything he worked so hard for will be burned up (2 Peter 3:10). Those pleasures of sin, which were but "for a season" (Hebrews 11:25), are gone! The joy did not endure.

Sin may taste sweet at first... but it leaves a bitter aftertaste!

CONCLUSION: Has God made provisions to take care of senior citizens? Naturally, we should seek God when we are young (Proverbs 8:17; Ecclesiastes 12:1). But what if we haven't? Is there anything we can do as we reach the twilight years?

It is urgent that older people give immediate attention to the well worn path you may be treading... You can teach an old dog new tricks!! My friend, you can start now (Matthew 23:1-16)... but you must seek after God before it is too late because your heart becomes too hard or you die.

My friend, don't die without the Lord!!

THE SLUGGARD

INTRO: In the book of Proverbs, we are introduced to the tragic figure of the sluggard (Proverbs 26:14-15). He is slothful and unmotivated. He is paralyzed and chained by imaginary obstacles, lack of energy, love of ease, fear of failure and no sense of direction.

He has an excuse-oriented personality. He shuns involvement. He sees only problems, not opportunities. We need to learn from his mistakes because we don't live long enough to make them all ourselves!!

I. THE SHORTCOMINGS OF THE SLUGGARD

A. He Will Not Begin Things (Proverbs 6:9-11). When we ask how long will he sleep and when will he get up, we are being too definite. He doesn't know.

He deceives himself by temporary delays. He doesn't want to commit to anything definite. He wants to wander through life getting by with the least possible he can do. He is definitely not a self-starter and makes some of the most ridiculous excuses to justify doing nothing (Proverbs 26:13). He is paralyzed by imaginary obstacles!

1. What About Us? We say "Someday I'll..." or "When I get around to it..." But my friend, life is a do-it-yourself project with the Bible as your guide (Acts 2:40; Philippians 2:12).

Refuse to make excuses which justify failure. Find a way, not an excuse! It is better to try and fail temporarily until you can try again than it is to do nothing and succeed (Ephesians 5:14).

B. He Will Not Finish Things (Proverbs 12:27). The rare effort of beginning something is too much for him. Now he doesn't have the energy to finish it! He cannot even finish a meal without being exhausted (Proverbs 19:24).

1. What About Us? Do we sometimes make a big deal out of little tasks? Goals which are rashly set and lightly taken are quickly abandoned. How many times have we started with a burst of energy to read the entire Bible in a year, only to get behind schedule and quit?

Let's know the joy of finishing. Don't bite off more than you can chew. Set reasonable goals. It's not how we start that matters, but how we finish that counts (Ecclesiastes 7:8). We must "count the cost" of being a disciple, then stick it out (Luke 9:62).

Let's be finishers... not quitters!!

C. He Will Not Face Things (Proverbs 26:16). He thinks he is being a realist... He knows all the reasons why something won't work. He sees problem and risk, not opportunity. He dreams, but is trapped by his own rationalization that there are too many obstacles (Proverbs 15:19; Ecclesiastes 11:4).

1. What About Us? How easy it is to blame others or various circumstances for our failures! We didn't do God's will because someone made fun of us, or because no one appreciated it, or it was too difficult! God accepts no excused disobedience (Romans 14:12).

If at first you don't succeed... that makes you about average... so try, try again! (Mark 10:27)

- D. **He Will Not Be Happy (Proverbs 21:25-26).** He craves much, but has little (Proverbs 13:4). By doing nothing, he brings on his own sorrow. He is also a source of discomfort to others. How can he be happy if he is an irritating, nonproductive, unreliable source of grief and discouragement to others (Proverbs 10:26).

He is part of the problem, not the solution. How can we be happy in the Lord's work if we complain the most but do the least? Slothful, lazy people pour cold water on other people's enthusiasm by their indifference.

CONCLUSION: My friend, life is full of endless possibilities and joy, if we will take from God's strength and work to accomplish much for his cause.

Lazy people are not lazy because they are tired... they are tired because they are lazy. The change and spurt of energy comes when one repents of his slothfulness and determines to work for the Lord!

What about you??

WHAT IS MARRIAGE?

INTRO: What kind of concept does the word "marriage" convey to your mind? Is it "just a piece of paper" or is it more? If that is all it is to you, then you have no business getting married! Does it signify permanence, commitment, love, security, family, sharing, pain, curse, or imprisonment?

I. MARRIAGE WAS INSTITUTED BY GOD

A. Man had not even got settled into the new world on the day of his creation before God created him a companion (Genesis 2:7-24). It never was just man's plan for men and women's coexistence. Although both man and woman are wonderfully made creatures (cf. Psalm 139:14) each is **incomplete** without the other!!

B. The relationship of marriage was ordained for the honorable joining of two people together (Hebrews 13:4). Cohabitation and sexual relations outside of marriage is sinful. God calls it fornication (1 Corinthians 7:1-4). Marriage is God's time-tested method for men and women to find happiness.

From the first day of man's existence, marriage has found favor in God's sight (Matthew 19:4-8).

C. The relationship between a husband and wife is so precious and special that God used it to compare with the special relationship Christ shares with His church (Ephesians 5:22-33).

Likewise, just as the church is the fulness of Christ (Ephesians 1:22-23), the wife is the fulness of her husband. They fill and complete one another. In God's rules of arithmetic, one plus one equals one!! (see Genesis 2:24).

Marriage was established to bless man, not to curse and afflict him. Unhappiness in marriage is not the fault of the God-ordained relationship. It is the fault of either or both partners!!

II. MARRIAGE IS PERMANENT

A. God never gave marriage as a trial-period. Marriage is the final commitment. Years of dating and engagements, are periods which should be used as trial-periods. Marriage is the point of no return (Romans 7:1-3; 1 Corinthians 7:39).

Once married, you do not change your mind!!

B. Even though men are very free with their annulments of marriage, God is still strict and stern (Matthew 19:6). Jesus gives only one justifiable cause for divorce (Matthew 19:9; 5:32)... and even then divorce is not mandatory!

God hates divorce (Malachi 2:16)!! It is not an acceptable solution to marriage problems. Marriage is for life.

III. MARRIAGE IS THE FORMATION OF A NEW HOME

- A. The word "home" stirs up memories of growing up with mother and father. A "home" is a place of happiness, love, and security. "Marriage" is the formation of a new home. No longer do you have the same responsibilities in your parent's home (although you still have responsibilities). Nor do you speak of "my home" anymore, but now "our home". No longer will things be mine, but now they are ours!!

Two people who marry, break away from two different homes and form a third home (Genesis 2:24). You must break away from your previous homes or trouble will surely follow. And parents must at the same time let go of their children!!

IV. LOVE THAT IS SHARED

- A. The love of a man for his wife is a beautiful thing. And there is no force in this world or beyond that is stronger than love. Even when the glitter is gone, your eyes don't sparkle as much, and your faults are coming to light, your love can still last.

After the honeymoon, your love is tested. And marriage continues to be a sharing of love... is all its degrees.

1. Romantic love (Proverbs 5:15-19).
2. Unquenchable love (Song of Solomon 8:6)
3. Learned love (1 Corinthians 13:4-8).

A love like this that is shared between two people will bring years of happiness to your life!

CONCLUSION: How seriously should we take marriage? Marriage can be a tremendous blessing to your life or it can bring you more pain than anything else in the world... it depends on what two people do with it!!

There is nothing that can give a 100% assurance that a marriage will last... but something can give you a definite edge... if both of you are Christians!! Give your life to God and you will find blessings in your home life (Psalm 128:1-4).

GOD-GIVEN ROLES IN MARRIAGE

INTRO: In an age when women's lib wants to redefine the roles of men and women in the home, we need to understand God's plan for men and women in a marriage relationship.

A football team would do very poorly if it had 11 men playing quarterback on the same offensive set of downs. Each player has a role that he is suited for, whether he is a running back, pass receiver, quarterback, or blocker. Each player must carry out his role and responsibility for the team to be a success.

So it is with marriage. Each partner has different roles and responsibilities to make a marriage a success. Neither partner is better than the other. They simply have different jobs!!

I. HUSBAND'S RESPONSIBILITY TO HIS WIFE

A. Love Here As Christ Does The Church (Ephesians 5:25,28-29). He gave up everything He had for the church... His home in heaven and the glory of being with God (Philippians 2:5-8), the simple pleasures of this world (Matthew 8:20), and eventually His own life (2 Corinthians 8:9).

Husbands hand over the number one spot in their lives, and give it to their wives. She becomes his entire purpose in life. She becomes part of him and he does as much to make her hurt go away as he does when his own body is hurting.

B. He Is The Head Of The Home (Ephesians 5:23). That does not mean that he is the master and she is the slave. He has the responsibility of guiding the family spiritually (Joshua 24:15; Ephesians 6:4). He must protect them with his very own life (Ephesians 5:25). He must provide for his family's necessities (1 Timothy 5:8).

Headship does not denote rulership as much as it does responsibility. If he is the head of that family, then he has a greater responsibility to that family than any other member (Luke 12:48).

C. He Must Live With His Wife With Understanding (1 Peter 3:7). Which partner is usually least patient and understanding? What does it mean to be a "weaker vessel"? Is that an insult? Does that say she is inferior?

Men, remember that women are more delicate and fragile in their emotional nature and physical stature. Therefore, we need to see that her spiritual, emotional, and physical needs are met. We also must "(give) honor to the wife". We don't put her down and deride her, but we exalt her and treat her like our queen. She is someone special because she is willing to put up with us and all our faults!!

D. He Must Enjoy Life With Her (Ecclesiastes 9:9). Marriage is not meant to make you unhappy. Nor are you to pursue your interests and she pursue hers. We are to "enjoy life with her".

Make her your best friend. Don't form deep, intimate relationships with other women. Be faithful to your wife.

II. WIFE'S RESPONSIBILITY TO HER HUSBAND

- A. **Submit To Him (Ephesians 5:22-24; 1 Peter 3:1-6).** Many a marriage conflict has come from a wife who refused to submit to her husband. But rarely does she refuse to submit because he is loving her as Christ loved the church (see Ephesians 5:25).

She does not submit as a slave, but as a loving partner who trust his judgment and honors her husband. Even if he is not a Christian, she is to be submissive to him, unless he requires her to forsake God (see Acts 5:29). Marrying someone who is not a Christian can make for some very hard times and temptation to compromise your convictions though so we must be very careful.

- B. **Give Her Life To Him (1 Corinthians 7:3-4).** He in turn must give his life and body over to her.

You don't use sex to bribe him or take revenge on him. Whenever you always "have a headache" or are "too tired", you are depriving him of something you gave over to his control when you agreed to become his wife.

- C. **Be The Keeper Of His Home (Titus 2:4-5).** This is not a lowly position, but an exalted one. This does not mean that she is his nanny and housekeeper. She keeps the "home" not just the "house". In the home she has a place of honor from God. She is his queen and is praised as she creates in the home an atmosphere of love and warmth in which both he and God will be glorified.

No one else can do that for him. He needs you!!

- D. **Be His Crowning Jewel (Proverbs 12:4).** You must not bring shame or reproach upon him and his name by your actions. A wife is the glory of her husband (1 Corinthians 11:7).

She is the worthy woman that any man would be proud to have as his wife (Proverbs 31:10-31).

CONCLUSION: Many responsibilities are placed on both partners in the marriage. For a marriage to be happy and succeed, both partners must fulfil their obligations.

God instituted marriage and God's regulations for it will work!! If we will submit to His will, we will see a marked improvement in our marriages!!

EVERYONE DID WHAT WAS RIGHT IN HIS OWN EYES

INTRO: The freedom to follow "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" is one of the rights we cherish as Americans. The laws of this country make it possible for everyone to do what they want to do... Everyone has an opinion and a right to one... everyone has the freedom to be ruled by his own conscience... to do what is right in his own eyes. That sounds great, doesn't it? Believe it or not, that same thing almost destroyed a nation before us!!

I. THE DARK AGES OF ISRAEL'S HISTORY

- A. Some Of The Darkest Days Of Israel's History Were The Years Following Their Conquest Of The Promised Land Of Canaan.** The Book of Joshua closes on a positive note, excitedly anticipating God's continued blessings in their land of rest as the Israelites swore "The Lord our God we will serve, and his voice we will obey" (Joshua 24:19-28).

But as the Book of Judges unfolds, Israel's hope for a peaceful, united kingdom is quickly doused because the people chose to do their own will rather than the will of God. The next few centuries were filled with war, unrest, wickedness, immorality, and some of the worst times of Hebrew history.

- B. The Days Of The Judges Became Known As The "Dark Ages" Of Israel's History.** The book of Judges has been called the "book of failure". The nation was on a downward spiral of unbelief.

Each new generation would rebel and because of their idolatry God would send the Canaanite nations to plunder them. Then the people would turn to God in repentance and he would raise up a judge... a deliverer... to restore the rest they had lost. Soon afterward the cycle repeated, year after year, century after century (see Judges 2:11-19).

II. EVERYONE DID WHAT WAS RIGHT IN HIS OWN EYES

- A. The Explanation For All Their Problems.** The explanation for all their problems — moral, spiritual, and religious — is found in these simple words "In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes" (Judges 17:6; 21:25).

Such a situation brought to ruin the greatest spiritual nation of the world.

- B. Then There's Us!!** We proudly parade our slogans like "Attend the church of your choice"... "Find a religion that suits you"... "Do your own thing as long as it is between you and God"... "Each of us have the right to find God in our own way". Does that sound familiar? Does that sound anything like ancient Israel's philosophy?

1. Where do you find any of those phrases or concepts in the Bible? The Bible affirms such truths as:

- a. Man cannot direct his own steps (Jeremiah 10:23)
 - b. Man cannot determine the right way himself (Proverbs 14:12)
 - c. The way to life is narrow, few will find it (Matthew 7:13-14)
2. Jesus Christ is our example in life, and even He did not do His own will, but rather the will of His Father (Romans 15:3; John 6:38). If the Son of God Himself could not "do His own thing", why do we think we should be able to?

III. DOING GOD'S WILL

- A. I Cherish My Rights In This Country...** to pursue life and happiness as I choose, but let's not think that principle of freedom rates higher than our duty to God!

Christ's kingdom is not a democracy, it is a monarchy in which He is absolute ruler — not as a dictator, tyrant, or despot — yet He still possesses "all authority in heaven and on earth" (Matthew 28:18). You and I do not get an opinion when it comes to Christ's commands. We must either accept His word or reject it (Matthew 12:30).

- B. We Don't Get To Choose...** what "we think" will be good for us and our families in spiritual matters because we would botch up the job! Everyone else who has pursued that kind of thing before us has failed!

The ultimate fate of those who do what is right in their own eyes (as great as it may seem to be) is a horrible one indeed (Matthew 7:21-23).

CONCLUSION: Dear listener, perhaps we need to rethink our positions on religion and our rights in regard to it. Don't you and I need to look for what is right in God's eyes instead of our own!!

Couldn't we do that together? That is the goal of the Harrodsburg Church of Christ which meets here in Harrodsburg. Won't your pursue such a goal with us?

"LORD, ARE THERE FEW WHO ARE SAVED?"

INTRO: As Jesus traveled the countryside, He taught a lot of people who were concerned with God, His laws, and religion. He answered hundreds of questions and surprised many people with His brevity and His ability to get to the heart of the matter with a short, but powerful statement or two.

Luke records one such conversation (Luke 13:22-30) Here was a person who was sincerely interested in the fate of other people. He asked "Lord, are there few who are saved?" (Luke 13:23), but Jesus' answer showed him that his interest was misplaced.

I. A SIMPLE QUESTION

A. This Individual Asked A Simple Question For Which The Bible Gives A Simple Answer In Another Passage. Are many people going to be saved in the judgment or only a few (Matthew 7:13-14)? The answer is "only a few"!! Offer that answer to a person's question today and you will likely be charged with narrow-mindedness!

But just because that is a narrow answer, it does not mean the one who gave it has a narrow mind!! Jesus Himself was the first to say it!!

1. The truth is that Christianity is a narrow religion. Jesus is the only way to salvation and anyone who does not accept Him cannot come to God (John 14:6)!! Nor is there salvation in any other (Acts 4:12)!!

(because the truth is narrow)

II. WHY ARE ONLY A FEW SAVED?

A. Is It Because God Does Not Want To Save All? Does He just not care about all His creation? Does He get some sort of sadistic satisfaction in sending people to hell? God wants everyone to be saved (1 Timothy 2:3-6).

When God chose Christ as our only Mediator, that naturally excluded any other way of coming to Him! But His plan was not designed so that people could not come to Him, but so they could!! God wants all to be saved (2 Peter 3:9). *we tend to look at the wrong side of this*

B. Because All Of Us Are Lost In The First Place!! That is so obvious we often look right over it! We get to thinking that everyone we know has some good in them and they deserve some kind of reward (or at least don't deserve to suffer punishment).

Then we look on God as the culprit when all have sinned and are lost because of it. The truth is that all men deserve to be eternally separated from God, because without Christ, all of us are separated from Him now (Romans 3:23; 6:23).

We may be very good people, but the reason few are saved is because all are lost to begin with!! And until those of us living in Harrodsburg, Mercer, Washington, Anderson, Boyle counties, the rest of Kentucky and the rest of the world obtain salvation from our sins by

not because we are good or bad people

the blood of Christ, the majority of us will remain lost!

The answer to this person's question is not pleasant, but it is sobering!!

III. MISDIRECTED INTEREST

- A. **Jesus Showed This Man's Interest Was Misdirected.** Jesus could have answered this person's question with a "yes" or "no", but He did not! Instead, He showed this person that His interest was misplaced (Luke 13:23-24).

In essence Jesus says "Don't worry about it if there are few who are saved, who they are, how many, etc. You worry about "Are you saved?" What happens to everyone else doesn't matter because none of us control that! The important question is whether or not you will be saved!! (cf. John 21:18-22)

- B. **Maybe Your Interest Is Misdirected.** Maybe you wonder "What about all those people in Africa who never heard God's word? What about our kind, considerate, loving neighbors? What about the honest and sincere people in all the different denominations? What about the hypocrites in the church?

Let God take care of all of them!! The important question you need to ask is "What about me?" My friend, are you saved? Are you ready to meet the Lord whether anyone else in the world is or not?

1. If you don't prepare now, it will be too late when He returns (Luke 13:25-28).

CONCLUSION: My friend, you need to be saved more than you need anything else in the world! Here is what the Bible says you must do. You must believe in the Lord Jesus with all your heart (John 3:16). Repent of all your sins (Acts 2:38). Confess Him as Lord of your life (Romans 10:9-10) and contact His blood in baptism (Mark 16:16; Romans 6:3-7).

Then live every day as if the Lord was coming because one day that will be true!! You can be one of the few who are saved!! Will you?

JESUS CHRIST AND HIS CHURCH

INTRO: How important is the Lord's church? Is it an unnecessary frill or the complement of a marvelous Savior? Many people desire a close, personal relationship with Jesus, yet scorn the church which He purchased with His own blood (Acts 20:28).

Christ's church is the fulfillment of a well conceived and meticulously executed plan designed by the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 3:9-11). The church is an expression of God's wisdom... her very existence is a manifestation of God's brilliance!! The church brings glory to God... not those who scorn and oppose her!! (Ephesians 3:21).

The Bible emphasizes the inseparable relationship between Christ and His church.

I. CHRIST AND HIS CHURCH

A. Christ Is The Head And The Church Is His Body (Colossians 1:18). Some people want to decapitate the Lord, separating Him from His body. The body of Christ consists of all His disciples... all the members of the church (Romans 12:5).

Each Christian, although possessing different abilities, is part of the Lord's body (1 Corinthians 12:12-27). Without a head, the Lord's church is dead... and if Christ has no body, what can He be head over? Jesus Christ cannot be a "head" without having a "body"!!

B. Christ Is The Shepherd And The Church Is His Flock (John 10:11). Can one be a shepherd if he has no sheep? For Jesus to be the "Good Shepherd", He must have a flock. Who comprises that flock (Acts 20:28)?

Whether important to men or not, the church of Jesus Christ is important to Him. He died for it as a loving shepherd would die for his sheep. Without the church, Jesus cannot be the "Good shepherd"!

C. Christ Is The Husband And The Church Is His Bride (Ephesians 5:23-25,32). The same bond existing between husband and wife unites Jesus and His church.

John the Baptist said that he himself did not have the bride, but that Jesus was the bridegroom and as such deserved the honor and praise (John 3:25-29). If John referred to Jesus as the bridegroom, then Jesus necessarily has to have a bride! That bride is the church which belongs to Christ (Ephesians 5:23-25).

One cannot be a husband without a wife! The church is the most important thing in Jesus' life. Who can say the church is unimportant?

D. Christ Is The Foundation And The Church Is His Temple (1 Corinthians 3:11,16). How many builders do you know who will dig and lay a foundation, then build nothing on it? Such an incomplete structure attests to the foolishness of the builder (cf. Luke 14:28-30).

Did Jesus count the cost before laying the foundation or did He leave Himself open to ridicule because of His ineptitude? There is no greater foundation than Jesus Christ. The church of Christ is built

upon Him. It is the temple in which God dwells among men (see Ephesians 2:19-22).

- E. Christ Is The Fulness Of God And The Church Is The Fulness Of Christ (Colossians 2:9-10).** One cannot be in Christ without being part of His church or vice versa (Ephesians 1:22-23).

If each is the fulness of the other, then there is not room for men to be in one without being in the other. Let me illustrate for you: If you take a cup and fill it completely to the brim with water, then the water becomes the fulness of the cup. It fills all in all. If you want to put a pebble in the cup without putting it in the water you cannot! If you want to put a pebble in the water without putting it in the cup you cannot either!

Putting the pebble in one automatically puts it in the other because the water is the fulness of the cup. Likewise one cannot be in Christ without being in the church!

CONCLUSION: Jesus Christ and His church are inseparable. Salvation is not given by the church... salvation come through Christ (Acts 4:12). Yet, the sum total of all who have been saved constitute the Lord's church (Acts 2:47).

Will you scorn the Lord's church or become part of it? Jesus loves His church and gave His life for her. How much do you love her? Take the time today to visit with us at the Harrodsburg church of Christ and we will be glad to talk with you more about the church Jesus died for!

If you would like a free cassette tape of this lesson sent to you, please drop us a note at the Harrodsburg Church of Christ, 232 S. College St., Harrodsburg, KY 40330.

WHAT GOD HATH JOINED TOGETHER

INTRO: "Known to God from eternity are all His works" (Acts 15:18). None of us must dare question the workings of God in the life and salvation of man! God knows what He is doing (Romans 11:34)!! God has carefully thought out and formulated His plan for mankind in this world, including the things that He knows are best for us!

Since that is the case, the Bible strongly states that "What God has joined together, let not man separate" (Matthew 19:6). You recognize that from Jesus' statements about marriage in Matthew 19.

As we study the Bible though, we find that there are other things that God has joined together for the happiness and salvation of man. The man who would try to separate them or cut them asunder is guilty of sin in withstanding God. My friend, we dare not become guilty of separating the things that God has joined together!!

I. WHAT GOD HATH JOINED TOGETHER

A. Husband And Wife (Matthew 19:4-6). God has joined a husband and wife together in the closest human relationship that is possible. It is so intimate that they are described as becoming "one flesh". They become one in spirit, in goals, in work, and in love.

The two marriage partners are to love one another more than themselves or anything else in the world (Ephesians 5:25; Titus 2:4). God always intended for marriage to be permanent... He hates divorce (Malachi 2:16). The only honorable way of dissolving a marriage is for one marriage partner to die (Romans 7:2-3).

When God joins men and women together He expects them to remain united for the rest of their lives. "What God hath joined together..."

B. Faith And Works (James 2:17). Many people base their hope of salvation in a man-made doctrine... the doctrine that we are "saved by faith only". But the Bible says the very opposite (James 2:24). Some people say that if works are a part of salvation, then you are earning your salvation. Now think about that for a minute...

Did Noah earn his salvation when he built the ark by faith in God's word (Hebrews 11:7)? Did the children of Israel earn the victory in their battle against Jericho when they marched around the walls of the city for seven days (Hebrews 11:30). No one would say they did... but likewise, no one would say that they would have received these blessings if they had not done some work to receive them!!

Why then, would anyone argue that faith and works are in opposition to one another? "What God hath joined together..."

C. Baptism And Salvation (Mark 16:16). There are a lot of people who would like to separate baptism from salvation, teaching that baptism is not a necessary step to receive salvation. But Jesus joined them together in His instructions about salvation to His apostles.

None of the early apostles and preachers tried to separate baptism from salvation... as a matter of fact, when they were asked what was necessary for God to save someone, they included baptism in their

answers (Acts 2:37-38; 22:16; 1 Peter 3:21).

Why then, would anyone argue that baptism is not an integral part in a person's salvation, and a condition necessary to receive it. "What God hath joined together..."

- D. Salvation And The Church (Acts 2:47).** Many people want to be in a right relationship with God, have the forgiveness of their sins, but stay away from the church. They think it is an unnecessary evil. The denominational world is that... but the church that Jesus purchased with His own blood is important to Jesus, and therefore should be to us too (Acts 20:28).

The church does not stand between us and salvation... so we must understand that we do not reach God by coming to Him through the church, we reach Him by coming through Christ... but we need to understand the church that Jesus died for is made up of all those who have been saved from their sins, and only those. The church is the body of the saved... you cannot be saved without being a part of the Lord's church!! "What God hath joined together..."

- E. Christ And The Church (Ephesians 1:22-23).** Many people want to separate Christ from the church and put the church under the rule of men to decide its doctrines and practices. Jesus already did that. At the first mention of the church in the New Testament, Jesus declares it is His and He will be the one who does the building (Matthew 16:18).

The apostle Paul uses the figure of a body and its head in describing Christ and the church. This illustrates the vital connection that each of us have with our head and the control He has over us in that position (1 Corinthians 12:12-27).

Neither Jesus nor the church can be separated from the other without destroying the body and the head. My friend, Christ and the church will continue to be joined together as long as man lives on this earth. "What God hath joined together..."

- F. Death And The Judgment (Hebrews 9:27).** All men must accept the fact that we will die... but not all want to accept the fact of the judgment which follows. My friend, we can deny it, refuse to believe in it, and even concoct some kind of theological answer to it, but after death for all of us will come the judgment.

We will be judged for our works and neither you nor I can escape it (2 Corinthians 5:10). Therefore, since Christ is coming back to judge us we are warned to repent (Acts 17:30-31). My friend, both of us will face judgment after death. "What God hath joined together..."

CONCLUSION: Now let me ask you... are you one who would be presumptuous enough to separate any of these things that God hath joined together? Then why not accept them and make them part of your spiritual life?

SIN AND ITS WAYS

INTRO: AIDS has us scared to death. People won't take blood transfusions, they won't use public restrooms, and won't visit the hospitals for fear that they might contract a disease that affects far less than one percent of our population.

But there is a greater, more deadly disease out in the world that many don't seem to be aware of, and others don't care anything about. The bad thing about this particular ailment is that it has a 100% mortality rate. The disease is sin and sin kills us all (Romans 6:23).

There are many other problems and curses that man experiences, and sadly most of them are related to sin!! Many men and women are ignorant of the fact that they are lost in sin! The Bible addresses the problem... it talks a lot about sin and what constitutes sin. Look for these things in your life my friend, and then we will see what God says we can do about it!

I. SOME DEFINITIONS OF SIN

- A. Transgression (2 John 9).** A transgression means going beyond, or overstepping God's divine boundary between good and evil. He also warns us against going beyond God's word and the things that are written in it.
- B. Iniquity (Matthew 7:21-23).** Notice that these are religious people who thought all along they were doing God's will and doing Him service. But they were working lawlessness... that is without God's law and approval. Doing all these seemingly good things outside of God's authority and commands is nothing but iniquity... sin!!
- C. Sin (Romans 3:23).** The idea here of sin is "missing the mark"... coming short of the target. Like an arrow that is shot toward a target, but misses its mark. God has set the standard, but all of us fall short of it. When we do, we have sinned.
- D. Error (James 5:19-20).** To walk in error is to depart from the way that is right, wandering away from God. Sometimes it is done in ignorance, sometimes simply because we are mistaken in our beliefs about God's word. But the consequence is the same... we are guilty of sin.
- E. Trespass (Ephesians 2:1).** This has to do with the intrusion of self-will which conflicts with God's commands and we decide we are going to go where we are not supposed to be. A "No Trespassing" sign means to "keep off because this belongs to another and you are not to be here". The same principle applies to religious doctrine. God is the author of the Bible and man dare not intrude and make laws of his own.
- F. Unbelief (Hebrews 3:12).** Not only is this the refusal to believe in God and His Son, but is also an obstinate rebellion against God's will and refusing to accept the truth. That was the problem of the Israelites this Hebrew writer is referring to.

So you see that sin is not always about murder, adultery, stealing, and such things. But anything that is done contrary to or is not done in accordance with God's will is sin!!

II. CAUSES FOR MAN'S SINS

- A. **Ignorance (Ephesians 4:17-19)**. Many of us will disobey God's will simply because we do not know what it is. We have not read the Bible sufficiently to know, and perhaps we just don't think it is that important. But my friend, it is (2 Timothy 2:15; 3:16-17).

Many sins have been committed in ignorance. Those who crucified Jesus did it in ignorance (Acts 3:17). Paul persecuted the church in ignorance (1 Timothy 1:13). But ignorance will not be an excuse on the day of judgment when God holds us accountable for sin (Acts 17:30-31).

- B. **Weakness (Matthew 26:41)**. This may be the most frustrating cause of sin... because we want to do what is right, but because of the weakness of the flesh we find ourselves giving into sin... and sometimes the same sin over and over and over! In our weakness we cry out to God (Psalm 6:2).

Many times we sin because our backbone is not strong, our will to do right is not strong, we are struggling with besetting sins which take up all our strength just trying to keep them constantly in check. We need to pray to God for more strength in weakness (Hebrews 4:16).

- C. **Rebellion (1 Samuel 15:22-23)**. Saul thought he was doing service to God by offering Him the best of the spoils of the Amalekites. But God had told him to utterly destroy them and leave nothing alive. Some of us sin like Saul did, simply because we don't want to follow God's word or think that we have a better way.

Some don't care about the truth, therefore God allows them to believe a lie (2 Thessalonians 2:10-12). If there is a worst kind of sin, rebellion against God's will may just be it. But then too, there is the sin of:

- D. **Negligence (Hebrews 2:1-3)**. Negligence is a terrible sin, because we could have done something about it, but just didn't. There may be more people who are lost in the day of judgment because of negligence, more than any other sin! (James 4:16)

CONCLUSION: My friend, where do you stand? Are you ignorant of God's will for your life? Are you weak and floundering in sin? Are you in open rebellion? Or do you know the right thing to do, but you just haven't done it yet?

Sin will keep you out of heaven... any kind!! If you believe Jesus is the Son of God, and will repent of your sins, you can be baptized to have them washed away. Can we help you render obedience to the gospel?

BACK TO THE BIBLE — TO BE CHRIST'S CHURCH

INTRO: Our plea at the Harrodsburg Church of Christ is a distinctive plea. It is not like the pleas of most major religious denominations who seek tolerance toward everyone else as an attempt to unify a fragmented religious world.

I. WE MUST GO BACK TO THE BIBLE TO BE CHRIST'S CHURCH

- A. Back To The Authority Of The Scriptures.** Jesus Christ is the head of His church (Colossians 1:18). No man or group of men is its pope, president, or presiding officers! All authority has been given to Him (Matthew 28:18). And His plan for His church is revealed in the New Testament (1 Corinthians 14:37).

A true church of Christ must do only what is authorized in Scripture (2 Timothy 3:16-17). We must be ready to give book, chapter, and verse authority for all we believe and practice (1 Peter 3:15).

In response to every proposal we must ask "Is it from heaven or men?" The question must not be "Does the Bible condemn it?" but "Does the Bible authorize it?" What the Bible does not authorize must be rejected as the commandments of men (Matthew 15:9). In expressing our faith we must speak where the Bible speaks and remain silent where the Bible is silent (1 Peter 4:11).

- B. Back To Scriptural Work.** A church determined to do only what the Scriptures authorize will go to the Scriptures to learn what work God intends for the church to do as a collective body of Christians. There it is learned that the church is the pillar and ground of the truth (1 Timothy 3:15).

Approved churches in the New Testament supported the preaching of the gospel in their own communities and elsewhere (Philippians 4:15-16). They were equipped by God with teachers and leaders "for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry for the edifying of the body of Christ" (Ephesians 4:11-12).

As a church of Christ, we must be dedicated to this work. We must be content to leave politics to the government, recreation and entertainment to the home, education to the schools, and social service to the institutions organized for that purpose. While every Christian may involve himself in such things, we must reserve our collective church resources for the tasks which the Lord has assigned to His church.

- C. Back To Scriptural Morality.** Godly living in an ungodly world is difficult. The church is designed to provide the godly teaching and training that will encourage this kind of life. Those who love the world and refuse to yield to God's will have no place in the church and must be excluded from its fellowship (1 Corinthians 5:11-13). A church today that would please God must exercise such discipline.

- D. Back To Scriptural Government.** When Christ built His church (Matthew 16:18), He gave it the simplest government imaginable. In each

community, believers were united to form a local church family which was presided over by local elders (Acts 14:23). These men had no authority outside their local church-family (1 Peter 5:1-5).

No earthly organization bound them together. The churches were united only by their common loyalty to Christ as their head and their acceptance of the apostles as His spokesmen. They were nothing more worldwide than "brethren of like faith" (1 Peter 2:17).

These local churches, working independently under Christ, had sufficient organization to accomplish the work Christ wanted done in the first century. They preached the gospel to the entire world without mission boards or coordinating sponsoring churches (Colossians 1:6,23). They developed their own teachers and preachers without seminaries or church supported colleges (2 Timothy 2:2). They cared for their needy without building benevolent institutions and societies (Acts 4:34-35; 11:29-30).

Those who are determined to go back to the Bible must be content with the only organization the Bible authorized for church work — the local church.

- E. Back To Scriptural Mission Of The Church.** We are told today that churches must make major changes if they are to survive. Should such changes be made? If the purpose of the church is to attract as many people as possible, then it will have to accommodate itself to changing human preferences. In doing that, it will cease to be the church that Christ died for.

The church that Jesus built is not a church "of men" but "of Christ" (Romans 16:16) and "of God" (1 Thessalonians 2:14). It is composed of men and women who are bound together by a common purpose ... to live by the will of the unchanging God (James 1:17) as revealed in His unchanging word (1 Peter 1:23-25).

And believe me, those same old truths are far from being non-progressive, they are the only thing that will bring us to God.

The church that Jesus built dare not try to remake God in the image of man, but its mission is to make men into the image of God!! We are the "salt of the earth" left to preserve it... but if the salt has lost its flavor, how shall it be seasoned (Matthew 5:13)?

CONCLUSION: Yes, the church Jesus died for is distinctive. Won't you search it out and become part of that body of believers which glorifies Him (Ephesians 3:21)?

Trying to find out something about our listening audience. Drop us a short note... let us know what you think of this program... send absolutely no money... we will send you booklet entitled "The Sword" which will help you locate passages about a number of Bible subjects.

Also would like to put you on our mailing list for upcoming gospel meetings and other things of that nature.

A HOUSE OF PLENTY

INTRO: The importance of the family – the most fundamental of all human relationships – has been neglected for a number of years. Yet, it seems that there is a revival of sorts going on with our families.

Some people, pursuing their careers and various luxuries, have sacrificed time and love from the very thing one's career is supposed to be serving – the family!! Our families receive no benefit at all when we provide them with some of the nicer things in life at the expense of the clan. Actually, sacrificing many of what we call "the good things in life" will bring us no regrets (Proverbs 15:17; 17:1)..

A home is a special place. It is a refuge where people should know they are loved... regardless of their faults... without having any doubts in their minds. It should be a place where comfort and security can be found, not a place from which one must regularly "get away".

A successful home is no accident... nor is it the product of wishful thinking. Each member must be dedicated to the family and its needs... totally dedicated! God has supplied instructions for such a home. Open your Bible and read with me part of these instructions (Ephesians 5:21-6:4).

I. SUBMITTING TO ONE ANOTHER

A. Submitting To One Another (Ephesians 5:21). This passage on family relationships is preceded by an often overlooked command, "submitting to one another in the fear of God" (Ephesians 5:21). The instructions following this admonition are direct applications of this command.

Every family member is subject to every other family member and must make all his wants and wishes subordinate to all the others! If every family member will think of himself/herself as the least important member, we will have happy successful families. Each member, giving in to the needs of the rest of the family, will insure a united, loving and happy, family. On the other hand, "a house divided against itself will fall" (Matthew 12:25).

1. Wife Submits To The Husband (5:22-24). He does not qualify that by saying "Submit to him only if he is a good husband". Ladies need to keep in mind a few things about their husbands.

a. He has a great responsibility to lead and guide the family as its head. He cannot lead if his wife refuses to follow and work with him.

He also has emotional needs. Beneath that stern, harsh exterior beats the heart of a human being. He needs to know that he is important to you and appreciated. He also has sexual needs. God created them in him, just like He did in you. When two people marry, they submit to one another the one thing that is theirs alone – each one gives his/her body to the other (1 Corinthians 7:3-5).

He sums it up, she is to be subject to him in everything (5:24). And everything means everything!

2. **Husband Submits To Wife (5:25,28-29).** But that works the other way too!! This is the second relationship of submission in a family. Husbands must subordinate themselves to their wives. We don't usually think about that!

Like Jesus Christ submitted Himself completely to the church... not to its authority, but to its needs. Likewise, we husbands submit to our wives in that sense.

- a. We must love her as our own body (5:28). Her body and emotional state is different from mine, therefore I must be sympathetic and understanding, regardless of whether or not it makes sense to me (1 Peter 3:7)!!

We must nourish and cherish her (5:29). Like a delicate rose, we must nurture her so she can grow mentally, emotionally, and spiritually.

Two separate people have now become one (5:31), therefore both have to submit to one another.

3. **Children Submit To Parents (6:1-3).** This is the third relationship of submission in the family. Children must submit to and obey parents... not so they won't be punished or to get some reward... not so they will buy you new toys or clothes... but because it is right!

You are also to honor them - no talking back, mocking them, or yelling at them. Young people, there will always be an unhappy home life as long as you do not submit to or obey your parents (Proverbs 29:15,17).

4. **Parents Submit To Children (6:4).** The last relationship of submission might surprise you more than any of the others. Parents must subject themselves to the well-being and upbringing of their children.

When children come into the world, in a real sense they become the boss!! Not in the sense that we let them tell us parents what to do, or jump every time they want something. But when a child is hungry, we must feed them... when thirsty, we must get them a drink... when dirty, we must change them... when in need of clothes, supplies, food, and money, we must give up everything to give them what they need... That is part of being a parent!!

Parents must completely submit ourselves to bring them up "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord". If they are going to grow up to be Christians, it is up to us to guide them in the right way now!!

CONCLUSION: Remember God's rule... if every family member will think of himself/herself as the least important member, we will have happy, successful families (Psalm 127).

ATTITUDES THAT SWEETEN MARRIAGE

INTRO: Is your marriage as happy as you want it to be? Many marriages today are in trouble with mates considering mere survival to be an accomplishment!

God never intended that marriage be an unhappy state, but that it be one of the happiest, most fulfilling relationships man could have on this earth (Proverbs 5:18-19). When a marriage is in trouble and the companions are very unhappy, someone is breaking the laws of God!

God created the man and said it was not good for him to be alone, so He made a helper suitable to man (Genesis 2:18,21-22; 1 Corinthians 11:9). That almost makes it sound like woman was an afterthought of God's for the benefit of the man... but God had planned His creation from eternity... woman was always part of that plan.

God then instituted the marriage relationship, for companionship, giving and receiving love, and propagating the human race.

I. ATTITUDES THAT WILL SWEETEN MARRIAGE

A. The Husband/Wife Relationship. God ordained that the man should rule over his wife (Genesis 3:16). But that is not an unjust, dictatorial rule as if she were a slave, but he is to rule over her with the greatest love possible (Ephesians 5:25,28-29).

This is to be a self-giving concern for her person - a love that seeks her happiness and well-being at the sacrifice of his own interests and welfare (1 Corinthians 13:5). At the same time, the wife is to reverence and submit to her husband (Ephesians 5:24,33) and love him (Titus 2:4).

Marriage fulfills one of the greatest needs of mankind - to love and be loved. This relationship brings into the life of each mate, fulfillment, satisfaction, and contentment. A fruitful marriage is built on love, trust, respect, faithfulness, and mutual consideration.

B. Attitudes That Will Sweeten Marriage. Marriage can be wonderful... and you can contribute much to making it that way. Ask "what can I do to make my marriage better?"

1. Express Appreciation To Your Companion. Don't just tell others how good he/she is... tell your mate!! Express appreciation for things that are done... whether they are things that are supposed to be done or not.

Look for the good qualities in your mate... if you look for the bad, you will find them, and at the same time overlook all the good. Then when you find the good... tell them!

2. Give Honor And Respect To Your Companion. Respect begets respect. So if a wife wants respect from her husband then she needs to show it to him and the same with a husband (1 Peter 3:7; Ephesians 5:33). Disrespect inflames hard feelings and strife.

Treat your mate with respect and dignity, and he/she will want to rise to that same level. You can improve them with honor and respect and make them worse with dishonor and criticism.

3. **Be Forgiving Toward Your Companion.** An unforgiving attitude feeds tension and strife. Never form the habit of bringing up past mistakes to put down your companion — not in public, not in private. This is unmerciful and unforgiving and all that does is open old wounds and condemn you for doing it (Romans 1:31-32).

Everyone wants and needs mercy and forgiveness for his/her shortcomings. Many of us will forgive just about anyone except our mates... yet, that is the first place forgiveness should be practiced (Matthew 6:14-15; Colossians 3:13; Ephesians 4:32).

Both you and your mate are imperfect human beings (cf. 1 John 1:8). So when you are wrong, why not simply say "I am wrong... and I am sorry"? Only an immature, proud person refuses to admit his own shortcomings.

4. **Be Helpful And Constructive.** Marriage companions should be able to talk with one another, honestly and openly. But that honesty does not give anyone a right to be hurtful and abusive. You really need to help bring out the best in each other. Sometimes that is a little uncomfortable, but you don't have to make it brutal (Proverbs 27:17).

A spouse will go when needed, listen when needed, hold confidences, have empathy for another, and feel for one another. Husbands and wives really need one another (Ecclesiastes 4:9-12).

CONCLUSION: A healthy, loving husband/wife relationship is not a master/slave relationship. It is a sharing, complementing relationship where each mate recognizes their God-ordained role.

When each mate realizes the things that sweeten marriage and does something about it, marriage will again be a blessing to mankind. How about if it starts with you? (Psalm 128:1-4)

HOW HUSBANDS CAN SHOW APPRECIATION FOR THEIR WIVES

INTRO: How many wives listening this morning have thought how nice it would be to have their husbands say something like "I can fly higher than an eagle... but you are the wind beneath my wings"? How many of us husbands have thought about saying something like that to our wives?

The unappreciated wife is the victim of one of life's saddest injustices. And a husband who is so unfeeling or stingy with his praise that he will not tell his wife regularly how grateful he is for her is definitely not deserving of her... and is deserving of a few lashes with a horsewhip at best.

Yet, even Christian husbands by the thousands, myself included, will have to admit that we have not tapped the tongue's potential for brightening the lives of our good wives. What can be done to deal with this habit of neglect?

I. SHOWING APPRECIATION FOR OUR WIVES

A. Do Appreciate Her. Wives need real gratitude... not just words and play-acting. They know when we really mean it!! In fact, wives hate nothing more than being patronized. She will understandably resent us saying something just because we think we are supposed to!

What is needed is more than just talking and acting as if he appreciates his mate. The only worthwhile way to solve the problem of non-expression of appreciation is to solve the problem of non-appreciation itself. Candy on Valentine's day is nice, and so are flowers on Mother's day. But tokens of appreciation are cheap and worthless if not given in love.

Maybe we have forgotten what she does mean to us. We can begin by rediscovering just how special our wives are!

B. Count Her Virtues. We would do well spending some time frequently reminding ourselves of how many praiseworthy attributes our wives possess. The chances are good that she still has whatever first attracted you to her enough to ask her hand in marriage.

Actually, these have probably deepened with the passing of time and also been enriched by the addition of even more. And when you and I start counting her virtues, why not list as number one, the patience of Job which she has to possess in order to live with each of us!! Am I right? Yeah, I see her smiling... but friend, what about you?

C. Walk In Her Shoes Often. Helping our wives with her work is a surefire way to increase our appreciation for our wives. We think that we are big and strong and can hold up under a tremendous workload... but when we come home at the end of the day, which one of us plops down on the couch or La-Z-Boy and kicks off our shoes to rest? While she is still in there working fixing our dinner?? Remember guys, most of us work 5 or 6 days a week... she works seven.

It takes patience, persistence, and stamina to do the work she must do day in and day out. Those are the things we have run out of by the time we get home!!

- D. **Express Appreciation Now.** Most of us will appreciate our wives too little too late if we don't do something about it now! She needs to know now... before she is emotionally spent and hurt irreparably, before she leaves us because of the pain... before she dies!

A memory of neglecting what you wanted to tell her will only taunt and torment you mercilessly, because you won't have the chance to say what you should have said long ago. Swallow your pride, and if you think it will sound too corny to say, then get your act together and quit being so foolish before it is too late!!

If you really love her, you need to cut through all of that and tell her about it right now (1 Corinthians 13:4-8).

CONCLUSION: There are many women who don't know how fortunate they are to have a good husband, but I fear there are more men who don't realize their blessing in having the wives they do (Proverbs 31:10-31).

If you are married to such a woman, then she sure better hear that you know it and are thankful... and she better hear it from your mouth... and it's not a bad idea to just go ahead and tell her right now!!

HOW WIVES CAN SHOW APPRECIATION FOR THEIR HUSBANDS

INTRO: Judging from the response I heard to last week's lesson, there are a lot of good husbands who really want to show their appreciation for their wives. Honestly, ladies, many of us are good men, we just don't always think and don't always show you how much we appreciate you, and just need to be reminded occasionally. Be patient with us as we try to do better.

At the same time, we hope you can remember something about us... behind the rough, proud, and crude exterior, beat the hearts of gentle souls who also need to know that we are appreciated.

God's plan is that we complement one another (Genesis 2:18,20-24). Yes, we are different... but that does not have to be a cause for contention between us. God purposefully made us that way so that man and woman together could make up God's creation — man (Genesis 1:27-28). So don't let that be so frustrating for you.

What can you do to show your appreciation for your husband?

I. SHOWING APPRECIATION FOR OUR HUSBANDS

A. Respect Him (Ephesians 5:33). Everyone thinks that positions of authority are great to have... to be in charge, to make decisions, to have the final say in things that are done... but with authority comes great responsibility!!

God has given the man that charge in the family (Ephesians 5:23-24). No one is arguing that he is better than his wife... just that God has given him that position and responsibility and has equipped him with the ability to make important decisions and guide his family.

Many a wife who spends hours trying to persuade her husband to her way of thinking needs to realize that God made her husband think differently from her to help him be a better leader. A woman possesses a far greater ability than a man to focus on emotions. While this quality makes her superior to the man for performing her God-given jobs, it easily gets in the way of wise leadership. Likewise the ability to disregard his emotions equips a man to better love his wife and act in her best interests.

That is not to say that husbands will not make mistakes. Sometimes that is the way human beings gain experience and learn lessons we might not otherwise know. Oftentimes a person profits more from doing something wrong than he would have if he did it right in the first place. Do we make more mistakes than you do? Well, honestly, one of the two of us will make more mistakes in a marriage... that is an inevitable fact of life. Men and women are both human... who is to condemn either one?

Ladies, show your husband you appreciate him by respecting him.

B. Praise Him. If he does a good job, or he just gladly tackles the responsibility to the best of his ability... couldn't you tell him? There are certain things you expect him to do... he should do them... but do you express your appreciation when he does that things that you expect him to do anyway? Or is praised reserved only for when he does the extraordinary?

Honestly... do you like to be taken for granted? Don't you need a little praise? What was it Jesus said once (Matthew 7:12)? You don't have to lie, and you don't have to exaggerate, and you don't have to tell him in some Betty Boop voice "Oh you big strong man, I don't know what I would do without you"... but a little honest praise is great motivation for him to do even more!

If he makes mistakes you need to let him know, but don't insult him! How you say something matters just as much as what you say (Proverbs 16:24; 25:11-12). And ladies... if you tell him he is a hopeless louse, or talk to him in such a way as to infer that, why would you expect him to be anything else?

Show your appreciation for him by praising him. Telling other people how much you appreciate him is good, but it means nothing unless he hears it from you!!

- C. Seduce Him (Proverbs 5:15-20).** Face it... men and women are sexual beings... it is not just a product of the 60's, 70's, 80's or 90's. Sex among husbands and wives is something that God has designed (Hebrews 13:4).

Why are the temptations so strong when immoral women seduce your husbands? Because of his human sexual desires for one thing... but that may not actually be what tempts him the most! There is also the fact that someone else thinks enough of him to want to seduce him. He is flattered! You can be sure that an adulteress will do that because she knows that is what appeals to him most (Proverbs 5:3-4; 7:6-21).

When was the last time you sexually flattered your husband? The worthy woman of Proverbs 31 does (31:22a; cf. 7:16). Maybe he is not all the man he used to be, but if you make him feel like he is, perhaps he can become better!

- D. Love Him.** It was love that attracted you to him... but it takes a greater level of love to make a marriage! That first level of love that brought you together was likely infatuation. It is a form of love in its first stages. It is what is commonly called love-at-first-sight or a kind of love that incites intense physical feelings in response to what our object of love says, does, or looks like.

But this kind of love cannot sustain a marriage because eventually he will say things that we disagree with or even hurt us, eventually he will do things that make us sick or anger us, and eventually he will not look as appealing as before.

In contrast God commands a husband and wife to love one another with the highest level of love... a love that is concerned with the other person's well-being and not our own (Ephesians 5:25; Titus 2:4; 1 Corinthians 13:4-7).

Ladies, you can show your appreciation for your husband by loving him unconditionally... and letting him know it!

CONCLUSION: Perhaps your husband is not all he should be or all you want him to be... but are you? You should let him know how much you really appreciate him. (Remind them lessons have been taped)

THE GOOD SENSE TO BE AFRAID

INTRO: We hate to talk about negative things when it comes to the Bible and its teaching on false doctrines, false prophets, and all those other unpleasant subjects that the Bible talks about. And many people that we should just never talk about hell.

Jesus didn't think that way. In his counsel to His twelve apostles, He reminds them of what their greatest concern should be. He told them "And be not afraid of them that kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell" (Matthew 10:28). That advice should not go unheeded.

In our effort to give peace to wounded hearts cut by sin and its consequences, we should never go so far as to remove them from all dread of hell. There are fears that are not only healthy, but also necessary.

I. THE IMPORTANCE OF FEAR

A. A Wholesome Fear Of Dangerous Situations Is A Blessing. That is why mothers and fathers teach their children to be afraid of the things that might lead to injury or even death. Of course, in spite of this, some youngsters rush headlong and heedlessly into disaster. Being afraid would have saved them.

1. There are adults who play the same reckless game when it comes to their relationship with God. They are not without fears. They fear poverty. They fear humiliation. They fear rejection. They fear loneliness. They fear failure. They fear disease. They fear death. But alienation from God and being eternally lost seems to hold no terror for them.

I know people who "know they are going to hell" and will freely admit it. I am not certain they know what "going to hell" means. That attitude is too cavalier. How can anyone be indifferent to spending eternity without God and without help, burning in the fires of hell with the devil and his angels and all the other ungodly human beings who have ever lived!!

Such a person doesn't have the good sense to be afraid.

B. Jesus Talked A Lot About Hell. It is sometimes forgotten that out of the twelve times that the word gehenna (hell) occurs in the Greek New Testament, eleven times it is spoken by the Lord, three of which times are in the Sermon on the Mount.

More, perhaps than anyone else, Jesus speaks of judgment and the awfulness of ultimate rejection. He is the one, rather than His apostles, who becomes so graphic about the horrors of hell.

1. He describes it as a fiery place of absolute anguish and utter blackness (Matthew 8:12; 13:42,50; 22:13; 25:30; Luke 13:28; 16:23-24).
2. Why would the gracious, loving Son of God detail at such great length the horrors of a place that strikes dread into the heart?

Doesn't He know we need comfort and encouragement in our efforts to serve Him? Yes, He knows that, but He also knows that we need to fear hell and stay as far away from it as possible. He is simply warning those whom He loves of the ultimate danger!!

- C. **Doesn't Love Cast Out Fear?** This is all well and good, someone says, but doesn't John say that "perfect love casts out fear" (1 John 4:18)? Yes... the gracious and merciful love of God and our own responding love do serve to cast out hopeless terror and despair, but our Father never intended that His love should remove us from a wholesome shrinking from those things which can cut us off from His forever!!
Our sense of hope and security in Christ should never make us blindly and deafly overly confident (Romans 11:20).

1. The apostle Paul had a special love for the Christians in Thessalonica (2 Thessalonians 1:3). He prayed that God would give them peace at all times (3:16).
And yet He warned them somberly of the "day of the Lord" which comes as "a thief in the night" (1 Thessalonians 5:1-8) and of the Lord's fiery indignation on those who do not "know God" and who do not "obey the gospel" (2 Thessalonians 1:7-8).

CONCLUSION: However much we may feel comfort and assurance in Christ, we should never lose our sense of the awfulness of hell! That awful place of utter darkness where men are cast off forever from the face of the God of light. That place where there is no goodness or kindness or gentleness or love. That place where all the ungodly men and women of all the ages will be heaped together in one unholy congregation of hate and malice and hopelessness.

My friend, I say to you with the same earnestness with which we love God and find joy in the thought of heaven... let us also fear hell (Matthew 10:28). Let us have the good sense to be afraid!!

THE CONSEQUENCES OF ERROR

INTRO: In the Bible, the word TRUTH never appears in the plural! Truth is treated as a single whole. Whatever is true is but a part of that great whole of truth and will fit perfectly into its little niche. No niche will be found however, for anything that is not true and a person who is determined to hold on to any error will find his whole perception of truth disturbed.

A remarkable demonstration of this and other facts about error is found in 1 Corinthians 15.

I. THE CONSEQUENCES OF ERROR

A. Acceptance Of Error Demands Rejection Of Truth. Those who made up the Corinthian church professed to accept the gospel, but still rejected the concept of resurrection. The apostle Paul showed the inconsistency of such a position.

1. He reminds them that the resurrection is a basic fact of the gospel which he preached to them (15:1-11).
2. He tells them that to deny the resurrection was to undercut everything about their Christianity (15:12-19).

Apparently, the Corinthians had not recognized these inconsistencies. By bringing them to their attention, Paul challenged them to make a choice — the gospel or their Greek philosophy. Both could not be true. Acceptance of one demanded rejection of the other.

B. Acceptance Of Error Affects Conduct. To some people, such issues as the resurrection of the dead are merely theoretical and really have no practical importance. They say "What difference does it make what happens after we die? We know we have a life in the here and now and we need to concentrate on it".

Such an attitude is like saying to a student "Why worry about final exams, graduation and what happens after that? Just concentrate on improving the quality of campus life". Final exams, graduation and life after college are what campus life is all about.

To deny the fact of resurrection — or even disregard it — affects one's whole outlook on the present. If there is a resurrection and eternity, then preparing for it is what life is all about. However, "if the dead do not rise, 'Let us eat and drink for tomorrow we die'" (15:32). Their denial of the resurrection, as theoretical as it might seem, explains their grossly immoral conduct.

C. Association With Those In Error Affects Conduct. It seems a strange place to find this comment about "evil companions corrupting good morals" (15:33) in the middle of a discussion about the resurrection. But look at it in the context.

Paul is warning believers in the resurrection that association with unbelievers can affect their conduct, even though they might still

hold to their belief in resurrection. The influence of peers is often stronger than the influence of convictions.

II. MODERN APPLICATIONS

A. **Man's Beginning And His End.** Occasionally, we come across people who believe in God and His Son, but think that discussions about how man came into being on this earth and what will happen at the Lord's final coming are immaterial since we find people taking such different positions on each. And since we were not here when it all began, and the second coming is still in the future, that it doesn't matter what we believe about those things.

1. Evolution. Some believe in much of evolution and still hold to a belief in God and the Bible. They even look at Genesis 1 as an allegory or story rather than a factual history of how the earth and its life came into being.

But evolution and the Genesis record cannot be made to harmonize, and Jesus said that God who made man, made him and her separate in the very beginning (Matthew 19:4-6)

Many consider the question of evolution insignificant. They ask "What difference does it make where we came from? What matters is how we live". The fact is that where we came from makes a big difference. If we are the product of creation then there is a purpose for our existence and a standard for us to follow. If we evolved, we are the products of mere chance, there is no reason for our existence and no standard by which we will be judged. It then becomes a "jungle code" of ethics.

2. Premillennialism. Some believe the Lord is coming back and will rapture away the saints and give men another chance to accept Christ before He destroys the wicked and either refurbishes the earth or takes the saved to heaven.

People say "What difference does it make if we are premillennial (believing in a literal 1000 year reign) or amillennial (not believing)? What matters is how we live now".

Well if we believe we may have another chance, then we may be more tempted to waste the first one, whereas if we believe what the Bible says about God destroying it all when Christ comes back then we will take heed what kind of people we are (2 Peter 3:10-13). We are looking for a new heaven and earth... a new realm to dwell in in the spirit.

It really does make a difference!

CONCLUSION: Jesus said "You shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32). Nothing else has that promise. My friend, those are the consequences of error. Shouldn't we believe the truth?

SOMEDAY PAYDAY

INTRO: A national survey of various denominations revealed startling statistics about church members — 10% cannot be found, 20% never attend, 25% never pray, 35% never read the word of God, 40% never contribute to the Lord's work, 70% never attend Sunday evening services, 75% never assume responsibility in the program of the church, 95% never win a soul to Christ, yet 100% expect to go to heaven.

What we see is a great number who hope and expect to get to heaven, but relatively few making any preparation. Will God save those who are so inactive in the work of the Lord? Will He save those who live for themselves 6 days a week and for God 1 day a week?

There is a principle found in the New Testament which applies to every phase of life. "Whatever a man sows, that shall he also reap" (Galatians 6:7). Think about how true that is... Sow corn, reap corn. Sow violence, reap violence. Sow strife, reap division. Sow word of God, reap Christian. Sow word of God plus something else, reap a denomination. Sow evil, reap punishment.

In so many areas of life you and I reap what we sow. We want to make some application of this principle in the lesson and simply entitle it "Someday Payday".

The man who thinks that God will not require us to be punished for wickedness is described as wicked, proud, and arrogant. He may know what the Bible says, but really deep-down, he does not believe that (Psalm 10:4,6,11,13). Paul said "Be not deceived, God is not mocked..." God will punish sin.

I. GOODNESS AND SEVERITY OF GOD

A. We Lose Sight Of The Severe Nature Of God. God is truly righteous and just. Therefore, God cannot just overlook sins. Sin demands punishment (Romans 6:23). For God to remain just and righteous, He must punish sin. Here we see the severity of God.

We see His goodness in sending His Son to suffer the punishment for our sins and give us a way of escape (Romans 11:22).

God shows kindness and blesses His children, but He destroys His enemies. God is a place of refuge for His own and a terror to His adversaries (Nahum 1:2-8).

B. Thus, As A Man Sows, So Shall He Reap. If he sows sin and disobedience in his life, he will reap punishment. The punishment is not immediate, but SOMEDAY comes PAYDAY.

II. SOMEDAY PAYDAY

A. Nations. Nations eventually reap what they have sown too. IF the leaders are cruel to the people, eventually, the people rise up and destroy them.

If the rulers are evil and disobedient to God, they will reap what they have sown. God's wrath comes down on them and destroys them. A

nation which loses sight of God's principles of justice and righteousness will be torn down (Proverbs 14:34).

A nation which elevates itself too high will be brought down by God. God will show us we are just men (Psalm 9:20). SOMEDAY will come PAYDAY (Psalm 9:17). Whether that be Iraq or us!

- B. Denominations.** Jesus promised to build His church (Matthew 16:18)... not 1200 different denominations. There are many people in the denominational world who are sincere and active in the work of their church, but does Jesus recognize what is being done (Matthew 7:21-23). Just doing something for the Lord does not mean He is pleased with anything we do.

When the words of men are given more importance than the words of God we are barking up the wrong tree (Matthew 15:9). When we lose sight of the importance of speaking as the oracles of God, then we lose the favor of God.

When we establish organizations which we call a church and teach things other than what God teaches, then we will pay (Matthew 15:13). Sincere religious people are condemned by God and will pay for their disobedience.

God will allow you to believe a lie if you do not love the truth as you say. He does not force the truth on anyone (2 Thessalonians 2:8-12). Believe what you want but SOMEDAY is going to be PAYDAY.

- C. Sound Churches.** There is an attitude in many of the "sound churches" which God cannot tolerate. We tend to think that as long as we are doctrinally sound, we are in great shape. We preach baptism for the remission of sins, no instrumental music, no church support of human institutions, and so we think we are sound.

We can preach the right thing and still not be sound. We can be sound in our practice but as dead as a doornail. If we have an ungodly "I don't care" attitude, then we won't care about teaching the gospel to others, worshipping God every chance we get and edifying others.

And SOMEDAY PAYDAY is going to come for us because we draw near with our mouths but our heart is far from Him (Matthew 15:8). Brethren, SOMEDAY we will pay for such complacency and indifference. SOMEDAY God is going to spew us out of His mouth.

- D. Alien Sinner.** You have the choice of obeying the gospel of Christ or disobeying. He does not force you. You can be a part of the world, you can be involved in sin all your life, you can prosper in sin and work your way to the top. You can even be happy while living in sin.

You may live 80-90 years and enjoy sinning all that time but SOMEDAY will come PAYDAY! Someday you will give an account of the life you have lived.

CONCLUSION: SOMEDAY PAYDAY is coming for all. The only protection you have from God's wrath is in His Son. Are you going to wait until you smell the brimstone to make your life right with God? Then it is too late for you, PAYDAY is THAT DAY!!

UNSAVED BELIEVERS

INTRO: All of your life you have likely heard it said that there is nothing to do to be saved... "only believe"! This has to be about the most popular doctrine being taught today. But have you ever found anywhere in the Bible where anyone was ever taught to "just believe" in Christ to be saved? Can you put your finger on the passage that says one must "only believe" or one is "saved at the point of faith", before and without any further acts of obedience, such as baptism, righteous living, etc?

It wouldn't make me mad if you showed it to me... In fact, I need to see it because that is not what I have been teaching and I don't want to lead anyone astray.

However, if I can show you just one person who really believed but was not saved, then the teaching that one must "only believe" will have been proven false. Actually, there are several cases of unsaved believers in the New Testament.

I. UNSAVED BELIEVERS

A. Rulers Of The Synagogue (John 12:42-43). Confessing Christ as God's Son is something one must do in addition to believing. They are not one and the same thing. If so, the rulers would have been saved! The Bible makes a clear distinction between the two (Romans 10:10).

If it is sufficient to "only believe" then these rulers, who refused to confess Jesus, would have been saved.

B. King Agrippa (Acts 26:27-29). Paul said Agrippa believed, but Agrippa admitted that he was not yet a Christian. Thus, one is not saved when he just believes!

C. The Devils (James 2:19). They called Him the Son of God, "the Holy One of God" (Matthew 8:29; Mark 1:24). But that belief and even confession was not enough to save them! If all one has to do is believe, then the demons would be saved too!!

II. SONS OF GOD

A. One Can Be A Believer Without Being A Spiritual Son Of God (John 1:12). Did you notice what it said? A believer has the power to become a son of God. "Only believing" does not make him one!

Did you ever read where one "believed into Christ"? No, but you have read where one is "baptized into Christ" (Galatians 3:26-27).

- Note the tenses of the words in those verses. You are children of God by faith because of something you did in the past. You are (present tense) children of God by faith because you have been (past tense) baptized!!

They could not have presently been called children of God if they had not taken this past action... because it put them "into Christ". If this meant they had "earned their salvation" by doing what God told them to do, then Paul did not know it. And his

words are inspired of God!

2. Note that saying one is saved by faith is not the same as saying one is saved by faith only. One is true (Ephesians 2:8), the other is false (James 2:24).
3. Isn't it strange that nearly every time baptism is mentioned that salvation is precisely what is connected with it? Consider what the Bible says about baptism.
 - a. Mark 16:16. He who believes and is baptized will be saved.
 - b. Acts 2:38. Baptism is for the remission of sins.
 - c. Acts 22:16. Baptism washes away sins.
 - d. Romans 6:3-4. We were buried with Him in baptism into His death... even so we also should walk in newness of life.
 - e. Colossians 2:12-13. Buried with Him in baptism... having forgiven you all trespasses.
 - f. 1 Peter 3:21. Baptism doth also now save us.

CONCLUSION: There are many popular evangelists today whose preaching draws large crowds and thousands of responses. But it has not resulted in the saving of one soul... For they are telling these people to "only believe" and you will be saved. And that "baptism has nothing to do with salvation". And it rips apart my soul that so many people are trusting these men who are leading them astray and not preaching to them the "whole counsel of God" (Acts 20:20).

Dear listener, are you a believer in Christ? I know you are, or you would not be listening this morning? You have the right to become a son of God (John 1:12). And the way you do that is by believing and being baptized (Galatians 3:26-27). Have you been baptized into Christ? Or were you taught that you were saved by "only believing", before being baptized?

The Scriptures are clear. Is Christ the author of salvation to all them that "only believe"? No! Listen to God's word (Hebrews 5:9). Will you humbly submit to His word?

If we may assist you, won't you please contact us at the Harrodsburg Church of Christ?

PRAYING FOR GOD'S WILL

INTRO: Thank you ~~...~~... and I would like to welcome everyone to Message of Truth. This war in the Middle East has really put our lives on hold. Most of our thoughts during the day are on our men and women in the war. We leave the TV and radio on constantly, hoping to get a little more news.

This war has brought us to our knees! Oh, we ~~are~~ not ~~being~~ defeated, but we are going to our knees in prayer to God. As well we should! Sometimes we need things to show us how human and in need of God we are!!

We see signs everywhere that say "Pray for peace"... and we do. Daily! ~~For~~ for peace to prevail in this conflict and that our troops come home soon. We should do that! But there is something even more important we should pray for! That in whatever happens, God's will be done (Matthew 6:10).

Bob and I were talking about this matter a little bit last Sunday morning. Let's look at ourselves and our motives. Are we just being selfish in our prayers, or are we praying that God be glorified and His will be done in the events occurring in the Middle East? My friend, most importantly we need to pray that the will of God and His Son be done because they are in control and are working out their own plans for the future of this world. You see, Jesus rules now (Ephesians 1:19-23; Revelation 1:4-5).

I. GOD'S PERSPECTIVE

- A. God Sees The Big Picture.** We don't! We only see the things that affect us, our families, our friends, and maybe in a larger perspective, our nation.

God sees how all these events will affect the United States, Iraq, Iran, Syria, Israel, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Soviet Union, Great Britain, France, Japan, and all the other nations of the world. Then too we sometimes forget that there are other things going on in other parts of the world — the reuniting of East and West Germany, the shedding of Communism by so many of the European nations, and rumblings in China.

- B. God Is Working Out His Plans.** All of us are the players who work out His plans for mankind. He rules through His Son (1 Peter 3:22). God manipulates the nations prospering or destroying them in the hope that they will seek after and serve Him (Acts 17:26-28). Depending on our response to these events, God determines our future (Jeremiah 18:7-10).

Maybe you think... but that is the way He did things in the Old Testament. We are not living under the Old Testament. So what does the Old Testament and Law of Moses have to do with how God says He rules in the nations of men? God's principles of rule in the nations is no different than it has ever been (Romans 15:4).

God has plans for this world... We are foolish if we claim that we know what they are... I certainly don't! But I do know that He has plans and it is all in His control, as He uses us to carry them out.

II. PRAYERS FROM OUR PERSPECTIVE

- A. Realize That God Hears Our Prayers.** He hears the prayers of the

righteous and answers them unless they are in conflict with His will (1 Peter 3:12; James 5:16). First, we must be sure that our lives are being lived consistently with His commands, or He does not hear our prayers (1 John 3:22).

1. **Do We Pray Selfishly?** We pray for peace because that is what we want. We should pray for the things that mean much to us... God encourages that (Philippians 4:6).

Pray for peace. I do!! But at the same time pray that God's will take precedence and be done because it may be different from ours!! Even Jesus did that (Matthew 26:39,42).

2. **God Answers Prayer.** But sometimes He answers differently from what we have requested!!
 - a. Moses asked to be allowed to cross the Jordan River to see the Promised Land... God let him see the Promised Land from a mountaintop (Deuteronomy 3:23-27).
 - b. Mary and Martha asked Jesus to heal their brother Lazarus so He would not die... Jesus let him die so He could give Lazarus back to them from the dead (John 11:3-6,21,43-44).
 - c. Paul asked three times that a thorn in his flesh be removed... God instead gave him grace to bear it (2 Corinthians 12:8-9).
 - d. We have prayed often for peace, but we have still gone to war... perhaps that is the only way God could answer our prayer. Before there can be lasting peace, the hindrance to that peace must be destroyed!!

Sometimes the way God accomplishes His will is different than what we think it should be or different than we can even understand (cf. Matthew 16:21-23). Just remember one thing... God's ways are not ours and who are we to question His wisdom (Romans 11:33-35).

CONCLUSION: My friend, we must never give up praying. When we pray, we are appealing to the only power who can actually change things in this world (Luke 18:1-8).

We should daily pray for our leaders and their wisdom in the decisions they make (1 Timothy 2:1-2). We need to pray and then wait patiently, for the Lord hears (Psalm 40:1).

And while we're at it... did anyone think to pray for Saddam Hussein and the Iraqi people... that they might cast aside the religion of Islam, seek after God, and find salvation from their sins in Jesus Christ (Matthew 5:43-45). My friend, that is what makes us sons of God and not of the same evil power they are following!!

SOME WHO CANNOT BE SAVED

INTRO: Are you getting tired of hearing all the bad news on the television each night... reading it in the newspaper and magazines... and not even being able to get away from it when you listen to the radio or share a conversation with a friend or neighbor? I am! It's downright discouraging!!

But there is "good news" for us to hear... That good news is that "the gospel of Christ is the power of God unto salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek" (Romans 1:16). There are glad tidings of good things and "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, who bring glad tidings of good things" (Romans 10:15).

The "good news" is that man can be saved from his sins. That message is to be taken to all the world and we are to tell ~~all~~ all men what they must do in order to be saved (Mark 16:15-16). The scope of the gospel is universal... no one is excluded from the glad tidings of salvation in and through Jesus Christ because of race, financial status, geographical location, or anything else. God is no respecter of persons (Acts 10:34-35). That is good news...

But, as good as this news is, we still cannot get away from the bad news! The bad news is that there are some who cannot be saved!!

I. SOME WHO CANNOT BE SAVED

A. Some Cannot Be Saved Because They Do Not Believe. But this has nothing to do with God. It is not God's fault!! He has conceived and revealed the glorious gospel plan of salvation in words too plain to be misunderstood (Ephesians 3:1-11).

Faith in Jesus as the Christ is necessary for salvation (John 8:21,24). Whose fault was it that these Jews did not believe? It certainly was not God's fault. He gave them abundant proof (John 12:37-40). Their unbelief was their own fault.

That is the bad news. They heard the same message the believers heard and saw the same miracles, but did not believe. Sadly, there are many today who do not believe the truth. They do not comprehend it, and therefore listen to false teachers who tickle their ears and blind them to the truth (2 Corinthians 4:3-4).

B. Some Cannot Be Saved Because They Will Not Repent. Repentance is a change of heart or mind that includes a change of action. It is essential to salvation (Luke 13:3).

Yet, some people hold to their sins and refuse to give them up. They are either in love with the sin, or it would be too hard, or they are too proud to admit they are wrong. Many people have been brought to trembling limbs and bitter tears... but still will not budge. They know what they should do, but they are immovable. They cannot make themselves do it! They don't mean to be defiant, but they defy the God who made them and the Lord who died for them by their inaction.

How sad that such people cannot be saved (Acts 17:30-31)!!

C. Some Cannot Be Saved Because They Do Not Desire Salvation. They feel

no need for a Savior... they do not realize they have something of danger to be saved from... sin and the punishment of sin in an eternal hell. They think they are just fine (Revelation 3:17-18).

How shall we escape though if we neglect the way of escape (John 14:6; Hebrews 2:2-3)?

- D. **Some Cannot Be Saved Because They Trust In Their Own Good Works.** This type of person says he believes in following "The Golden Rule". He is morally good and good to his fellowman, so he is not really sure why he needs Christ, salvation, and the church.

These may be the greatest works that a man can do, but no man is saved simply by the worth and merit of his works (Ephesians 2:8-9; Luke 17:10). We cannot do enough. It is not a matter of us not being evil, cruel, and ruthless people, but if we have not had the slightest of our sins washed away by the blood of Christ, then we are doomed (Romans 6:23).

CONCLUSION: Dear listener, the good news is that God has sent His Son into the world to save it from its sins (1 Timothy 2:3-6)... the bad news is that not everyone can be saved, because not everyone is desperately longing for salvation and willing to give up everything to obtain it.

Like a rich young ruler who came to Jesus wanting to know "what must I do to be saved", even though he was a good, wonderful person who served God in areas he wanted to, he was told there was one thing that stood in the way between him and eternal life (Mark 10:21-22)... and he could not give it up!!

Friend... don't be that close to salvation and miss it....

PRIORITY OF TRUTH

INTRO: There are some things in this world that are far more important than others... some things that are actually worth sacrificing many other worthy motives and ideals for... some things which must never be compromised at any cost!

One of those things is the truth. Before sentencing Jesus to death by crucifixion, Pilate asked Jesus "What is truth?" as if it was some kind of elusive thing that philosophers and thinkers can never come to find! A couple of years earlier Jesus had said that truth was able to free men by the mere possession and knowledge of it (John 8:31-32,36).

The wise man said that truth is such a precious thing that we should do whatever we must to obtain it, and then hang on to it with all we've got (Proverbs 23:23). If it is not truth, we must not accept it... if it is not truth, it can be only one other thing... it is false!! And false doctrine, along with false teaching will only destine man's soul for destruction for both teaching it and believing it (2 Peter 2:1-3; 1 John 4:1).

I. TRUTH MUST HAVE PRIORITY OVER EVERYTHING

A. Truth Must Have Priority Over Friendship. Differences are unpleasant. They rub us the wrong way and hampered constructive, united relationships. But sometimes, there cannot be friendship or unity where truth is involved, because one refuses to abide by truth (1 Corinthians 1:10; 11:19). When that happens, friendships must be set aside to stand up on the side of truth!!

Truth is more important than friendship. It is not a friendly act to compromise the truth to maintain friendship and equity among people (James 4:4; Matthew 10:34-38).

B. Truth Must Have Priority Over Courtesy. Christians should be kind and considerate people (Ephesians 4:31-32). As a matter of fact, we must go out of our way to insure that we are gentle and kind to all, sometimes even when we are correcting those who are in error (2 Timothy 2:24-26).

But in no way are we to show him courtesy in the things he is teaching which are false (2 John 9-11). Courtesy must step aside, not being replaced by arrogance, hatred, or vengeance, but step aside so that boldness, truthfulness, forcefulness, and hard-nosed exposure of error can take over (Ephesians 5:9-12).

I am sorry if it makes him look bad or hurts his feelings, but truth must take precedence over courtesy.

C. Truth Must Have Priority Over Peace, Unity, And Fellowship. Those are things that are so desirable among brethren and believers in Christ. It is sad that we cannot enjoy more of it, especially since it was Jesus' prayer for us (John 17:20-21).

But these things... peace, unity, and fellowship... these are results, they are not goals in and of themselves. Each of these is the result of everyone conforming to the truth. You can never find unity with those who hold to error, only truth!! (1 John 1:7)

We have been sanctified by truth (John 17:17) and the church is to

be the "pillar and ground of the truth" (1 Timothy 3:15). How then, can we have peace with that which is false? How can we be united with that which separates us? How can light have fellowship or unity with darkness (2 Corinthians 6:14-18).

D. What Priority Must Truth Hold? It must be acknowledged (2 Timothy 2:25)... it must be believed (2 Thessalonians 2:12-13)... it must be obeyed (Romans 2:8; Galatians 3:1)... and it must be loved above everything else (2 Thessalonians 2:10).

CONCLUSION: My friend, do you believe, accept, and live by the truth? It does make a difference what you believe about the church that Jesus built and the rest of the denominations... it does make a difference what you believe about baptism or faith and works... it does make a difference what you believe about marriage, divorce, and remarriage or cohabitation... it does make a difference what you believe about the kingdom of Christ and His coming!

It does make a difference what you believe about instrumental music in worship to God and the work of the church... it does make a difference whether you believe there is a heaven or a hell...

It makes a difference what you believe about any and all of these things, because if you built your faith on these, it will be built either on a foundation of truth or a foundation of error!! You cannot deny it... "Have I therefore become your enemy because I tell you the truth?" (Galatians 4:16)?