

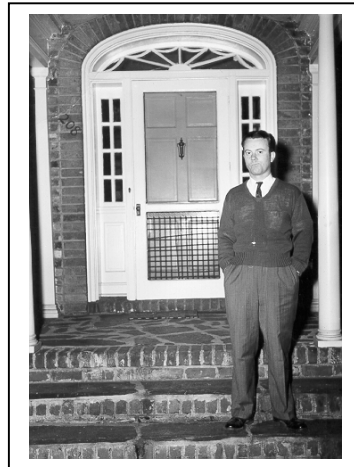


## *Glimpses of Grace (#11)*

By

**Pastor James W. Collison**

**September 2001**



## *Acknowledgements*

The very first thing I wish to do is to thank God for his inspiring guidance in writing this book. My sincere desire is to give him all the praise and honor while hoping and praying that everyone who reads these writings will receive a blessing.

As I wane in health and wax in years, encouragement from friends becomes a greater blessing with each passing day. I earnestly thank God for the following people:

Mr. Ron Banuk for his long hours of reading, typing, valuable advice, and redactor's notes which are greatly appreciated.

Mrs. Patricia Banuk, his wife, for her untiring efforts in typing, encouragement and time.

Mrs. Janet Chambers, my darling daughter for her typing and interest in the endeavor of getting the manuscript together.

Mrs. Ernestine Stith for her much appreciated help in doing the initial typing with enthusiasm and encouragement.

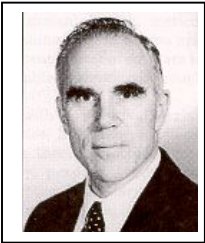
Rev. Lyn O'Berry, my pastor, showing his faith in getting the book on the Linthicum Baptist Church website.

Finally, my dear wife Ruth who has my undying gratitude for the great effort she made in making this possible. In our prayers we pray that the Lord will be praised for letting us witness these and other glimpses of his wonderful grace.

Pastor James W. Collison  
11 September, 2001

## Redactor's Note

By Ron Banuk



I must admit with some chagrin, that after reading the first two or three short stories written by Pastor James W. Collison, I was unimpressed. Perhaps I was looking for spectacular displays of God's bountiful goodness—and there are many such examples in literature, and I, who have created a ledger on such events, am well informed on the subject. That is not to say that the examples of God's salvatory grace shown in these short stories are not displays of bountiful goodness. They are. Each and every one is a poignant example of the Almighty's *hesed* (lovingkindness) to man, and this was Pastor Collison's focus, and that was exactly why I missed the underlying meaning of this collection of short stories.

The Pastor focuses on God's *hesed* to man, but the undercurrent to these stories, the backbeat to his praise-the-Lord melodies, is his own *hesed* to his fellow man, his lovingkindness to man out of loyalty to God. That is the real story here and Pastor Collison disguised it very well. Nowhere does he take credit for the events leading up to a man's salvation. He merely says that he was proud to be a participant in the experience. And yet, he, in fact, was the cause of salvation to all these people. This does not mean that he brought salvation to them, no man can except Jesus Christ. It also does not mean that he caused their salvation, but it does mean that God allowed him to be an instrument in the providential hands of the Holy Spirit because of his initiative inspired by *hesed*.

The initiative is teachable. The *hesed* is not. It, like the Book of Ruth, is only demonstrable. Herein you will observe simple acts like visitations, phone calls, concerned thoughts, a 50-mile drive, a search through a city's taverns, and a second invitation at a revival. These acts when fueled by *hesed* can be used providentially by Jehovah to usher in the Holy Spirit by bringing the salvation of Jesus Christ to lost souls so that we all may fulfill the reason of our existence—praising the Lord!

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## Introduction

By Pastor James W. Collison

I have been a pastor since my thirties. In the course of my career, I have witnessed blessings from the Lord that I came to regard as going with the territory. Now that poor health has forced me into retirement, I miss the great joy I once experienced preaching the Lord Jesus Christ at a revival or counseling a couple in the ways of the Lord. Sharing highlights from my career with friends has been as uplifting to me as it has to them. Consequently, in 1996 I began to put these experiences to pen so that I may share them with the greatest number of people with the hope that all will receive a blessing by it.

I am presently on dialysis because my kidneys have shut down. Driving a car is now but a memory and walking is accomplished with the aid of two canes and my gentle wife at my side. Worst of all, I cannot read or write so the word of God reaches me through what is left of my hearing. If I cogitate on these circumstances long enough, I can become depressed. But these miasmal thoughts are quickly vaporized by the blessings the Lord has and continues to give me. I spent sixty years in conjugal union with my first wife and my present wife had spent forty-five years with her spouse before he went to the Lord. **Her love for me keeps me focused on the two most important things in this life: praising the Lord and bringing souls through the narrow gate to salvation.**

## Chapter 1

### My Conversion and Call to the Ministry



I was born in Caroline County, Virginia in 1916. Since my father was frequently away from home tending to his duties as a blacksmith, I received much of my religious education from my mother and grandmother who attended a small Baptist church called Enon. A few years later, my family moved to Baltimore, Maryland where I made a profession of faith at a Methodist church at the age of twelve and was baptized by sprinkling. Two years later, I was baptized by immersion at the First Baptist Church of Brooklyn, New York.

Shortly thereafter, I realized that God was calling me into the ministry, so I promised verbally to pursue a vocation as a preacher. But the embers from that initial conviction began to cool and after fifteen years only ashes remained until one day a voice seemed to kindle within me saying: That promise you made. What have you done about it? Soon the promise I had made at the age of fourteen became an obsession and I encountered nights with only snatches of sleep. Then I had a strange dream in which a voice told me to preach at Enon. Yes, Lord, I'll go, I said, but you must prepare the way. So struck was I by the encounter that I woke my wife. She was not impressed with my dream or my youthful promise. "Many young boys make promises to God", she said, implying that I may not have been responsible. "I believe", I said, "that God was calling that little boy and is now calling this man to the ministry." We then decided that if this were truly God's will, he would make the first move. When he opened the door, we would act.

The following day, I shared this experience with a co-worker who reflected intently on what I had said. "Yes", he said, "the hand of the Lord is here." A day later, he approached me saying that he had shared our conversation with his father who extended the opportunity for me to speak at his house gathering the following Monday night. I reluctantly accepted. Truthfully, it was not what I was expecting. But I did address nineteen people who were mostly neighbors gathered at this man's home. The following Monday, I spoke again, this time with the pastor of a local church present. His church was called Enon by chance

per chance<sup>1</sup> and was located a few miles south of the Enon I had known as a child. I was now convinced that this was the hand of God.

Now making plans in earnest, I asked my boss about the longevity of the present job to which he said there was no immediate end in sight, and then asked why I asked. I told him that I would have to end my employment with him so that I could begin my ministry in the Baltimore area. We moved, and I began working for a large insurance company. For a four-year period, I studied by correspondence and preached wherever invited. Then I was fortunate to be called to a church as a full-time pastor. I then secured permission to attend the Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary. I graduated and have continued in God's ministry preaching revivals ever since.

I thank God for extending me the privilege to preach his Word. As a retired eighty-five-year-old preacher, I continue to preach on occasions when my health permits.

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### **Important Dates in The Life of Pastor James Collison**

- 1916, 27 March..... Born in Caroline County, Virginia
- 1928..... Saved at Curtis Bay Methodist Episcopalian Church in Maryland
- 1928..... Baptized by Sprinkling at Curtis Bay on Easter
- 1930..... Baptized by Immersion at First Baptist Church in Brooklyn, MD
- 1936, 18 April..... Married to Roma Lee Lennon in Brooklyn Park, Maryland
- 1938, 24 April..... Birth of Daughter, Janet Kay Collison in B.P., MD
- 1946, 14 February..... Birth of Son, James Woodford Collison, Jr. in B.P.
- 1958, 25 May..... Ordained at First Baptist Church of Brooklyn, MD
- 1963, 3 May..... Graduated from Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wakeforest, North Carolina
- 1981, March..... Retired from Jessup Baptist Church in Maryland after 12 Years Service
- 1996, 11 February..... Pastor Emeritus at First Baptist Church of Brooklyn, MD
- 1997, 3 February..... Wife Roma Lee Died in Brooklyn Park, MD
- 2000, 17 June..... Married to Ruth Lowman at Linthicum Baptist Church in Linthicum, MD

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<sup>1</sup> By chance per chance: This is a pleonasm, using redundancy or extra words to express a point. It is used in Scripture in Ruth and Ecclesiastes. Here it is used to imply the opposite, i.e., it was not chance at all, but the providence of God.



## **The Worst Man God Ever Made**

I began my career pastoring a church in a very small community consisting of a few houses and a country store. One day a middle-aged man knocked at my study door. He entered showing all the signs of distress. He was an alcoholic and his world had turned upside down. As he tortuously described his predicament, I quickly saw that the only way to restore order in this man's life was to preach Jesus Christ to him. He understood. His countenance softened, then in sorrow he lowered his face. His voice cracked as he said, "O Lord, I must be the worst man you ever made. If you do not hear me, who will?" As I continued to talk to him, peacefulness settled over him. After confessing his guilt, he left with restored confidence. After that I only saw him once and at a distance. I continued to pray for him and thanked God for the opportunity to witness to him.

## **That Little Book with the Gospel according to John**

While preparing for the ministry, I worked as a debt collector for an insurance agency. Time was scarce during these years for my time was divided among working, studying, and preaching part time. One day while checking my debit records, I remembered collecting from a woman whose husband had suffered from a string of heart attacks, which left him nearly enfeebled. He had been just strong enough to walk to the shade of a large tree sit down and read throughout the day. So I returned to his house, called him by name, and asked if he knew that I preached. He said he knew that, that he respected it, and that he had also known my father. I then mentioned that I had collected from him for several years without talking to him about Christ. After a few minutes of talking and praying, he indicated that he wished to give his heart to Jesus. I then gave him the gospel according to John and left all the while wondering why I had not spoken to him earlier.

Making my rounds the following month, his wife related to me that he was much weaker and asked if I could visit him at his bedside. He seemed very happy and exclaimed that that little book with the Gospel according to John was the most beautiful work he had ever read. He was very happy, and as I was about to leave his wife told me what a changed man he was. It was the last time I saw him alive. Two weeks later, the family asked me to preach at his funeral. It was my first funeral and I thanked the Lord for the occasion.

Two weeks later while collecting at that house, his wife mentioned that while washing his pants, she notice a red dye in the water. Further scrutiny revealed

that the coloring had been caused by the cover from the little book with the Gospel according to John. He had been reading this prior to his death. This brought a lump to my throat and tears to my eyes. It was a memorable experience that helped to propel me into the ministry.

### **Don't You Know Who I Am**

I was in a pulpit preaching at a mission when I noticed through a window beside me a man across the street. He was on his hands and knees crawling on the sidewalk. Past one set of front steps he went, then another, and until he reached what apparently were the steps to his apartment. He then crawled to the top and sat upright swaying in a drunken stupor. The church members told me he had done this many times before and that they had been in prayer for him but without success.

Two weeks later, I had the resolve to cross the street and knock on his door. Completely sober, he greeted me and invited me in. Obviously God had prepared the visit. I then spoke about Jesus Christ and asked if he had ever thought of giving his heart to the Lord. "Don't you know who I am?" he interjected. "Yes", I said. "I have seen you crawling along the sidewalk; but Jesus Christ can save anybody." Then I turned to a verse in the New Testament and let him read it himself: *For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved—*Romans 10:13. Then he put his hands together, looked downward, and said he was ready. He prayed the sinner's prayer. Then, quite surprisingly he said, "If you go back across the street, I will get dressed and visit the mission, if they will have me." I left, went back to the mission and prepared for the evening service. He walked in, clean and well dressed just as the service began. When the invitation was called, he came forward to a group of Christians who greeted him with tears of joy.

I then took the time to visit the man's former employer, who admitted he probably was a changed man, but, nevertheless, it was company policy not to rehire him because of the detrimental effect it would have on the other employees. So we found him a job at a restaurant. His descent into alcoholism had a devastating effect on his former life. He had lost his job, his wife, and now lived in a third-floor apartment.

While I was called to pastor another church, I inquired as to his progress. Despite good attendance for many months and showing a spirit that was obviously born again, he had a relapse. For nearly a week he had been on a drinking binge. That evening I searched all the downtown bars for him but without success. So I waited on the steps of his rooming house. After an hour's wait, I could see him coming home in the distance. In a sober voice, he explained how someone offered him a drink that opened the dam to a weeklong bender. But it wasn't the fun it used to be he related. We walked up to his third-floor apartment and prayed

at his bedside. I left him, but continued to check on his progress with the mission. From what I could learn, he was never seen backsliding again. I thank the Lord for having been part of this experience.

### **Just As I Am**

I was standing on the sidewalk in front of a church I pastored doing a revival when a middle-aged man stopped to talk to me. I recognized him to be one who would freely imbibe, so I invited him to our evening revival. He kept his promise, but was obviously drunk and carried a shiner I could see all the way from the pulpit. During the sermon, he remained in the back of the church. At the invitation, he stood up, walked down the aisle to the preacher, turned around, and knelt facing the people with his head resting on the front pew. Although drunk, we witnessed to him. Had we not sung “Just As I Am” for the invitation? We both invited him to the study to outline in more detail God’s plan for salvation. By his conversation, we both felt that the Holy Spirit had gotten through to him and that he was convicted. I then made arrangements to visit him every morning to pray with him. It was here that I learned he was divorced. But now he wanted his wife back and asked if I would be the mediator.

I visited his wife at her place of employment and spoke with her at length. She was glad to hear of his change in life and cautiously agreed to return to him.

My prayer sessions with the reunited couple continued and appeared to be doing some good. I heard him pray thanking the Lord for his blessings and asking God to safeguard him from the evil of drink adding that if he were ever on the verge of a relapse, the Lord would take him home to be with him because he did not want to spoil his testimony. I was now completely convinced that this man knew the Lord. In a few weeks, both joined our church and even sang in the choir.

Years had passed and I was preaching in another state when I received a call informing me of his death and a request to preach at his funeral. Talking to his wife, I learned that he had lived a good life for many years, but for a very brief time had backslid and began imbibing heavily. It was on one of these occasions that he was walking on a river dock when he fell in and drowned. His surviving wife’s question to the preacher was “What about my dear husband?” So I reminded her about his prayer years ago asking that the Lord take him rather than he continue in sin and ruin his testimony. Yes, he was born again, but failed to meet the mark so the Lord took him home at his request.<sup>2</sup>

While standing in the viewing room, one of his sons, a law enforcement officer, asked me how to be saved. So I shared God’s plan for salvation and while

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<sup>2</sup> Paul says: For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.—1 Cor 11:30. This shows that the Lord brings illness and even death to believers who sin.

standing at his father's head he surrendered his will to trust in Jesus Christ. I praised the Lord for allowing me to witness this man's salvation.

### **Thanksgiving Dinner**

It was a typical Sunday morning service at the mission. We were singing when suddenly the doors burst open and in walked a lady with bandages on her face and bruises on areas that were not bandaged. During the sermon, I could not help wondering what was troubling her. After giving the invitation and having no responses, I dismissed the congregation. It was only then that this battered woman approached the pulpit to speak to me. She was sixty years old and at one point in her life had been a Sunday school teacher. But for the past two years she had been overwhelmed by alcohol; and home, it seemed, had been one saloon after another. Meanwhile, her husband and two nearly grown children seemed more estranged as time went on. I witnessed to her and it seemed that her desire was to return to the Lord of her former life. When I visited her family it was obviously on the mend. Her husband told me that this was the first Thanksgiving his wife had cooked dinner for them in eighteen years—long enough that the children had no recollection of those halcyon days.

Since my period as pastor at that mission had come to an end, I was not able to follow her progress, but was sure she was saved *for whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved*—Romans 10:13.

### **A Last-Chance Invitation**

At one time I spent five years in a rural church with a pastorate that reached for 60 square miles. Of the very many acquaintances I made in that community over those years, one stands out most clearly. There was a Christian woman who lived on a very wee kept farm with her husband—a man who seemed to respect her church, but was given to occasional heavy drinking and the ways of the world. When I visited his household, I would extend the invitation to attend church with his wife, but to no avail. He did, however, respond on occasion to a revival meeting. He would usually attend on one night of the meetings, but without showing any signs that he was convicted.

I was finally called away to another church and did not see the man for at least five years when I was invited back to his wife's church. Before the revival began, I went with the resident pastor and visited him and his wife. Once again I requested his presence at the upcoming series of meetings and, as he had done in the past, he consented. He did not show up to the first, or second or third meeting, but on the last night, there he was. When the invitation was given, he did not stir. I had personally thought that this revival had been very successful, but the one person I had hoped to convict sat motionless in his pew. Then, as the

service was about to close, I received the idea to try something bold. “I was a pastor in this church for five years, and then five years at another site. Now, strangely enough, I have returned. Why? Perhaps God has sent me here to give a personal invitation to a special person that God wants by his side. If that is you, then come to Jesus today while there is still time.” Finally the man moved toward the aisle and then came forward. The parishioners were well aware of what was happening. So many came forward to shake his hand and offer him encouragement that it was difficult to close the service. I thank the Lord for allowing me to have been a participant in this experience.

### **How Could I Accept Someone Who Would Let Me Suffer Like This?**

While pastoring a church in a small city, a member invited me to visit a sick friend at her home. She was in her eighties and in great pain suffering from gangrene in her feet. Her feet were so sensitive that a wire frame had been fabricated to keep the sheets and blankets from contacting her feet. When my friend drew back the sheet just enough to take a quick look, I knew that I could never become a doctor. I said a few comforting words to her and asked if she knew Jesus Christ as her Savior. Her answer startled me. “How could I accept someone who would let me suffer like this”? I thought for a moment and then said, “If God were to take away this pain, would you accept him then?” Her answer was a strong “Yes!” So we continued to talk for a few more minutes. Then she stopped at one point and said, “You know, the pain I had is gone—every bit of it”. That was my cue, of course, so I immediately said, “Will you accept him now?” She then called on the name of the Lord. I left her house that night with joy in my heart. Two weeks later I received word that she had died, and, I might add, without ever having a spasm of pain.

In retrospect, I have often thought about this particular miracle. We had not prayed to the Lord for healing or relief of pain, yet it happened at a time most conducive to salvation. Salvation and healing is intimately linked, but not always at our behest. God not only allowed, but also formulated the circumstances for this pain knowing full well the end result.

Years later, I was preaching a revival in another city when I accompanied the pastor to an afternoon visitation. The man we were visiting began to recount the story of an old woman who moved from this town to another with her husband. He then recounted the above story perfectly and ended with the statement, “That old preacher certainly saw the hand of the Lord that day, didn’t he?” I was crushed to hear the story told so unexpectedly in that way, and with a tear in my

eye concluded with “You are looking at that old preacher.” When the works of the Lord are remembered, the Lord remembers his people. Praise the Lord!

### **That Booth Where We Sat**

While pastoring at a church, I received an out-of-town call from a man I had worked with at the insurance office. He wanted to join me for lunch. So we met at a local restaurant and he proceeded to tell me about surgery he was about to have—open-heart surgery. He was worried, and apparently had called me thinking I could in some way help. At the end of the luncheon, I asked him if he knew the Lord. No he had not, but he interjected that he had respect for God and the church. We continued the conversation, then he called on the Lord in prayer and was saved. His surgery was successful and two more that followed that. Whenever I eat at that restaurant now, I glance at that booth where we sat and am reminded of God’s ever-present mercy.

Several years later, his family called to say he had been taken home to the Lord. They invited me to speak at his funeral. Now a funeral can be a thoroughly sad situation, but in this case it was balanced with joy. Praise the Lord!

### **The Right Front Spindle**

The wife and I had just started out in our car when the right front wheel began to screech. Since we were not far from home, I turned around and parked the car in my garage. The following day began driving to the mechanic when the noise suddenly became louder and the front right wheel dropped off. I called for a tow, left the car behind at the repair shop, and found a ride home. Greeting the wife, I said that the Bible says in Romans 8:28, that *all things work together for good to them that love God*. Let’s see how this works out.

The following day I paid \$125 for a new axle. Apparently the bearings had lost their seal and burnt out thus allowing the hub to slip off the axle. Fortunately I was only going five miles per hour at the time, so out loud, I thanked the Lord for being safe. I said a few more things to the mechanic about God’s goodness and was about to get into my car when I unexpectedly asked him if he had ever given his heart to Jesus. There was complete silence for a moment. The mechanic then regained his composure and said that he had not. I then asked him if he would like to, and he answered, “Yes.” We bowed our heads and he prayed to receive Jesus Christ. Then I spent a few minutes with him explaining what had just happened in his life. As I turned to get into my car, I remembered Romans 8:28, and can truly say that the frightening experience of losing a wheel on the road was more than compensated by that man’s salvation. Praise the Lord!

### **Ten Minutes per Visit**

A lady member of my church approached me one day to request a visit to her very sick brother-in-law at a military hospital about fifty miles away. She quickly cautioned me, however, that she was not on good terms with him, and that he was openly contentious about religion and could order you out of the room. I consented feeling somehow obligated to go.

During our drive to the hospital, I was overcome with the feeling that I had not prayed enough. So I pulled over to the side of the road, prayed together, and once again we were on our way.

The sign at the reception desk read, "Ten Minutes per Visit". That would only be enough if he threw me out. I left my wife in the waiting room and requested permission at the desk to visit this man in intensive care. "In this case," she said, "you can stay as long as you like." At his bedside I learned that he was dying of cancer. But he seemed receptive to me, and to make things easier, he said, "I'm about finished and I'm no good." To me this was good. He realized that his spiritual condition was in disrepair. This made it easier to begin witnessing to him. Within a few minutes he willingly closed his eyes, bowed his head, and accepted the Lord Jesus Christ. He then thanked me for coming and asked me to convey his apologies to his sister-in-law.

Within two weeks, he had gone on to be with the Lord, but before that, his separated wife visited him. They straightened their past out and she went to church the following Sunday and rededicated her life to the Lord saying that her husband had made her promise to get right with the Lord. I thank God for allowing me to have been a part of this experience.

### **The Man on a Step Ladder**

We had invited a man to teach a class on soul winning to our mission members. It was a weeknight. After the class, participants were told to go out into the community and put what they had just learned into practice. The goal was to win their heart for Jesus or to invite them to our church. We said a prayer and dispersed.

Looking through the door window, I could see a man high on a stepladder. He was apparently fixing the chandelier hanging from the ceiling. After his wife graciously let us in, I witnessed to them about Jesus Christ. Meanwhile, the man continued to remain on the stepladder. After a few minutes of witnessing

followed by discussion, I asked if they would like to invite Jesus Christ into their hearts. Both said, “Yes.” I was thrilled with their profession of faith and left rejoicing in the Lord that he had allowed me to witness this event.

### **Sixty Years of Marriage**

I had just returned home after an eleven-day hospital stay. My wife had died shortly before, so there was no one to help with any care I might have needed. To ease me into my environs, the hospital had dispatched several social workers, a nurse, and a physical therapist to my home. With time my health began to return. One day the physical therapist inquired about the picture on the television. “Is that you and your wife?” he asked. “Yes”, I said. “We spent sixty years together. She is deceased now”. He seemed surprised and asked how anyone could be married that long. I immediately saw this as an opportunity to witness for Christ, so I told him that the best way to establish a long and enduring relationship was to give one’s heart to Jesus Christ and to make him the head of the household. He said that he had heard of giving one’s heart to Jesus, but didn’t know what it entailed. I quickly thought of Paul’s exhortation to Timothy, a young convert who later accompanied him on his missionary journeys:

*Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.—2 Timothy 4:2*

I presented the plan of salvation to him. After which he immediately and gladly entered into prayer with me and made a profession of faith. During the remainder of his therapeutic visits to my home, our conversation was always flavored with Christian sentiment. I was overjoyed that God could still use me in my old age and weakened condition. Praise God!

### **On Dialysis and on Call**

My kidneys were not functioning properly, so, as a last resort, I began dialysis treatment. I was lying down in the reclining chair bemusing my fate and feeling depressed like I never had before in my life. I had reached the end of the line and would probably never recover enough to resume my normal activities, which included, above all, the ministry of the Word. I was so disheartened, I almost didn’t notice the visiting dialysis technician. He said something to me from across the room that I didn’t quite catch and then walked over to my machine. Quickly we became engaged in a lengthy conversation. After I mentioned that I was a retired minister of the Gospel, he asked me about my calling. I gladly recounted “My Conversion and Call to the Ministry” and asked about his particular relationship with Jesus Christ, to which he answered that he had not been born again. After I explained God’s plan of salvation, he expressed his



desire to accept Jesus as Savior and Lord. He then returned to his work. Before he left for the day, he came by to say how happy he was to have Jesus Christ in his life. I never saw him after that, but feel that both of us are rejoicing as we follow the Way.<sup>3</sup> I also saw that God could still use me, despite my physical frailties.

### **Salvation to an Octogenarian**

An eighty-year-old man, who would visit our church on occasion, lived on a farm with his son's family. At the old man's request, his son built him a small two-room house in the front yard to give him some privacy and a place to retire from the noisy activities of the family. There was a symbiotic relationship between the old man and his son's family.

When I visited the farm, I made it a point to visit the old man in his two-room house. During one visit, I mentioned that we had missed seeing him at church, to which he answered that he did not have enough money to pay the dues. This caught my attention and must have added 20 inches to my blood pressure. "We don't receive dues at church", I said, "We receive offerings to do the work of the Lord." I then assured him that salvation was free to all who called upon the name of the Lord and this was the work I was there to do.

I then asked him if he knew Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior. When he replied in the negative, I outlined the plan of salvation.<sup>4</sup> He accepted God's plan and his son as Lord and Savior of his life. The following Sunday, he made a public profession of faith along with two other people. I told him about baptism and he replied that his doctor had warned him against baptism by immersion because of his weak heart. He then asked me what I thought. Not being a doctor, I could only say that as a minister, I have never heard of an accident during the baptismal ceremony. Encouraged, he immediately said, "Then I want to be baptized."

At this particular baptismal ceremony, there were 18 young Christians and one octogenarian. He lived an exemplary life as a Christian for three more years and then died of a stroke. This was but a glimpse of God's grace.

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<sup>3</sup> The Way: *And I persecuted this way unto the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women.*—Acts 22:4. See also Acts 9:2

<sup>4</sup> 1) Know that you are a sinner. 2) Realize that you need a Savior. 3) Confess and forsake your sins. 4) Turn in faith to Jesus Christ alone accepting no other mediator.

## **First Sermon: Justification and the Christian Experience (Romans 5:1-6)**

*Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; And patience, experience; and experience, hope: And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us. For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.—Romans 5:1-6*

Several years ago, I was taking a short course in soul-winning. Some of you were there I believe. The greatest privilege, I believe, a Christian can have is to tell someone else about Jesus. The person who was teaching the class said that on a few occasions he had asked the class to write on a sheet of paper their experience when they had asked Jesus to come into their heart. I did this same thing several times after that in Bible studies. It was for the purpose of making people aware of the truth about themselves concerning whether they had really made this very important commitment in their lives. This teacher said all but one person was not writing. After collecting the papers, he noticed one blank sheet. A quick investigation revealed that the owner of the blank sheet had never accepted Christ in her heart. She then and there called upon Jesus to come into her heart and life. Tonight as another approach to soul winning, I would like to read and mention some of the Scriptures that describe some of the things that have happened to us as a part of our Christian Experience. I would like for you to take your Bibles and follow along as we read these verses. There may be some one here who has never confessed the Savior. If there is one who has not taken this step, please allow the Holy Spirit apply the cleansing Blood of Calvary to your life tonight. Let Him have His way in your life. There is no way that we can tell for sure whether another person is saved or not, just by looking at him. Only you and God know for sure. First Corinthians 11:28 tells us to examine ourselves. Many folks are nice people, good moral people, and still are lost as they can be tonight without Christ. In the third chapter of John's Gospel, Jesus while speaking to a man named Nicodemus, told this man that unless he were to be Born Again, he would not see the Kingdom of God. This man like anyone else, could not understand this strange saying of Our Lord. He asked Jesus how this could ever be. Jesus told Nicodemus that what He really was talking about was that he would have to be Born from Above, and be made a New Creature. This of course could only happen by the Grace of God, by the Holy Spirit. This is what usually happens to all unbelievers. They cannot understand at first what the term, Born Again means until the Spirit reveals it to them. I have asked many people during my ministry, "Are you saved?" and have heard them answer, "Saved from what?". It may be that some of you here tonight have shared this same experience. They really do not know what they are doing that would require them to be saved. People must come to a place in their thinking that they realize that

*All have sinned*—Romans 3:23, before they are able to call on the Name of the Lord and be saved. No one can really know this until the Holy Spirit convicts us and shows us the Risen Christ as the only remedy. Don't ever try to talk to anyone about the Saving Grace of our Wonderful God until you have first prayed for the guidance of the Spirit. If right now you will let your mind drift back over this wonderful experience of your Salvation and Growth in Grace, I feel very sure that you will remember with great excitement many times of your life. Paul said, *So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God*—Romans 10:17. He also said, *For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth*—Romans 1:16. Paul also wrote that the preaching of the Cross is foolishness to them who perish. (See 1 Corinthians 1:18.) In verse 21 of this same chapter, he said that *It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe*—1 Corinthians 1:21.

We could try an interesting experiment by placing some saw dust on a sheet of paper and then passing a magnet over the tiny pieces of wood. We would notice that there would be no movement of the sawdust. We could then place some iron filings obtained by filing a piece of iron and put them on the same piece of paper. Then if we were to pass the magnet over both the iron filings and the sawdust, we would clearly notice that the magnetic force would attract and even pick up the filings and leave the tiny pieces of wood undisturbed. This little experiment seems to illustrate how a person must be drawn by the Spirit in order to be saved. John 6:44 tells us that in order for one to come to Christ he must first be drawn by the Father. Many hear the Gospel daily but only those who are willing to yield to the drawing power of the Holy Spirit will come to Jesus and receive Salvation. I preached to a man for several years in one of the churches where I served. This man was an intellectual giant. He had all the signs of having developed his mind far above average. I would extend the invitation each Sunday just expecting this young man to come forward and accept Jesus Christ as his Savior. As the weeks and months passed he still made no move in that direction. Needless to say, I was very concerned by that time. One Sunday Morning I extended the invitation as usual. I looked around and I could see this young man making his way toward the front of the church. I was very happy to see this. He said to me as we talked, "Preacher, this is the first time in my whole life I ever understood what it meant to give my heart to Christ." I knew then that the Holy Spirit had both brought him under conviction, and the Father had drawn him. Some of you might be saying in your hearts, "I'll come when I get ready to come." Don't take that chance. The Spirit must be working in you in order for you to want to come: *Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed: and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.* 1 Corinthians 12:3.

So you see then, the truth that our hearts must be prepared by the Spirit in order to receive the things of the Lord: *But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned*—1 Corinthians 2:14. I have been

told by those who know, that in warfare it is much harder to hit a slow flying Piper Cub airplane while flying in a fighter jet than it is to score a direct hit on a faster plane. Sometimes it seems the Gospel can be preached to a congregation, and as it falls on all ears alike, the most unlikely person will respond in faith to it. *For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart—Hebrews 4:12.* Lets read Matthew 10:34 ff. *Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household.* The Word of God can be preached over and over to the same people, but if they do not allow the Holy spirit to work in them, they will never see the Risen and Exalted Christ and understand what the Gospel is all about. No wonder Nicodemus could not understand, and asked, “*How can these things be?*” “Then Jesus told Nicodemus how being Born Again was a mystery and that it must be understood from above: *The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit—John 3:8.*

Jesus then gave to the dying world what has been called, “The Gospel in a Nut-shell.” (See “The Little Gospel”--John 3:16.) Many times while witnessing to a lost person I have felt the need to share with him or her that one verse alone. I have seen many people saved by doing so. I’m thinking of a man in one of our U.S. Army hospitals, who lay at the point of death. I shared with him this one verse from Scripture, and he surrendered his life to Jesus. I believe that he is in Heaven now. I believe it because I believe God’s Word.

Continue to read the precious verses of this wonderful chapter, and in verses 17-18, see the purpose for which He came into the world, and see clearly the way we must believe in order to receive Salvation. In the seventeenth verse we read that He did not come to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. Although Christ, who was and is God, came in the flesh to dwell among us, He was Righteous and perfect. *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God—1 John 1:1. And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth—John 1:14.* He certainly had every right to destroy us from the face of the earth, but that amount of love and that quality of love caused Him to suffer and give His Life on that cruel cross for our Salvation. (See John 3:16.) One preacher in another faith during a funeral service told me that there was no way of knowing whether we are saved until we get to the Final Judgment. Aren’t you glad that Jesus took the time to tell us that we can know? *He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of Go.—John 3:18.* If some one were to ask you if you are saved, you should know by faith the answer. Paul said that you would be a New

*Creature: Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new—2 Corinthians 5:17.*

If you have made some superficial move toward Christ, and He has not made you a New Man or woman, I can tell you that there is certainly no power shortage at the cross. I am not the judge of another, but I certainly suggest that you make another attempt to invite Jesus into your life. I know that if you ask Him to save you, He surely will. We must believe in Jesus, and rely upon His finished work on the cross. This is what is meant by being a believer.

John the Baptist stood in the Jordan River, and as he saw Jesus, he exclaimed, *Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world—John 1:29.* There is something wonderful about the word, “behold”. It is simply saying to a lost world: Look. There is the One who is the remedy God has given us for our sin and unhappiness. In the centuries before Christ was born, people of faith were told to sacrifice the blood of an animal to the Lord. All of this was looking in faith toward Calvary. We are now looking back toward the cross. These lambs that were sacrificed were just expressions of faith by which the people looked toward the cross. When Jesus really came, John pointed Him out to the world as *The Lamb of God—John 1:29.* Scripture says further: *And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me—John 12:32.* Jesus is the Lamb of God who was slain from the foundation of the world. Let us read some more in Scripture. *And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil—John 3:19.* He is saying that this is the condemnation that men have refused to look at this light and let Jesus be the Lord of their lives. To look at this Light and receive Him as Personal Savior, results in Salvation which He came to the earth to bring us freely. Salvation is not necessarily an emotional feeling. However Salvation affects different people in different ways. I know that when I am deeply moved by some of the Blessings of the Lord, a lump will appear in my throat, and I might become very quiet, not able to utter a word. I have seen others who seemed to be sharing that same kind of feeling, who weep. Some others might even start to laugh. Salvation seems to affect different people in different ways. I’ve seen many people receive Christ as their Savior. Some were very excited, some were very quiet, but all who really meant what they were doing surely allowed Him to bring about a change in their lives. (See 2 Corinthians 5:17.)

In Isaiah Chapter 6, we read of the experience of this man, the way he looked up and saw the Lord on High and lifted up. The second place he looked was down at himself, and saw himself as undone before the Lord. If you read the rest of this vision you will read how Isaiah was cleansed of his sin. This is what has happened to each of us who have received the conversion experience. We truly must see the Lord Jesus high and lifted up and ourselves as in need of a remedy for our sin. *And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me—John 12:32.* Then it is that we may call on the name of the Lord and be saved: *For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved—Romans 10:13.* I try to preach Jesus Christ and Him crucified, and the Spirit of

the Lord takes this Good News and makes it the power of God unto Salvation to all who will believe: *For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek*—Romans 1:16. In John 20:28 Jesus came to Thomas who had doubted. He invited him to come and make a close inspection of His Hands and His side. When Thomas heard these things he cried out, “My Lord and my God.” I can think of many people, some were alcoholics, some in many walks of life who were converted. Every one of them and every one of us had to come to Him the same way, by the way of the cross. Praise the Lord! When you think back over your conversion experience or try to relate it to some one else, it is a powerful experience.

Turn now to Romans 5:1. Simultaneously with the conversion of your soul comes justification. When Jesus takes control of your life this thing called justification also takes place in you. We should preach doctrinal sermons more often from our pulpits. We need to learn the meaning of these important terms and words the Spirit uses in His Holy Word. Lets read the first verse we find here in this fifth chapter of Romans, *Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:---Romans 5:1.* Now just what does the word justified mean? Well the verse tells us that we have peace with God. The next verse or two tells us that we have access. It tells us later that we glory in tribulation. It seems to explain itself very well. It means first to be declared righteous. It is just like standing before a judge in one of our courts, and having him declare us not guilty. The only difference being that the judge is not able to remove the guilt. All he could do is declare you not guilty, whereas the Lord Jesus makes you not guilty. Forever after that time you will never be confronted with that transgression again for all Eternity: *There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.*—Romans 8:1. I suppose that many of the criminals who stand guilty of crimes in our courts have said in their hearts, “I wish I had not done this. I wish I could live this part of my life over again”. Some might say, “I wish that I hadn’t been caught.” I do believe that many of them wish they could undo the whole thing. The wonderful thing about Justification is that Jesus, the Righteous Judge brings down His divine gavel and not only declares the sinner righteous, but makes him righteous: *For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him*—2 Corinthians 5:21. This is all accomplished through the Grace of God. What does it mean to be Justified? Some have said that a condition exists that makes us as though the sin had never happened. It is very hard for us to imagine with our finite minds that we can be guilty of sin and the Grace of God can undo it. Praise the Lord, what a remedy we have found in this greatest of all miracles. Read again and again (See Romans 8:1.) and see how that God will never bring to us sins that have been forgiven. Therefore He says that, “We have peace with God”.

The very next verse tells us that we then have access into all His Grace. *By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice*

*in hope of the glory of God*—Romans 5:2. If you are a Child of God, you stand in the Grace of God. It is something like a child that is adopted into an earthly family. A child like this is a welcome to anything the family has. He feels perfectly at home, and he has this right to feel that way. Two children were in a Christian home where I visited while preaching a Revival some years ago. One was adopted and the other had been birthed. I noticed while sitting in the home that evening something that I took for a perfect illustration of this great truth concerning this word, “access.” I noticed that the little girl who had been born into the family without any hesitation went to the refrigerator and took out some food to snack on. Almost immediately the little boy who had been adopted before the little sister was born into the family, came to the refrigerator and came out with a sample of the same food. I noticed the ease he was feeling as he did so. He really felt that he had access to all the family possessed. We have peace within our hearts, the peace that passeth understanding. Not only peace but access.

This peace and this justification gives us happiness here, and gives us the blessed hope, knowing that when the trumpet sounds, and the dead in Christ shall rise, we shall be among them.

Justification is a one-time thing; forgiveness is a many-time thing. First John 1:9 tells us that if we sin and confess the sin to Him, He is faithful and Just and will forgive. You can come to the Lord a hundred times a day and confess your sins and He will forgive you. If I sin in word, thought, or deed I try to confess that sin to God as soon as possible. I know He forgives me. Sin has a way of haunting us. If we sin and do not feel any guilt, there is something very wrong with us. Make sure you confess your sins often. Don’t let your conscience become hardened. Don’t sin presumptuously. Someone prayed a prayer one time something like this, “Lord, break my heart with the things that have broken Your Heart”. Sin broke the heart of Jesus. You cannot go very far wrong if you think this way. Keep your prayer life up to date.

Justification is a one-time happening. Forgiveness happens many times. The Grace of God is constantly with us. This wonderful Grace and the precious Justification does not nullify our constant duty to be an active servant of God. Read Romans 3:31: *Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law.* Read also Matthew 5:17-19. Again turn to John and read about Sanctification: *Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth*—John 17:17. This is a progressive act of the Holy Spirit in our lives as we read God’s Holy Word prayerfully: *And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God*—1 Corinthians 6:11.

Have these things happened to you? If not, you can come to Jesus tonight and start on your way to Heaven.

## Second Sermon: Where You Get Your Strength and How You Can Lose It (Judges 16:1-6)

*Then went Samson to Gaza, and saw there an harlot, and went in unto her. And it was told the Gazites, saying, Samson is come hither. And they compassed him in, and laid wait for him all night in the gate of the city, and were quiet all the night, saying, In the morning, when it is day, we shall kill him. And Samson lay till midnight, and arose at midnight, and took the doors of the gate of the city, and the two posts, and went away with them, bar and all, and put them upon his shoulders, and carried them up to the top of an hill that is before Hebron. And it came to pass afterward, that he loved a woman in the valley of Sorek, whose name was Delilah. And the lords of the Philistines came up unto her, and said unto her, Entice him, and see wherein his great strength lieth, and by what means we may prevail against him, that we may bind him to afflict him: and we will give thee every one of us eleven hundred pieces of silver. And Delilah said to Samson, Tell me, I pray thee, wherein thy great strength lieth, and wherewith thou mightest be bound to afflict thee—Judges 16:1-6.*

I believe I'll just start my sermon today by simply reading to you the text, We will read the latter part of verse 6. *Tell me, I pray thee, wherein thy great strength lieth, and wherewith thou mayest be bound to afflict thee.* I ask you to keep this text in mind. The first part of this text seems to indicate that Samson possessed much more strength than the average person. It seems that in recognition of that great strength someone asks where it came from. Also how it might be lost. The person inquiring was named Delilah who was an enemy. We have read these Scriptures and have found that Samson, the thirteenth Judge of Israel, was being used by the Lord God of Israel to rule over the people of God. Starting with the fourteenth chapter of the Book of Judges one can read about his life and work. Look for a moment at the seventeenth verse. After Samson had given several wrong answers to this same question, he proceeded to answer Delilah with the correct answer to her question: *that he told her all his heart, and said unto her, There hath not come a razor upon mine head; for I have been a Nazarite unto God from my mother's womb: If I be shaven, then my strength will go from me, and I shall become weak, and be like any other man—Judges 16:17.*

His mother had dedicated him to the Lord with a vow. In those days a mother could dedicate her son to the Lord by taking the vow of a Nazarite for him. When the child was born to a mother who had done this he could never shave his face, or drink of the juice of the vine, and other things that the vow had promised. Neither was he ever allowed to cut his hair. He was set apart to be a special servant of the Lord. It was also possible for a person after being born to assume this vow and be bound so long as he had promised to be bound under it.

I would like to say now... that I believe that any promise we make to God today is binding to us. We should never make a bad promise to God. If we do however make a wrong promise to God, I believe we ought to talk to Him about it, get our minds straight and back in His Will again. We should be very careful



what we promise God. In fact we should be very careful what we promise any person. We have to be careful how we conduct our lives. People are watching us closely. It is quite possible that we could cause some young Christian to stumble or fall. We might cause even some lost person to shy away from the Christian life. We have a great responsibility to the Lord and to our neighbors and friends.

I would hurry to say a word or warning to the lost and the saved concerning depending upon any human being. I have often told them not to keep their eyes on man because man will disappoint them sooner or later. Keep your eyes focused upon Jesus. He will never let you down. I make great haste to say that it is wonderful to see the way The Holy Spirit uses mere human beings to preach His Word, and to live a good testimony before the world. This is the Grace of God at work in the Christian's life. Although Samson did many things that did not please the Lord, he was still a servant of God. He uses our lives today in the same manner. If you go back and read the first few verses of chapter sixteen you will see where Samson went in to a harlot. This was certainly the wrong thing to do, but as we read on we see that he was in great danger, he went to the edge of the city and pulled the gate of the city up, posts and all, and carried it up to the top of a hill and dropped it down. This man was blessed with a very strong body. In Judges 15:14 ff, the Spirit gave this man strength to slay a thousand of the enemy with the jawbone of an ass. Down in the state of Virginia where I was born, while playing out in some of the fields, I have seen the skulls of dead cattle. I have the feeling that this was similar to Samson's implement. Of course, instead of cattle, this was the bone of a mule. In Judges 14:5 Samson with his bare hands, slew a lion.

The Holy Spirit in this Day of Grace indwells us at all times. He never leaves us. First Corinthians 6:19 tells us that our bodies are the Temple of the Holy Spirit. In the days of Samson, however, the Spirit was granted to a person for some particular task that God wanted him to do. Samson had great strength when he needed it, but he knew he must at all times keep this vow that had been made to God before his birth.

He fell in love with this woman called Delilah. As he talked with her all through the night, she tried to persuade him to tell her where he had obtained this great strength. This was one of his first mistakes: going into the camp of the enemy. I would like to say here and now that a young man or young woman makes a great mistake when they choose a mate in marriage who does not feel the same as they do about the things of the Lord. If you are keeping company with a man or girl who believes in drinking, or who will not go to church with you, give him up. Unless he comes to Christ, give him up.

Finally, Samson told Delilah about the vow his mother had taken before his birth which made him a Nazarite unto the Lord, (See Judges 16:1.) and in verse nineteen she caused him to sleep upon her knees while she had his long hair

cut short. This caused Samson to break the vow and his great strength was taken from him.

The story continues and we learn that they plucked Samson's eyes from his head and caused him to grind in the prison house while all the enemies stood around and watched him. This process took long enough time that without the enemy being aware of it, his hair and beard grew long again. He was blind but he could feel his great strength returning to him again. At the end of his life, however, at his own request Samson during a ceremony in which the enemy was offering him as sacrifice to the pagan god, Dagon. Samson felt that the Lord God had given him back His great strength. (Judges 16:29) He could feel the great posts that held the building up. He put his hands out and pushed the posts apart and he prayed to the Lord God to let him be avenged. The Lord answered his prayer and he pushed the posts apart and thousands of the Philistines were killed that day. In verse thirty we read that he killed more of the enemy that day than he had had in his entire life. In answer to his prayer, he died with them.

The telling of this story as I have done was to get the sermon off the ground. Lets continue. As we read Isaiah 40:29, we read that our strength comes from God. We hear Jeremiah say that there is nothing too hard for the Lord. (See Jeremiah 32:17.) I remember reading in Genesis 18:14 how Sarah, the wife of Abraham, was told by the Lord that at a very old age she would bring forth a son, and through his lineage one would come and bless all the nations of the world. The Lord told them that there was nothing too hard for the Lord to do. Abraham was a hundred years old and Sarah not much younger. Yet the Lord gave her this son who would be in the lineage of our Savior. In Matthew: *All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth*—Matthew 28:18. Jesus in Isaiah is mentioned as, *Wonderful, Counseller, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace*—Isaiah 9:6. He surely is Wonderful. He is certainly Counselor to His people. Nearly everywhere you look today you see someone in need of this kind of help. With this Wonderful Jesus every person is somebody. Every one of His creation is special to Him. Many times we need to talk to someone who knows more about certain subjects than we do. We have need of counseling. Jesus is that Person on whom we can depend. People have lost their minds and have had to be put into special mental hospitals, and much of this could have been remedied by a little bit of loving Godly advice. He is also the Mighty God. Everything you could ever need or hope for, Jesus is. We get all our strength from Him. I think of David who sinned so much during parts of his life, cried out in Psalms: *I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills from whence cometh my help*—Psalm 121:1. He was not asking a hill to give him strength, he was calling and looking unto the God that is High and lifted up. (See Isaiah 6:1 and 57:15) In most funerals I read: *God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble*—Psalm 46:1. In the book of Daniel we read how this servant was so obedient to the Lord His God, that his enemies who wanted to accuse him of some wrong doing said, *We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find it against him concerning the law of his God*—Daniel 6:5. Daniel in the

lion's den, also the three Hebrew Children, and all other people of great strength found their power and strength in the Lord.

Samson was asked the question, *Wherein lieth your great strength?* Also he was asked what could be done to him to afflict him and deprive him of that great power. Samson's final answer was that his strength came from the Lord.

I want to tell you today about several people in the Old Testament and some in the New Testament, also some modern day people who have had great strength, and have revealed to the world what could be done to them to make this power ineffective. I think first of the Apostle Peter as he followed Jesus from the Garden of Gethsemane. The Bible says that he followed Jesus "afar off": *Then took they him, and led him, and brought him into the high priest's house. And Peter followed afar off*—Luke 22:54. Next we read is that Peter warmed himself by the fires of the enemy. Finally we hear him denying Jesus three times. He said that he did not know Him. In Luke we are told that Jesus looked at Peter. At that moment Peter was filled with remorse and went out of the building and wept bitterly. This same Peter who had said just a few hours before that he would never deny Jesus was now doing just what he said he would never do. *And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice*—Luke 22:61. I read in the book of Hosea: *Ephraim, he hath mixed himself among the people; Ephraim is a cake not turned. Strangers have devoured his strength, and he knoweth it not: yea, gray hairs are here and there upon him, yet he knoweth not*—Hosea 7:8-9. Hosea was using gray hairs upon the head of the nation of God's people as an analogy to describe the way a nation or a person can lose strength by mixing with the world of evil men. You remember that the Bible teaches us in 2 Corinthians 6:17, to come out from among them, and to be separate from the evil deeds of evil men. In Amos we read: *Can two walk together, except they be agreed?*—Amos 3:3. And in Corinthians it reads: *Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness*—2 Corinthians 6:14?

Hosea was teaching that Ephraim had been bound and afflicted by mixing himself with the world. This is basically the question that was asked Samson by the wicked woman named Delilah. In First Peter we hear the apostle reminding all Christians: *Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul*—1 Peter 2:11. He is telling us by the use of the words, "strangers and pilgrims" that we will not be here long, and that we are on our way to some other place. That other place, beloved, is Heaven.

Let me tell you what the Bible says about that great Day when we will be gathered home. In First Thessalonians 4:13-18, we are told that even our bodies that lie in the grave will be raised and meet the Lord in the air. Turn sometime to Matthew 27:52 and read of the Power of the Resurrection of the Lord Jesus

Christ. *And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose—Matthew 27:52.* I do not claim to understand all about this verse, but I do see the power of His Resurrection, and I know that because He was Raised, so I will come up out of the grave when He calls: “Allelulia!” No grave could hold Jesus, and because of His Death, Burial and Resurrection, no grave will be able to have victory over us: *O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory—Corinthians 15:55?* When Jesus called Lazarus to come forth, this man who had been dead four days obeyed and came out of the grave: *And when he thus had spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth.—John 11:43.* I have heard it said many times by preachers that if Jesus had not specified the name “Lazarus”, that every saint who was in the ground at that time would have been raised. This certainly is not original with me. I have no idea who first said it, but I have made it my own through my faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Praise the Lord!

To go after the lusts of our flesh is very dangerous to our spiritual well-being. Jesus also said: *Ye are the salt of the earth—Matthew 5:13.* He reminded us that if the salt loses the properties that make it salt, it is worthless, and that men will walk on our testimonies. A small fault can also be harmful. Read Ecclesiastes 10:1. We can be saved and still lose our great strength by mixing ourselves with the world. Who wants to talk to a person about how to be saved if that person himself is no different from the rest of the lost world? Paul tells us that a saved person should be different. When one allows himself to be mixed with the world and fleshly lusts, he loses his great power with men as he attempts to witness to them: *And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.—Romans 12:2.*

The same condition exists in a nation also. I read in Psalms: *Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD: and the people whom he hath chosen for his own inheritance—Psalm 33:12.* I believe that the nation that takes the family structure to mean almost nothing and makes drunkenness and drugs a way of life, or a life style, and sexual perversion the same way, will certainly pay for it in God’s Judgment of that nation.

The great strength in any real church being used of God today is found in its faith in God. When the church mixes itself with the world today in a way of compromising its doctrinal teachings and its right living as some do, it too will lose its great power. Paul says that the Gospel of Christ is the power of God unto salvation to all who will believe. (See Romans 1:16.) If the preaching of the church is not the true Gospel, the church is on its way down. It will lose its great strength.

What could happen to the Christian family that would make it become weak and fall apart? The answer is simply this: If the family begins to leave Jesus out of their thoughts and decision-making: This is the beginning of the fall.

What could happen to our individual lives? Where does your strength lie? Our strength lies in the Lord God. The answer is then if we wish to remain strong we need to stay near the Cross.

John 17:17.....*Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.*

2 Timothy 2:15.....*Study to show thyself approved unto God,*

1 Thessalonians 5:17.....*Pray without ceasing.*

Hebrews 10:25.....*Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together*

2 Peter 3:18.....*But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen*

### **Third Sermon: The Sacrifice of Jesus, the Suffering Servant (Isaiah 53:1-10)**

*Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed? For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken. And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth. Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand.—Isaiah 53:1-10*

I would like for you to follow along in your Bibles as I try to bring this message from the Word of God. What I have to say tonight as usual will surely bring forth the Word of God. As I start to preach this message I would like to say that if there is any person here or anywhere else who cannot see that this Scripture is speaking of Jesus, I believe that he needs to pray more that the Holy Spirit might open his eyes and heart so the message will become clear to him. In the New Testament can be found quite a few places that mention these wonderful verses and indicate to us that this Scripture is speaking of Jesus.

This morning I spoke concerning this matter from (I Peter 1:9-12). These verses tell me that the Old Testament Prophets recognized that what they were writing of certainly had not occurred at that time, and they asked the Holy Spirit if these things were to happen in their time or were they for another day. They were informed that what they were writing was for the Gospel Age. We read in the latter part of vs. 12 that even the Angels wanted to look into this wonderful news of the Gospel times.

*Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel*

*unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven;  
which things the angels desire to look into—1 Peter 1:12.*

Beloved, we are NOW living in the very best of times, I do believe. (Acts 8:32-35) also lets us see that the writers of the New Testament also refer to Isaiah 53, and indicate that the Prophet is talking about Jesus.

*The place of the scripture which he read was this, He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth: In his humiliation his judgment was taken away: and who shall declare his generation? for his life is taken from the earth. And the eunuch answered Philip, and said, I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man? Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus—Acts 8:32-35.*

As we read the first verse of this chapter let us pause a long time to study what it is really saying to us. *Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed?—Isaiah 53:1.* If you look in Corinthians you will see that it says that natural man does not see the things of the Lord, because they are revealed to us by the Spirit of the Lord.

*But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned  
But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man.  
For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ.—  
I Corinthians 2:14-16*

I have had people to ask me how is it that you get something out of certain Scriptures while the same verses fail to mean anything to them. I must refer them to these verses to show them that they must be illuminated by the Spirit of God. This happens not only to the lost folks I meet but also to some of my friends who have been saved. This I believe is because they have not prayed before they read their Bible. I heard a preacher say on the T.V. this past week that he did not like other translations of the Bible because, he said, they lose the beauty of the language. I never preach from any translation but the King James. I have others in my study that I use as commentaries, but I like to preach out of the King James Version. An older lady in one of the churches I used to pastor asked me once, “Pastor, Didn’t you tell us that the Holy Spirit is the One who teaches us the Scriptures?” I answered that this was very true. She then asked me, “Well, why

is it then that we have need of other Versions and Translations to make the English more clear?" I ask you that question, Why do we? I realize that at least some of the writers of these other translations are good Greek Scholars, and maybe it would help me to study better, but I still like to preach from the Old Bible that I have learned to love and quote best.

We read in Corinthians that we are not able to call Jesus LORD but by the Holy Spirit. *Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed: and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost*—1 Corinthians 12:3.

This verse asks us the question, Who hath believed our report? I would like to read several other passages of Scripture to you right now. *But they have not all obeyed the Gospel, for Isaiah saith, Lord, who hath believed our report? So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*—Romans 10:16-17. These verses are also a reference made by the Apostle Paul to our text. John 12:37-38 also a references this same Scripture. It is hard now and it was hard then for natural man to accept the report that Jesus is the Son of God. Only the Spirit of God is able to reveal this to a lost world.

Imagine how it must have sounded to the people in Christ's day. They had been hearing words from the Law telling them as they heard the Commandments, "Thou shalt not do certain things", and "Thou shalt do certain other things". Then one day Jesus, on a mountain began to preach that greatest of all sermons called, "The Sermon On the Mount". (See Matthew chapters 5-7.) They had heard how David had killed his tens of thousands, and they had heard of the great penalty for sin. Yet right before their very eyes and in their own hearing they were both seeing and hearing this soft spoken wonderful man speak of the marvelous Grace of God. This was the wonderful Day of Grace, when *For whosoever shall call on the Name of the Lord shall be saved.*—Romans 10:13. I usually say of the Sermon on the Mount, that it was the greatest sermon that was ever preached, and I am sure the greatest one that will ever be preached unless Jesus comes and preaches another.

Imagine how the people must have felt at the close of his earthly ministry, when they found out that Jesus had not come at that time to set up His earthly Kingdom.

*He came unto his own, and his own received him not—*  
John 1:11

The greatest event in the history of mankind was followed by the greatest tragedy when His Own received Him not. That great tragedy is reenacted daily when people reject him today. To have seen Him dying that shameful death on the cross appeared like victory for the enemies of Our Savior.



How much more shameful to reject the Lord today when we have the truth concerning His Resurrection from the grave. Praise the Lord, for the grave could not hold Him. Because He came out of the grave we can be justified tonight.

*Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification—Romans 4:25.*

Think what it would be like in our little town if we were to hear that our President of these United States was going to visit here. I believe that we would be out in the streets picking up paper and giving our town a good cleaning. The same would happen if we were to have a king from some other country. Think what would happen if we were to hear that Jesus, *KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS—Revelations 19:16*, was about to pay us a visit. I believe we would clean up our town as well. Maybe we would even construct Him a large speakers platform so He could speak to us. My brothers and sisters, Jesus is coming again and it may be very soon. Yet, people will not believe the precious Gospel and be saved.

He came the first time and He was not born in some great hospital, or in the best home or inn, but in a lowly stable with the animals. Not to rich parents, but to poor was He born. People had a hard time believing this report. They said, *Can any good thing come out of Nazareth—John 1:46?* When Jesus went back to His Own home town, He said : *Verily I say unto you, No prophet is accepted in his own country—Luke 4:24.* Read this same thing in John 4:44.

You must have the Holy ‘Spirit to convict you in order for you to see Jesus as the Christ. I preached to one church for five years, and visited in many homes during that time. There was one man whom I went to see concerning his soul. Many times he was told about the saving Grace of Jesus during that time. Every time we would have a Revival meeting in our church he would come one night only. We prayed often for him. Finally I resigned from that church after five years. The church extended me an invitation to preach a Revival five years later. We went out to see this same man again, and he came out to the meeting that evening. During the invitation I remember saying, “I was here in this church for a five-year pastorate, and have been away from here five years before coming back to help in this revival meeting. There are some here tonight who have been rejecting Jesus all these years. I believe the Lord has sent me back here once more to preach to you again. This might be the night the Holy Spirit will bring you under conviction and you will surrender your life to our Wonderful Savior. It took more than people telling him he ought to be saved; it took the Holy Spirit. Finally during the latter part of the hymn of invitation this man moved out of the pew and made his way to the front of the church and gave his life to Jesus. This man, who was an elderly man, soon went on to be with the Lord. We really had a revival coming down from Above after that. (Matthew 27:54) The centurion and others there at the place where Jesus was put to death for the sins of the whole world, said: *Truly this was the son of God—Matthew 27:54b.*

The centurion was a soldier who had given the orders to drive the spikes in the hands of our Lord, yet we see him truly convinced that Jesus was the Son of God. Nothing is impossible with God. He had probably heard the voice of the Lord cry out that blood-curdling cry, *My God, My God, Why has thou forsaken me*—Matthew 27:46? Many expected Jesus to come in a different manner than a poor and lowly person.

It was also hard for them to know how to follow Him. In Luke 9: 57-62, Jesus had to explain to them just what it meant to be a true disciple and follow Him. Read this Scripture when you get home.

Many times while I am preaching to congregations, it would seem that I'm speaking to ears that are deaf. It is not the eloquence of the preacher that gets the message into the people's hearts, it is nothing but the Holy Spirit who does this great work. With all of this we learn who will believe our report. I join other ministers in believing that we have only one main task in preaching, that is to be faithful in the Word. The Holy Spirit does the work.

Now let us go on to the second verse, *For He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant, and as a root of a dry ground: He hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him*—Isaiah 53:2. I have thought about those words this week. A tender plant sometimes can be seen in the forest growing in a most inconspicuous place behind a tree that has grown very tall, or behind a large rock. It does not try to make a showing for itself, yet if you step closer to it and examine it, you will find that it has a quality in it that will amaze you. God has placed it there to be a thing of beauty for anyone who will stop long enough to take a good look at it. God put the little flower there for His own reasons. It stands there to help show us that there is a God, for *The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork*—Psalm 19:1. Jesus is described in much the same way. He came not calling attention to His power and riches, but to reveal the love of God to the world.

In a commentary I was reading this part week, the writer said he thought Jesus was like a small tree growing from a root beside the tree's trunk, and not like a branch growing higher up on the tree. Often we go out in the garden and see a little tender plant like this and we stoop down and pull it up by the roots. We think that it does not belong. This analogy is used to describe Jesus the Son of God who came to the earth to make atonement to God for our sins. With all this said of our Lord, we still find few people who believe in Him. Of Mary, the mother of Jesus, we read: *But Mary kept all these things and pondered them in her heart*—Luke 2:19. At the first miracle of Jesus, as He turned the water into wine, the mother of Jesus said to the servants in the home of the wedding feast, *Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it.* She was a Godly mother and was one of the

people waiting for the salvation of the Lord. There were others also such as Simeon, (Luke 2:29-30, 38) and a prophetess named Anna.

He grew up as a root out of dry ground. I think I might have told you about a little root growing up in a most unlikely place. There was a storm sewer in the street right at the corner of the parsonage where we lived in the city of Salisbury, MD. One day my wife and I were crossing the street and I just happened to glance down into that storm sewer as we stepped over it to the other side, and I noticed a small green plant growing down in the bottom in a small amount of sand. I mentioned it to my wife, and added that it surely was evidence that the little plant really was anxious to stay alive and grow, even under such adverse conditions. The weeks and days passed and later in the summer we passed by that way and again noticed the little plant. It had grown to the top of the sewer grating, and had come above it. On the top of the little bush there was a pretty flower. I asked my wife what kind of flower that was, and she informed me that it was a Rose of Sharon. You may never know the thrill I got when it seemed to me the Lord reminded me that in The Song of Solomon Jesus is called Rose of Sharon.

*I am the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys—*  
Songs 2:1.

The very next description we have of Jesus in the second verse is, *He hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him.* He had nothing that looked to the world like dignity and grace. Turn to First Samuel 16:12 and see what is said about David. He was, *Of a beautiful countenance and goodly to look to.* Turn to Heb. 11:23 and you will read that Moses was *a proper child.* In Acts 11:20, Moses is described as *exceeding fair.* Moses and Samuel were good to look upon, but Jesus the Son of God had no beauty to desire Him. Jesus was born lowly in order to reach down and take hold of the lowest person, and the vilest sinner and restore him to a proper relationship with the Heavenly Father. I believe that Simeon, when he saw Jesus took Him in his arms and as he looked at Him, recognized that He was the long awaited Messiah. This man Simeon had read the Law and the Prophets and knew his Savior when he saw Him.

No one would intentionally do anything to cause his or her body to be marred or scarred. If anything were to happen to us that would leave a bad scar on our face, we would try to have surgery or in some way we would try to cover the scar. There is no person in the world today, no matter what his facial features or marred body may appear like who has to be ashamed to come to his Savior. Jesus was born without beauty, without money, without shelter at birth for it is written: *Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head—*Luke 9:58. There is no person who can say that He came to the earth to live in the flesh with any of the advantages that others did not have. In Philippians we read: *But made Himself of no reputation, and took upon*

*Himself the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men—Philippians 2:7. And in the 8<sup>th</sup> verse we read: and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross—Philippians 2:8. Can't you see the humility of Jesus as He allowed the Roman soldiers to beat Him with whips until His back and shoulders were raw and bleeding. But with all this we are told: and with His stripes we are healed—Isaiah 53:5.*

Jesus knew that He had the power to call down angels and destroy the whole wicked world, but He refused to use the power he referred to in Matthew: *All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth—Matthew 28:18.* It must have been extremely humiliating for Him to endure all this, *even the death of the cross.* The most ignominious and shameful death anyone could experience, yet He had no sin and they had no right to inflict punishment upon Him. This was the same punishment and death that was inflicted upon insurrectionists of the land in that day.

That is what the world thought of Jesus. It was an indication that there was no beauty in Him the world would desire, (Isaiah 53:2). But for the Child of God, Jesus was and is precious (1 Peter 2:4). He was so lowly that when the people were asked to choose between Jesus and Barabbas, their choice was the latter.

*The governor answered and said to them, “Which of the two do you want me to release to you?” They said, “Barabbas—Matthew 27:21!*

The soldiers went to the cell of this terrible criminal and released Barabbas. That was a mighty poor choice for the people that day, but the world today is still making the same kind of decisions this very day. People are condoning the same kinds of wicked men's deeds today, and giving them applause rather than speaking out against all such evil. God, grant that our places of learning, and our Pulpits will stop being silent, and do the great work that they are put here to carry out.

It seems to me that when the Roman soldiers came to that prison cell that day and said to Barabbas, “Jesus of Nazareth is going to the cross in your stead”, that Barabbas should have been thankful. There is nothing said of this anywhere in the Bible though, so I suppose he just went his way.

We surely have something to love Jesus for today. He took our place on the cross that day. Isaiah 53 continues: *He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, acquainted with grief—Isaiah 53:3.* Pilate's wife told her husband to have nothing to do with this Just Man; she said she had suffered much about Him. Pilate asked the mobs to tell him what they wished to be done with

this Man who had done nothing wrong. They said: *Let Him be crucified*—Matthew 27:22.

Many of us think that if it became necessary to give their lives and die for Jesus, we would be glad to do it, but all He is asking us to do is to live for Him. Far too few are willing to live for Him.

In verse five we see that, *He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities*—Isaiah 53:5. We must remember that everything Jesus suffered on that cruel cross was for the sins of the whole world. There is no way we can get past those Pearly Gates, but by being washed in the Precious Blood of this Christ who died on the cross for us that day.

In vs. 6, we read that *All we like sheep have gone astray*—Isaiah 53:6. This is corroborated by in Romans: *All have sinned and come short of the glory of go*—Romans 3:23 and later: *The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ Our Lord*—Romans 6:23.

Finally we read: *Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise Him*—Isaiah 53:10. After seeing this kind of love, who could possibly reject His marvelous Grace now?

**Fourth Sermon: Worthy Is the Lamb that Was Slain  
(Revelation 5:1-14)**

*1 And I saw in the right hand of him that sat on the throne a book written within and on the backside, sealed with seven seals. 2 And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof? 3 And no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the book, neither to look thereon. 4 And I wept much, because no man was found worthy to open and to read the book, neither to look thereon. 5 And one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof. 6 And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth. 7 And he came and took the book out of the right hand of him that sat upon the throne. 8 And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints. 9 And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; 10 And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth. 11 And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; 12 Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. 13 And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever. 14 And the four beasts said, Amen. And the four and twenty elders fell down and worshipped him that liveth for ever and ever.—Revelation 5:1-14*

We have not recently studied the first four chapters of the book of Revelation, although we have studied the entire book in time past. We indeed have come this morning to a very strange sounding Scripture. It is about a book that John saw after he had been taken in the Spirit up to Heaven and was being shown a vision by the Lord. In Revelation 5:1, we read: *And I saw in the right hand of Him that sat on the throne a book written within and on the backside, sealed with seven seals.* We also remember reading in another place in this great Book of Revelation, about another book called *The Book of Life* (Rev 20:15). In this other great book we are told that if our names are not written in it we will be cast into the lake of fire. All of our names are either written in The Lamb's Book of Life or we will hear Jesus the Righteous Judge say: *Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire*—Matthew 25:41. If on the other hand our names are found in this wonderful book, we will hear Him say: *Well done, thou good and faithful servant*—Matthew 25:21.

We're standing today at the crossroads of life where the message of the cross is being preached. In First Corinthians, we are told that there are some listening to the message of the cross who think that this preaching is mere foolishness.

*For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God—1 Corinthians 1:18.*

To others, however, this message of God has been made the Power of God unto Salvation. Last Sunday Evening it was my privilege to baptize nine people. As I think about these people, I am reminded that they have all arrived at the place in this life that surely must be the center of the universe. I believe that in a real sense the Foot of the Cross is truly the center of all the Universe. These nine folks while standing at the cross hearing the Gospel of Christ, accepted the marvelous Grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ, while there may have been others sitting in the same service who went away rejecting the same Loving Grace that was offered them at the same time. But the Bible says: *It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save those that believe—1 Corinthians 1:21.*

Now let us come to this other book that we are reading from this morning. I'd like you to keep your Bibles open during the sermon because I plan to stay mostly in this chapter. There is no real quick explanation for this book. I believe we must rely on other Scriptures. Turn if you will over to Leviticus 25:23-25 and read with me God's Law and method about the redemption of land. When the people of Israel owned a piece of ground they were not ever to sell it to anyone. If they owed someone a debt and had to have their property taken from them as payment for the bill they owed, there was a Law that God gave to them whereby they would be able to redeem it. Listen to the reading of this Scripture beginning with verse twenty three: *The land shall not be sold forever: For the land is mine; for ye are strangers and sojourners with me. And in all the land of your possession ye shall grant a redemption for the land. If thy brother be waxen poor, and hath sold away some of his possession, and if any of his kin come to redeem it, then shall he redeem that which his brother sold—Leviticus 25:23-25.*

I believe that after reading out of the Law of God as found here in the book of Leviticus, that the book we find here in the text this morning, must be the Deed and Title to the Lost World and all the people that sold themselves down into sin and needed to be Redeemed. In Romans 7:14, we are sold under sin, and in 1 Corinthians 6:20, we are bought with a Price.

We appropriately read in our Bible reading this morning in Genesis that *In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth—Genesis 1:1.* Folks, by virtue of the fact that He made the earth, He owns the earth and all that are in it. Even though much of the earth is now being used for things that do not please God He still is the owner of it. Then after man fell into sin while in the Garden of

Eden, God removed man from the Garden and the account in Genesis 3 tells us of the terrible fate of man thereafter. In the very early stages of man's sinful condition however, The Lord God promised Redemption in Genesis 3:15 which is called the protoevangelium. God has, since that time, been working redemptively in the world to save man from his serious plight of sin, and also to restore all of nature and all the world back to the condition it was in before man fell into sin. This is all good sound Scriptural teaching.

Now we read in the Book of Revelation about the vision that was given to John while he was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day in Revelation 1:10. In this Book we have a Revelation of Jesus Christ the Son of God. In Revelation 1:1-20, we learn many things about Jesus. As John was told to write these things to seven Churches of Asia, he was able to write that Jesus existed before the creation of the world and all that is in it (Revelation 1:4-8). Also he wrote in verse 5 that He is the *Faithful Witness*. He is pictured as the *Prince of the Kings of the earth, the First begotten of God, and That he loved us and washed us with His own Blood*—Revelation 1:5. We read also a little of His *Coming in the clouds* to receive His own in the Second coming. We are able to read later on in the first chapter of how He walks among the churches.

In John 1:1 we also see again that Jesus did not have a beginning. He was from the beginning. He was present at the Creation, and He it was Who created all things. See John 1:3, 3:16, and Hebrews 11:3. The Word (Jesus) was made flesh and dwelt among us (John 1:14). As we read all these things about the Redemptive work of God through Jesus Christ His Only Begotten Son, we should surely be convinced that the world and all the things that are in the world belong to Him alone. He made it all and then bought it back with His Own Precious Blood on the Cross of Calvary. We already have had the Price paid for our salvation. All we have to do is to invite Jesus into our lives and hearts to receive it. He made us first and then bought us back after we had sold ourselves down into sin. *For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin*—Romans 7:14. We went astray.

*For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God—*  
Romans 3:23.

*All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every  
one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the  
iniquity of us all—*Isaiah 53:6.

And God pronounced the penalty on sin.

*For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is  
eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord—*Romans  
6:23.



*Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sinneth, it shall die—Ezekiel 18:4.*

Then in Romans we read, *But God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us—Romans 5:8.* God could not allow sin to reign in our lives and take us to Heaven too. God's Righteousness required that sin be punished by death so He sent His Son to die for that sin. This is shown in Isaiah where it says: *yet it pleased the Lord to bruise Him; He hath put Him to grief—Isaiah 53:10.* After knowing all these things I certainly am happy to admit and confess that God owns me and with Paul say, *But by the Grace of God I am what I am—1 Corinthians 15:10.* Yes, beloved, I am His. Praise the Lord.

Now let us go back to the fifth chapter of Revelation where we read:

*And I saw in the right hand of Him that sat on the throne a book written within and on the backside, sealed with seven seals. And I saw a strong Angel proclaiming with a loud voice, who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof? And no man in heaven, nor in earth, was able to open the book, neither to look thereon—Revelation 5:1-3.*

As I read this during the past week, I thought to myself how one would feel even here on earth, if he were to enter a private office of a businessman, and see a book lying on the desk before him. I don't believe the person would feel exactly free to reach out and pick the book up unless he were to be invited to do so. This holy scene, however, is a scene in the presence of God, before Whom John was standing where I would think he would be speechless and filled with reverence. Think of it! This book was an unusual sight to see. It was written within and on the backside and sealed with seven Seals. The number Seven has always been designated as the number of perfection. It is the number that means God. As we read further, we hear a strong Angel with a loud voice making inquiry concerning One who is worthy to open the seals and read the book. The great book must be opened, and the only Person who could open the seals and read the book would have to be One who was worthy. I believe as I have said many times before, that this book was, as many think, the Title Deed to the earth and all of God's creation. Refer back to the Law of God in the book of Leviticus concerning the right of redemption and ownership and you will come to the conclusion that Jesus was the Creator of the universe and it was He Who had paid the price of Redemption. Jesus is the Lamb who was slain and He therefore is the One who is worthy. A search was made in Heaven, in the earth and under the earth; but He was the only Person worthy to open the book.

I believe that this scene takes place in Heaven immediately after the church is taken out of the world. The great Rapture of the church is described in Revelation 4:1, 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, and 1 Corinthians 15:51-58. The first chapter of Revelation is an expository on Jesus Christ. In Chapters two and three we read the Seven letters written to the Seven Churches of Asia. In Chapter 4, however, the scene changes from Earth to Heaven: *After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven: And the first voice which I heard was as it were a trumpet talking with me; which said, come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter*—Revelation 4:1. I also believe that the *four and twenty elders* mentioned in Rev. 4:6 are the Redeemed Saints who have been taken up to Heaven in the great Rapture of the church mentioned earlier in the first verse of chapter four of Revelation. Also in the sixth verse of chapter four, we see mentioned *Four Beasts*, or four beings that are created and their duty in Heaven is to Sing: *Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty, which was and is and is to com*—Revelation 4:8.

The passage further tells us that *I wept much, because no man was found worthy to open and to read the book, neither to look thereon*—Revelation 5:4. This to me is saying that John realized that it took a special person to open the book and redeem the world. Friends, the Bible makes it very plain that there is only one name given under Heaven among man whereby we must be saved, and that name is the name of Jesus who died for us and bought us back.

*Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved*—Acts 4:12.

*Truly my soul waiteth upon God: from him cometh my salvation. He only is my rock and my salvation; he is my defence; I shall not be greatly moved*—Psalm 62:2 and 62:6.

Finally, after search had been made throughout Heaven and Earth, and even under the earth, there came the voice of one of the Elders saying: *Weep not: Behold, the lion of the tribe of Juda, the root of David, hath prevailed to open the Book, and the loose the seven seals thereof. And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a lamb as it has been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent forth into all the earth. And He came and took the book out of the right hand of Him that sat upon the throne*—Revelation 5:5-7.

Jesus is the One who has the All-Seeing Eyes and the One upon Whom is the Spirit of the Lord God. See Isaiah 61:1 and Luke 4:18. Also Jesus, the Son of God, is the Judge of all the world: *For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son*—John 5:22.

He is the only One who could open this Book and read, and open the seals thereon. He was the One who paid that sacrificial price of His life on the Old Rugged Cross. He died a death that was both propitiatory and vicarious. The Angel of the Lord came to Joseph and said: *Thou shalt call His name Jesus: For He shall save His people from their sins*—Matthew 1:21. In the book of Deuteronomy, 21:22-23, we are told, *And if any man have committed a sin worthy of death, and he be put to death, and thou hang him on a tree; his body shall not remain all night upon the tree, but thou shalt in any wise bury him that day; for he that is hanged is accursed of God; that they land be not defiled, which the Lord thy God giveth thee for an inheritance*—Deuteronomy 21:22-23. Then we are reminded of what the Apostle Paul said: *Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the Law being made a curse for us: for it is written, cursed is every man that hangeth on a tree*—Galatians 3:13.

So you see that Our Savior expressed not only a quantitative Love, but a qualitative love as He paid with His life on the cruel cross for our sins. He satisfied every requirement that God had for us to be restored back into His marvelous grace. The Bible says: *To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself*—1 Corinthians 5:19. He washed my dirty life up and your dirty life too, and then presented our clean hands and lives back into the Hand of His Righteous Heavenly Father.

Yes, He was the only one who was worthy to take this book from the hand of the heavenly Father and remove the seven seals and read what was on the inside. At this time, which seems to be immediately after the Rapture of the Church, we read in the pages that follow in the book of Revelation, of the Great Tribulation. I hope you will begin right at this point (Revelation 4:1) and read about the great events that will shortly be coming on this old earth as soon as the church is gone up to Heaven.

The book of this prophecy is written in the past tense as though it has already happened. This is called prolepsis. It should be read, according to the way I see it, as something that is yet to happen in the future. Many of the things spoken of in this book are yet to be seen in the future.

Reading Chapter 5 of the book of Revelation: *When He had taken the book, the four beasts and the four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints. And they sung a new song, saying, thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: Four thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us. To God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue and people and nation*—Revelation 5:8-9. Here the redeemed saints of all time began to give to God the true worship that He deserves. When the angels in Heaven heard of the great Love that God had for fallen mankind, they *desired to look into it* (1 Peter 1:12). Angels themselves have never known such love and such a great salvation as this love and this salvation as we have been given. Read: *But God commendeth his*

*love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us—Romans 5:8* over and over again until it sinks into our minds and our hearts. Praise our wonderful God!

John recalls Jesus saying: *Your Father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: And He saw it and was glad—John 8:56.* Also there is much evidence that others like Moses got a glimpse of “my day”.

I believe that the sacrificial worship of the Old Testament servants of God were in faith looking ahead through the centuries to the time when the Messiah would come and would give His life on the Old Rugged Cross. There has never, nor will there ever be any one redeemed by anyone or anything but the precious blood of Christ.

All Heaven falls down in a great worship experience before Him who sits on the throne: *Tremble, though earth at the presence of the Lord, At the presence of the God of Jacob—Psalm 114:7.* All nature seems to obey the instinct that God has created in them, only man has chosen to walk according to his own will in a selfish way.

In Luke, some of the Pharisees asked Jesus to rebuke His Disciples to stop them from singing His praise as He came into Jerusalem. He answered them by saying: *I tell you that if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out—Luke 19:39-40.*

On that day there will be an even a more intensified experience of worship in the Heavenly Realm by a number so great, which no man could ever number. Their main theme is still *Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom, And strength and honor, and glory, and blessing.*—Revelation 5:11-12.

We’ll be there because we have been redeemed. The bodies of those who are with the Lord at this very hour will be there. Their bodies will rise up out of their graves at the last Trump (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18) and meet the Lord in the air during the great Rapture. I believe that all the saints who have been redeemed by the blood will be there and help make up that great number mentioned here.

There is absolutely nothing too good for Jesus. I hear people say sometimes, “Don’t be a religious fanatic!” Let me tell you that nearly everything I become interested in I find that I put all I have into it. Friends, if I am going to go all out for anything, let it be for Jesus. Let me become a fanatic for my wonderful Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Paul says: *Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, for as much as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord—1 Corinthians 15:58.*

Have you ever taken the time in your prayer life to say, Lord, I adore you, or Lord, thank you so very much for all you did for me on that cross? Try that some time. Praise Him and worship Him. Many of us sometimes act as though we think we are doing Him a great favor when we give Him a little of our time. Let us remember that it is God who has done all the giving. *Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift*—2 Corinthians 9:15.

After hearing all this, some people still say that God will not throw a man into Hell. Listen, after I have studied about the Love of God and how He became Flesh and died for us, I don't think I would be too surprised to hear Him say to the rejecter, *Depart from Me, Ye worker of iniquity*. I say this reverently as I say all other things; He has done everything that Heaven can do to save our unworthy souls. If we die and are lost it will certainly be our own fault.

All Heaven agrees that Jesus is the One Who is Worthy: *And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever. And the four beasts said, Amen. And the four and twenty elders fell down and worshipped him that liveth for ever and ever*—Revelation 5:13-14.

All nature and all Believers groan for the Redemption of our bodies.

*Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body*—Romans 8:21-23.

As I read the wonderful Word of God, I see that not only will our souls be delivered, but also our bodies, and it seems to me the Bible is telling me that during the Great Tribulation the whole earth will be purified. I heard a person say once, "I don't think we ought to use that building for a worship service because it was a bar or some other evil place." I say that the devil has used it long enough; let us take it over for the use of the Lord's work.

Yes, Jesus has died for us. He has paid the price for our redemption. Will you let Him be the Lord of your life today? Let Jesus come into your heart and your life and be your Lord and Master. He is worthy; He died for you.

## **Fifth Sermon: Our God Is a Consuming Fire (Hebrews 12:28-29)**

*Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: For our God is a consuming fire—Hebrews 12:28-29.*

Turn in today's text and read the two verses in the book of Hebrews. These are powerful verses. Vs. 28 seems to connote our response to God while vs. 29 seems to tell us of the impact that God makes upon our lives. We read: *Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: For our God is a consuming fire—Hebrews 12:28-29.*

This last verse, Heb. 12:29, I would like to use for our text this morning. *For our God is a consuming fire.* I believe that if you study this term, "consuming fire" in the original language you will find that it has to do with the justice of God. It says to us that God puts His disapproval upon anything and everything that is not righteous. We know by reading the Word of God that God hates evil and has an abhorrence toward all sin. Yet we know for certain that He loves the sinner *For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.—John 3:16.* He did that which was necessary to save the sinner. I am so happy to say this morning that the Lord Jesus Christ by His death, burial and Resurrection did everything that was required in the sight of our Heavenly Father to make the vilest sinner clean and to admit him to Heaven. Yes He will say to us "Well done." if we accept His offer of Salvation by Grace: *For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast—Ephesians 2:8-9.* With His precious Blood we have been saved: *Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot—1 Peter 1:18-19.*

When we read this word, "consume", describing our God, it is believed to be referring to the strict divine justice of His righteousness. I remember that before I entered the gospel ministry I worked with lead. This was a very heavy metal and would get impure very quickly because of oxidation. It was my task occasionally to clean and purify some of the metal that had been used and make it ready by cleansing by fire to be used again to make other objects. The method that was used to purify lead was to melt the dirty lead in a melting pot and skim the dross from the surface with an iron ladle. Under this dross could be seen the cleanest, prettiest molten lead you would ever wish to see. This is what I believe happens to the sinner's dirty life of iniquity. God had said in the Old Testament: *The word of the LORD came unto me again, saying, What mean ye, that ye use*

*this proverb concerning the land of Israel, saying, The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge? As I live, saith the Lord GOD, ye shall not have occasion any more to use this proverb in Israel. Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sinneth, it shall die—Ezekiel 18:1-4. And in the New Testament: For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord—Romans 6:23.*

Both in the Old and the New Testaments God deals very harshly with sin in our lives. We see that He has dealt very lovingly and kindly with the sinner because of what Jesus has done when He went to Calvary and paid the sin debt for us all. I must remind all of you this morning that when The Son of God died on the Cross, His Father in Heaven did not immunize Him from suffering and grief but Jesus bore all the pain and grief (by imputation) that we collectively would have suffered if He had not suffered in our stead.

God told Moses that He is a *Consuming Fire*—Deuteronomy 4:24 and Jeremiah once wrote: *But His word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones—Jeremiah 20:9.* Jeremiah made this statement at a time when he had slowed down a little bit in preaching the Word of God. Listen, the Bible says that the Gospel *is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth—Romans 1:16.* In my own ministry I have found it very difficult to go away and not proclaim the Word even for a short vacation. A person who has studied the Bible and taught or preached it should find it very hard to be quiet and refrain from the task that Jesus gave in the Great Commission as seen in Matthew 28:19-20 and Acts 1:8 which He has placed squarely upon his shoulders:

*Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen—Matthew 28:19-20*

*But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth—Acts 1:8*

. I used to think while reading John the Baptist's introduction of Jesus Christ near the River Jordan, *Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world—John 1:29*, how I wish that I could have been there and had a part in this wonderful day when the Lord was being introduced to a lost world. As I grew older and learned more about what the Good News really was and the great power in it and behind it, I realized that Jesus, when He gave us the Great Commission to tell all the world, He was giving us the same opportunity to tell about the Savior that John the Baptist enjoyed. He knew that it was the greatest Blessing

that we could receive, other than receiving Christ Jesus into our lives--to share the Gospel with someone else. He could have sent a bright shining angel to tell the great News, but He allowed us this great privilege of spreading the Good News for Him. Along with this Good News goes an all-encompassing invitation to any person who will come. In Revelation we read: *And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely*—Revelation 22:17. This is the last invitation found in the Bible. This Gracious invitation is being extended all over the world wherever the Word is being proclaimed today. It will continue until Jesus comes to gather His Church in the Great Rapture. In Romans 10:13, John 3:16, Isaiah 55:1 and many other places in the Bible we see His gracious invitation:

*For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved*—Romans 10:13.

*For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life*—John 3:16

*Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price*—Isaiah 55:1

And now I would like to share with you several thoughts that may be gleaned from the lesson this morning.

The first thought I glean from our text this morning is that God as a consuming fire purifies our lives and leaves only that which is pure and righteous. I have told my churches many times that the Lord God is righteous and the closer one gets to Him the purer one becomes. This is sound theology. God is the standard of all righteousness. If you are going to measure anything to determine whether it is right or wrong you must measure it by God's standard of righteousness. I have taught you before that even in the Ten Commandments, the Decalogue, God didn't arbitrarily pick ten things we could or could not do and some that we must not do. As I have remembered my experience of raising and training our children; when they would ask that natural question, "Why Daddy?", many times after I had exhausted all my answers I would reply, "Just because I said so." This is not the way God does things. God has never said anything that was not consistent with His righteousness. Therefore, anything that does not conform to the righteousness of God is not righteous.

We in this humanistic age sometimes tell others to do that which is right for you. We hear some people advocating situation ethics and other formulae to conduct our lives by. Nothing is said in the Word of God that would support this kind of thinking or teaching. God's Word is our guide which the Holy Spirit uses to sanctify us and make us what He wishes us to be: *Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth*—John 17:17.



Many times I have had people ask me what some verse in the Bible meant and I would have to admit that I too did not understand the meaning. Whether I understood the passage of Scripture or not, I must say that I know it was right and true because God said it. I have heard people say that in these modern times in which we live they believe we need to rethink the Bible. They say that we need to bring this precious book up to date. They seem to think this is needed in order to speak more clearly to the people of today. Friends, the Bible was more up to date when it was written than any book of the world's thinkers is today. The only rethinking we need to do is to start to study God's Word and learn the many things we have failed to learn up to this present time. The Word of God was right when it was spoken; is right this present time; and will remain right all through Eternity. God is righteousness and anything that fails to meet His standard is not right.

We have been told many times in the Bible that we all have sinned: *For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God*—Romans 3:23, and this is very true. I would like to share with you a little story that is also true. I suppose I have told you about this incident before. After being here eleven and a half years, I think I must have told you all I know twice but it would profit you to hear some things over again. I was visiting in a hospital on one occasion and while I was there visiting one of our own members I was asked to stop and see a man who lay almost at the point of death. While speaking to him and his wife I noticed that he was going in and out of consciousness. Finally he seemed to go out for the final time. After he passed away, his wife asked me what I was trying to find out from her husband. I told her that I was wondering how he stood in his faith toward God. She answered me in a way I shall never forget. She said, "Preacher, if my husband has ever sinned since we've been married, I am not aware of it." Oh, my God, don't ever let me be responsible for not telling people that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. Let me get across to the people that we are not saved by works, but by the grace of God: *For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast*—Ephesians 2:8-9. I try to think that he must have had faith in Jesus Christ. We are not the judge of any man.

God has spoken and His Word is true. He cannot lie. The Bible says:

*Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me*—John 14:16.

*God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written, That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged*—Romans 3:4

*Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sinneth, it shall die*—Ezekiel 18:4.

He was really saying that as a consuming fire, He must get rid of our sin. So He sent the Lord Jesus Christ, His Son to die for us on the cross. Praise our wonderful God!

God cannot look at sin. He gave His Son to die on the cross for our sins. There will be no sin in Heaven. Aren't you glad about this? Listen to these verses as we read from Hebrews: *For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries—Hebrews 10:26-27.* Again, we get a glimpse of the consuming fire of our God. The consuming fire of our God is burning strong and hot against sin and the devil in the world. He warns us: *Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour—1 Peter 5:8.*

Consider this verse: *His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire—Revelation 1:14.* If we study to see just what He was doing among the churches, we would find that He was pointing out to them their faults so they could set about to correct them and be in the will of God again. We see here that Jesus is walking among all His churches in the world today as He walked among the seven churches in Asia in the days when John the Apostle was given this vision. God the Holy Spirit is searching our churches today and telling us what He sees wrong in them. I wonder if today, as He examines our church here this morning, He finds us to be like the church of Ephesus: *Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love—Revelation 2:4.* They, Jesus said, had left their first love. Do you today remember the way you felt about Jesus the very moment you were born again? Is your conversion experience just as fresh and crisp and real as it was then? If not, I wonder if we don't have a need to rededicate our lives to Him again. Read the remainder of chapters two and three of the book of Revelation and see the rest of the faults that the Lord Jesus Christ found in these churches. We need to apply these same things to our church and to our own personal lives and see if we don't need to make some changes.

*Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new—2 Corinthians 5:17.* I don't like to ride some hobbyhorse in every sermon I preach, but some times I feel like riding a regular wooden hobbyhorse. There are so many empty wooden pews I see before me I think that Jesus must be looking down on us and reminding us of what is said in Hebrews: *Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching—Hebrews 10:25.* Does the attendance we see from time to time indicate that some of us have left our first love? When we get to Heaven one of these days there is no way we will be able to stand there in His presence if He were not looking at us through the precious blood of Jesus. If it were not for the blood we would be calling out to the rocks

and mountains to fall on us and hide us from the Face of the One who sits on the Throne: *And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand—Revelation 6:16-17?*

Isn't it wonderful to know that the blood of Christ has us covered. God, as a consuming fire does not overlook sin but He washes it away and forgives us; then He does not remember our sins again through time and eternity for *There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit—Romans 8:1.* God does not turn over a new leaf, or just forget about it and call it square, He gave His Son Jesus to die for our sins. There is no sin ever forgiven outside the blood of Jesus. Do you believe that? Thank God for the blood of Jesus.

Only the Lord God knows the heart of man. Paul writes: *But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup—1 Corinthians 11:28.* Sometimes we are very dishonest with ourselves as we try to make this examination of ourselves. The prophet Jeremiah tells us that *The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it—Jeremiah 17:9?* In the very next verse God tells us that *I the LORD search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings—Jeremiah 17:10.* Many times when I pray for forgiveness I realize that I may not be honest enough with myself about who is to be blamed for my sins, but thank the Lord that His Spirit, Who works in me, causes me to feel the conviction that I need to confess my sins to Him and be forgiven, for *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness—1 John 1:19.* Also when we stand before Him at the judgment seat of Christ, *Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is—1 Corinthians 3:13.* We are to read the Bible in order to experience growth in Grace: *Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth—John 17:17.*

Also we are told: *For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do—Hebrews 4:12-13.* The consuming fire of God knows all, and you can believe He sees all also. When we can read God's Word, the Holy Spirit will tell us what is wrong in our lives.

In this verse: *Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful—Romans 7:13,* we are told the Law came that *sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful.* Paul said: *What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet—Romans 7:7.* So you see the necessity of reading the Holy Bible.

We have been speaking a lot about works here this morning but we must return to the truth that we are not saved by works but entirely by the Grace of God: *For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God—Ephesians 2:8.* The greatest love that man has ever known is the Love of God that caused Him to send Jesus to die in our stead on the cross: *We love Him because He first loved us—1 John 4:19.*

God as a consuming fire gives us counsel. Everybody needs a counselor. Jesus is Called *“Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father The Prince of Peace—Isaiah 9:6.* *“For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace—Isaiah 9:6.*

Our country today and all the nations of the world are together trying to find a peaceful means of settling their differences, but I fear that they, for the most part, are failing to call on the One who is the Prince of Peace. I believe that if all the nations who desire peace would call on this Prince of Peace there would be peace on all the earth. I believe for sure that if people who are disturbed in their emotions and minds would lay their troubles at the foot of the cross at Jesus’ feet, they too would have peace.

*For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind—2 Timothy 1:7.*

Some time ago I heard of some people somewhere in the United States who voiced an objection to having a statue of Jesus standing on property belonging to the government. I know that we are not to worship images, but this was not their objection. They were trying to uphold the doctrine of the Separation of church and State. Sometimes I am persuaded that we as Christians are going a little too far in protecting this belief. I don’t believe that the state should dictate to the church. Neither do I think the church should dictate to the state, but I am afraid that some of those who have atheistic purposes in mind are getting the support of some Christians in their effort of pushing God out of our public schools and out of our government. I believe that our country should not be ashamed to acknowledge the living God upon whose teachings it was founded. I am not for pushing God aside in order to keep others from prospering in their faith that may differ from ours. I have enough faith in the true and living God to believe He is able to hold His own in a world that may be filled with other gods who are

powerless. Praise the Lord who has all power in Heaven and in Earth: *And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth—Matthew 28:18.*

I know that our God as a consuming fire sends the fires of revival. Many times I have prayed that this church would receive the fire of revival. If every Christian in this church would allow his testimony to be seen, I believe that the lost in the community would want to be here to find out what was happening; and I believe that the Holy Spirit would pour out a revival right here. Psalm 85:6, The Psalmist prays: *Wilt thou not revive us again, that thy people may rejoice in the—* Psalm 85:6?

Then lastly our God as a consuming fire brings final judgment to the unbelievers: *And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment—Hebrews 9:27.* Turn to the Book of Revelation: *And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire—Revelation 20:15,* then back up to Verse 11 and read how one's fate is sealed.

## Sixth Sermon: The Tears of Jesus for His Friends (John 11:35)

*Jesus wept*—John 11:35.

We never read anywhere in the Bible that Jesus laughed. He might have laughed on occasions, but He had come to the earth for a serious reason. When Jesus came to the earth there was not much to laugh about. In the Bible we read that people had gone so far away from God that He told them to *Let your laughter be turned to mourning*—James 4:9. I am convinced that we should often let our laughter be turned into Godly sorrow because of our sins.

Going back in the Scriptural account, we see that a certain man named Lazarus lay sick unto death. He lived in the town of Bethany with his two sisters, Mary and Martha. One sister was the same Mary. She had come into the house where Jesus was and had washed His feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. *Then said his disciples, Lord, if he sleep, he shall do well*—John 11:12.

This is quite a lengthy story. They in their time of trouble did what most Christians would have done--get in touch with the Master. They believed in their hearts that Jesus could do anything. How many people here this morning believe that Jesus is able to do anything? Well, all power in Heaven and Earth was given to Jesus. *And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth*—Matthew 28:18. Jesus purposely remained in the place where He was for another two days delaying His coming to His friends.

When Jesus finally arrived in Bethany, He found Lazarus dead. Yes, upon His arrival He found the little family, which He loved, deeply bereaved over the loss of their brother. There was surely no doubt in the minds of anyone that Lazarus was really dead. He had been dead four days. Jesus was informed that *His body stinketh*—John 11:39, indicating a degree of putrefaction. There are those who try to explain away some of the precious truths we hold sacred and dear. This is sickening to my heart. There is no way that anyone could mistake the fact that Lazarus was really dead. Let us, this morning, not try to rewrite the Bible, but let us rather pray that the Holy Spirit will transform our hearts and lives. *I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God*—Romans 12:1-2. Jesus had come to this world to seek and save that which was lost, *For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost*—Luke 19:10.

This morning let us put aside all images and pictures of Christ, except the picture He has given us. We must believe that He will do all that He has promised. How many of us here this morning believe that Jesus is able to do all that He has promised? He is never late. He is always on time. *The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance*—2 Peter 3:9. Praise God that He left us with His promise that He would come again to take His church away with Him. Look for Him. He will surely come again for His Saints as He said He would.

Jesus asked, *Where have ye laid him?* Their answer was, *come and see*—John 11:34. As our Lord came to the grave, He wept. *Jesus wept*—John 11:35. Jesus then called, *Lazarus, come forth*—John 11:43, *For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first*--1 Thes 4:16. Here we are told that Jesus will call again to all His Saints who lie in their graves and they will all hear His voice and they will come forth in the great Resurrection and meet the Lord in the air. Let us pray that all who are under the sound of my unworthy voice today will know Him as Savior and be able to hear His welcome call to us on that great and wonderful day. *That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death*—Philemon 3:10. Jesus had just told the sisters of Lazarus and is telling us today, *I Am the Resurrection and the Life: he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live*—John 11:25. Martha seemed to believe in the Resurrection that was to take place on the Last Day, but Jesus was preparing to raise Lazarus from the dead on that day.

You who are present here in this service this morning; do you know that Jesus is going to raise you in that great resurrection? This is the blessed hope of the church of the Living Christ. This is His Promise and we should be looking for it.

We are told here in this Scripture that as Jesus walked toward his friend's grave, He wept. Recently over the past six or seven years a lot of things have happened in my life that caused me to cry. My dad had been an invalid for several years. I shed tears over his condition because I loved him. My mother also was suffering from several devastating strokes and my brother was in suffering under our own roof. Many times during these trying times my heart was broken and I found myself weeping. It has been thought by some that a man who weeps is a weakling; but, I believe that the ability to weep is a quality that no genuine child of God should be without.

I am happy to know that the One Who came to the earth to die for my sins was able to cry real tears for His friends as well as for the whole lost world. I believe that it behooves the child of god to be able to cry. I have preached many funerals

for those who were my long-time friends and often it would be all I could do to hold the tears back. It was not only that I was suffering the loss of a good friend; but I was looking at a group of people whose hearts were breaking. As I reflect back on these times, I am happy that the Holy Spirit has given us Scriptures that enlighten us about this subject. The Bible tells us: *Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep*—Romans 12:15.

Jesus showed His grief here in several ways: In Verse 33, we read: *He groaned in the Spirit and was troubled*. I believe this was because He saw His good friends with their hearts broken. Could you believe that I have preached at least one funeral where I thought I was the saddest person there? When I visited the home later I could hear the music being played and the behavior of the spouse with others and it was heart breaking to me. The music sounded like it was coming out of the jungle. It was a sad experience for me. I don't mean to judge others; but as the events of the future unfolded, I was convinced that I must have been correct in my impressions at the time.

Often when we stand amid sadness we seem to feel within ourselves a type of groaning in our spirit for the unhappiness of others. All that we have are finite minds; therefore, we are not capable of sharing or of feeling the grief of others as Our Savior did. When we feel deeply hurt in our hearts and some loving person comes to us and offers us their sincere sympathy we are inclined to be comforted. The things that caused Jesus to groan in His Spirit could be satisfied by His successful Mission of His Death and Resurrection. He came to seek and save that which was lost. I wish now that I could stop right here and preach a sermon on "The Lostness of the Lost". The great struggle He found His friends going through with death and sin was what caused Jesus to groan. These are the very things that caused Him to drink of that bitter cup there at Calvary. *And he went a little further, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt*—Matthew 26:39. Although we might have tasted of some sorrow, there is not a one of us who have even tasted a slight bit of that bitterness that Our dear Lord drank of in Gethsemane.

We can only conclude that while Jesus groaned in His Spirit He was sharing in His soul the deep sorrows of His friends. The prophet Isaiah tells us that He was a Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief. *He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not*—Isaiah 53:3. In First Peter we read: *Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you*—1 Peter 5:7. I was talking to my brother some time ago while he lay ill on a hospital bed. As I looked at him I could see the tears filling his eyes. I was so happy to tell him that the Lord Jesus Christ cared about him and his condition. I had the feeling that he also was aware of this wonderful truth. We had a servant of God preaching a revival here in our church who told us of the long illness of his wife before she went home to be with the Lord. He told the church that the



Lord did not look the other way when they called on Him. They felt the presence of the Lord even in that sick room while his dear wife was near death. Turn to the book of Isaiah: *In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them: in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old*—Isaiah 63:9. The Lord Jesus really cares.

There is another Scripture I would like to share with you this morning. Turn to Isaiah and see that although it hurts Him when we hurt, It pleased the Lord to bruise Him: *Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand*—Isaiah 53:10. There is no way we can understand fully the concern of our God for our hurts and tears. But I think the greatest expression of his love was when Jesus took upon Himself our sins and blame and came to the cross where He cried out that blood-curdling cry *Eli, Eli, Lama sabachthani*—Matthew 27:46, translated means, “My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?” *And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me*—Matthew 27:46?

Is it possible today that there could be any person who would reject this Wonderful Jesus and His marvelous Grace? *For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace*—Isaiah 9:6. No such Love has ever been seen in the universe:

*Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls. Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into*—1 Peter 1:9-12.

Along with this rejection would have to go the greatest sin that a person could be guilty of. Yet we see this sin being committed every day.

Jesus asked: *Where have ye laid him*—John 11:34? When I meet with a bereaved family in a funeral home I never suggest that they should hold back their tears. I am persuaded that a person should weep when it is necessary. I begin by

admitting that tragedy has come into their lives but there are those who care and share their feelings of sorrow. Most of all the loving heavenly Father knows about their sorrow and cares more than we could possibly care. My hope is in Jesus. Recently I received in the mail a brochure trying to sell me a set of books on bringing comfort to the dying. These books caught my interest until I read further into the letter where it listed one book on comforting the atheist in death. Oh, friend, the only comfort that can be brought into the life of an atheist is the Good News of how Jesus died and rose from the dead to redeem his lost soul from Hell. Then I would invite him to receive Christ as his Savior. This has happened at least once in my ministry.

Another way Jesus showed His concern was that He wept. *Then said the Jews, Behold how he loved him—John 11:36!* This expression as Jesus wept told the love of Jesus for His friends. I believe it is becoming for a Christian to be able to cry for the sorrows of others. *But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd—Matthew 9:36.*

As Jesus was looking over Jerusalem, He saw that great city He began to cry unto it and express his great concern by saying: *O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not—Matthew 23:37!* I can never read this verse without being deeply moved in my spirit. I don't believe Jesus could look at that scene ever without weeping. Is He weeping over our city today? I believe He surely must be. It is impossible for my finite mind to comprehend the kind of love and compassion that Jesus has for this old lost world. It is the love of God Himself.

Going further, the Lord said: *Then saith he unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with me—Matthew 26:38.* The deep emotions of the Son of God were moved over the troubles of men. Jesus while hanging on the cruel Cross, cried out to His heavenly Father: *Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do—Luke 23:34.* He did not ask that fire be sent down from Heaven to destroy the world. He would have been justified in doing so, but He did not. They spat upon Him, whipped Him, insulted Him, placed a crown of thorns upon His brow, and finally nailed Him to the cross. They nailed His hands and His feet to the cross. There it was that He prayed for those who crucified Him. For this we should cry a river of tears. Is your heart still that of a hardened sinner?

Another way in which Jesus shows His love and concern in this lesson is His willingness to save us when we call upon His name: *For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved—Romans 10:13.* There is not a person in this church this morning, who would remain lost if he would call on the

wonderful name of the Lord. He really loves you and died for you. I ask you in the name of my wonderful Jesus call on Him now. He will save you now.

## Seventh Sermon: Five Ingredients Found in Isaiah's Worship Experience (Isaiah 6:1-8)

1 *In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. 2 Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. 3 And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory. 4 And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke. 5 Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts. 6 Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar: 7 And he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged. 8 Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me—Isaiah 6:1-8.*

This morning I would like to take this Scripture and divide it into five parts or points. Each one of these points will constitute one very important ingredient for a true worship experience.

We have studied that the mission of the Local Church is two-fold. Jesus in announcing the great commission said: *Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen—Matthew 28:19-20.*

From this we learn that the mission of the church is two-fold. According to this Scripture we are to first preach the Good News to the entire World. We are to then baptize them Scripturally. We are to continue to teach these new Christians all things that God has taught us in His Holy Word. Paul said: *For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth—Romans 1:16.* What Jesus is really saying to them and to us is that we are to tell the Good News of Jesus to all people and after they are saved we are not to drop them but we are to follow up on them and help them to grow into mature Christians. It is a lifetime task to keep them in a fold subject to good Bible preaching and teaching. Jesus tells us that this Spiritual growth, called sanctification, comes by the Word of God that is taught us by the Holy Spirit. *Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth—John 17:17.*

I think it was Charles H. Spurgeon who said that he tried to preach a certain percentage of his sermons evangelistic and the rest of them as soul feeding. I decided to do it this way in order to reach all the people who attend my services at any given time.

Let us look during the remainder of this service at the five ingredients found in Isaiah's worship experience.

My wife sometimes bakes a cake so delicious I can't stop asking for another piece. She and all the good cooks I have watched in my life take a certain ingredient and mix it with other ingredients. Then after cooking it for a specified time it is really worth putting your teeth into. A true worship experience needs certain spiritual ingredients also.

The key ingredient to the prophet Isaiah's worship experience is: He had a lofty concept of God. He said: *I saw the Lord... high and lifted up*—Isaiah 6:11. Any good worship that I have ever enjoyed consisted of a spirit of reverence for Almighty God. I had to have the feeling that God was high and lifted up. Some people have advanced the theory that Isaiah went into the temple that day because of his feeling of loss over the death of his king. I have no way of knowing just why he was in the temple that day but God gave him a vision that he never forgot and one that transformed his life.

In this vision, Isaiah saw the Lord glorified. There are many verses in the Bible that illustrate that the Lord God should be seen as high and lifted up. He is Almighty God, our heavenly Father. There was a man in our church one Sunday who had been saved from alcoholism many years before. This man became a little upset when he heard me say that our heavenly Father should not be referred to as "the man upstairs" as many people refer to Him. I told him I was sorry he was offended. If he had been taught to view the Lord as high and lifted up in the beginning, the term would surely have been outgrown as he reached a higher degree of maturity. He is Almighty God. He is all sufficient. He is the Lord of the whole universe and should be referred to with the highest reverence and respect. Do not ever reduce the name of our wonderful God to this kind of speaking or thinking. He is the omnipotent, which means He is all powerful. He is also omniscient and omnipresent, which means He is all knowing and is present everywhere.

I heard a preacher say over a radio program this last week that God can do anything. I could say "Amen" to that. After that true statement he added, "Anything that God cannot do just can't be done." Listen, wonderful people of God here today, there is nothing that the Lord God cannot do.

Jesus told a woman in Samaria that there was a special kind of worship that was due the Father in Heaven: *God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth*—John 4:24. God says about Himself: *For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones*—Isaiah 57:15. Because of all we read in God's Word we can know that God is high and lifted up. In order to have a true worship experience

we must follow what Jesus said : *Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me—John 14:6.* Jesus said: *And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me—John 12:32.* Jesus claimed Deity. He is God. When He was here on earth He was God in the flesh. In the first verse of John we read: *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God—John 1:1.* We are told also in that same chapter that *The Word was made flesh and dwelth among us—John 1:14.* We read: *Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world—1 John 4:1.* Also we are informed in the following two verses how we may know that the Spirit is of God. A confession must be made by them that Jesus has come into the world in the flesh. At the outset, our concept of God should be as lofty our finite minds are capable of thinking.

Even at our best, our thoughts can only reach a certain plateau. Isaiah tells us: *For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts—Isaiah 55:9.* God knows the end from the very beginning. I am glad to know that when I stand before the righteous Judge of all the universe at the judgment seat of Christ: *But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ—Romans 14:10.* I will not have to convince Him of anything. He will already know all about my life and therefore His judgment will be right. When He says “Well done.” to us that day, even though we may not think of ourselves as being worthy, we will remember that it is an omniscient God that declared us righteous because of our faith in His precious blood. *Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ—Romans 5:1* and *Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification—Romans 4:25.* By His Resurrection from the dead we have been justified. John tells us that if Jesus be lifted up from the earth, He will draw all men unto Him. He truly was lifted up when He gave His life for us on that cruel cross. Jesus is lifted up also when we live our daily lives for Him; or when we proclaim His Word in preaching. *And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me—John 12:32.*

Several thousand years ago David said: *I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help—Psalm 121:1.* We must have a high concept of God in order to enjoy a true worship experience. Those things used in the worship of God should be respected. You people here today are God’s people. This Book I hold in my hand is the holy Bible, God’s written Word. The building we meet in worship is God’s building. These things should never be desecrated. We should prayerfully read the Word of God, and depend upon the Holy Spirit to interpret it for us by illumination. Paul tells us that natural man does not understand the things of God. They are only understood by the Spirit of God. If sometime this past week or ever in the past you have framed your tongue or lips to speak the precious name of our God in vain, you should fall down to your knees and ask Him to forgive you of that terrible sin. The name of God is on

high and to be lifted up. This is the very first element found in a true worship experience. *But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned*—1 Corinthians 2:14.

The second ingredient found in the true worship experience requires that we taken an honest assessment of ourselves. Isaiah said: *Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts*—Isaiah 6:5. This morning we should take a good look at ourselves. The Bible has said that no man has seen God at any time. No man can see God and live. So this was truly a vision that God gave Isaiah transforming his life into a life that could be used in His service. We should be happy for the Lord to transform our lives into lives that can be used by Him.

There are secrets in all our hearts that can only be examined and confessed by us: *But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup*—1 Corinthians 11:28. We are told *but let man examine himself...* When Isaiah looked into his own heart he exclaimed: *Woe is me*. I don't know of a stronger word in the Old Testament to describe the condition of a man with sin in his heart than this word—woe. Many of us in describing our sinful conditions to others or ourselves are inclined to use less accurate expressions such as, "Sure, I've sinned." Often to such a light-hearted statement as this we may even add, "I'm only human." When we are finished with the whole matter it sounds so trivial it hardly sounds serious at all. The word that Isaiah used to describe his sinful condition was, "woe", and this is exactly what it was in the sight of God.

Friends, when we come to the end of our lives and feel the chilly waters of death, I have a feeling that when we realize that we are about to stand in the presence of the righteous God of the universe we will then see ourselves as we really are. Make very sure that you confess your sins to Him now so you will be prepared to meet Him. Today is the day of Salvation. When I get to Heaven and I know I will be going there, it will not be because I have preached or because I've been good but because Jesus died on the cross for my sins. If you believe that, say "amen". It will be because we have appropriated to our own lives through faith that finished work of Jesus on Calvary's Cross. While Jesus was hanging on the cross He cried: *It is finished*. *When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost*—John 19:30. This means that our Salvation had been bought and paid for with His precious blood.

There are many theological questions that are asked from time to time. One is: "What happens to a person who is saved one day and on his way home he is suddenly killed before he has an opportunity to ask forgiveness for sinful thoughts or deeds he has committed between the time he was saved and his death?" *For this reason I also suffer these things; nevertheless I am not ashamed,*

*for I know who I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day—2 Tim 1:12.* He saves from the past sins; He keeps us in the present; He saves us in the future. Dear friends, we have a wonderful salvation. If you would like to read more on this subject, turn to I Peter 1:9-12 and read how in vs. 12 that the angels desire to see more of this great love of God.

I lay in a Baltimore hospital some years ago awaiting surgery scheduled for the following morning. Before I was able to drop off to sleep, there came to my mind some sins I had been guilty of. I began to ask the Lord to forgive me of these sins that now cluttered my mind. As I thought of these sins one by one, I would confess them and ask for forgiveness. There seemed to be a deluge of these memories. At length I became distressed. I feared I could never call them all to mind and something might keep me from confessing the last one. Finally I must have fallen into a deep sleep. During this sleep I had a beautiful dream. In the dream I heard a voice speaking to me. The voice said to me to recall that the Word of God teaches that (Rev. 20:15) if your name is found written in the Lamb's Book of Life, you could look forward to spending eternity in Heaven with the Lord Jesus Christ. I feel sure to this very day that the voice which spoke to me that night in that dream was surely the voice of the Lord giving me the grace and assurance I needed at that time. Oh, what a blessed assurance we have when Jesus is in our lives. *The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.* I had perfect peace for the remainder of that night and the following morning. On my way to the operating room I seemed to have had a new song in my heart. Thank God that there is no condemnation after our sins have been forgiven. *There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit—Romans 8:1.*

The third ingredient is cleansing. This must come from above. As Isaiah stood in the Temple that day he was aware of his sin and that he needed to confess it and have it forgiven and cleansed forever. He was standing in the presence of a righteous God and could not feel comfortable with his present sinful life. None of us should ever feel at ease in our hearts about our sin. In fact, when we attend services in our church, or when we read our Bibles, there should be a reminder in the message to bring conviction to us making un-confessed sin weigh heavy on our consciences. It should be, however, that we remain close to the Lord in our thoughts and meditations. *But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night—Psalm 1:2.* I have a feeling that Isaiah, when confronted with his feelings of guilt, did not feel like saying what so many people say in making excuses for themselves. Some of us have been heard to say, "So what?", or that "We're only human. Everyone sins sometimes." Do you remember the adulterous woman that was brought before the Master? *And the scribes and Pharisees brought unto him a woman taken in adultery; and when they had set her in the midst—John 8:3.* I believe that this poor woman of the world who had been taken in the very act of her sin as she lay there on the ground



before all of them had absolutely no excuse to offer for her actions. In the very same way, I believe we have none either. Jesus knew that cleansing from our sins had to come from above. This was the exact reason why Jesus came down to the earth to bring this cleansing to our sinful lives. *For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost*—Luke 19:10. Jesus had come into the world to save sinners like her and like us. In Isaiah’s vision, if you remember, there were Seraphim in the presence of the Lord. One of these heavenly creatures flew across the Temple and took a burning coal from the altar of God. With this fire the Seraph cleansed the lips of this servant of God. You know I am glad this morning that I don’t have to leave people guilty in their hearts with a great load of sin. I’m happy that there is real hope this morning in the precious Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. There is hope for all who will call on the Name of the Lord. *For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved*—Romans 10:13. A man asked me once: “Pastor, why don’t you ride us more about our sins than you do?” If you are a child of God, your conscience will be riding you about your sin. Friends, this cleansing must come from above. Nothing but the Blood of Jesus can ever take our sins away: *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness*—1 John 1:9. Thank God for Calvary!

Sometimes I think that folks think that if their preacher pours it in them hard enough about their sins that will ease their conscience and maybe that will be all the punishment they will ever get. Not so, my friend. This is not the case at all. *For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord*—Romans 6:23. This tells us that the wages of sin is still death. Jesus said: *And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up*—John 3:14. This is the One to look to. His Name is Jesus. A man asked me once, “Have you been washed in a container of blood?” I could only deduct from this question that this well educated man was just poking a little bit of fun at me. I explained to him that if he had never had an encounter with Jesus, he was still in his sin.

The fourth ingredient is probably the most difficult for us to include in our worship experience. It is that of listening to the voice of the Lord. I am not familiar with the customs of all the peoples of the world, but I have heard that here are some people in certain nations who are accustomed to praying for a time to the Lord and then they will spend another period of their time trying to let the Lord speak to their hearts as they meditate in the Word of God. I think this is a very good idea for all of us also. I do believe that it is necessary for us to allow God’s Holy Spirit to speak to our quiet hearts from His Word. *Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth*—John 17:17. Someone may be saying right now, “My heart tells me what is right and what is wrong”, but listen to what the Bible tells us about the heart: *The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it*—Jeremiah 17:9? Be very careful listening only to your heart. Your heart is capable of misleading you unless it is completely controlled by the Spirit of God. Feelings may fool you, but Jesus is

Truth. *Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me—John 14:6.* Remember. Listen to the still small voice speaking to you. This is exactly what Isaiah was trying to do.

He heard the voice of God saying: *Whom shall I send, and who will go for us—Isaiah 6:8?* I'm glad that the Lord did not use Angels to go into all the world and preach the Gospel but allowed man to do this special task. Aren't you happy about this too? This is the greatest privilege a Child of God can enjoy on this earth: preach His eternal Word. Although I read in the book of Revelation that in the future somewhere the Lord will send an Angel with the everlasting Gospel. *And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people—Revelation 14:6.* But at this time in the day of His grace, He has given us the Great Commission.

*And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen—Matthew 28:18-20.*

The fifth ingredient in the worship experience is to give God a faith response. Isaiah answered God by saying: *Here am I; send me.*

*Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me—Isaiah 6:8.*

During this entire worship experience Isaiah remained in awe. The five things that Isaiah experienced should also be your experience:

- 1) He had seen the Lord high and lifted up.
- 2) He had seen himself sinful and undone.
- 3) He had been cleansed from above.
- 4) He had listened to the voice of the Lord.
- 5) He had given God a faith response.

What an important moment he found himself living in!

You too, here this morning, are at the most important moment in history. You are now in the day of grace and at the moment of decision. What will your eternal answer be to His gracious invitation of love?

## **Eighth Sermon: The Tragedy of Oversleeping (Ephesians 5:14-18)**

*14 Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light. 15 See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise. 16 Redeeming the time, because the days are evil. 17 Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is. 18 And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit—Ephesians 5:14-18.*

I heard of a Pastor one time who became so discouraged after he had preached the Gospel for many years to the people of his church that he just decided to stop preaching for a while. I know this was a wrong decision for him and would be wrong for any other preacher to make because we are dealing with the Gospel, which is the power of God unto salvation to all who will believe. *For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek—Romans 1:16.* We also should not let ourselves get too disheartened over what seems to be failure in our lives because we have been sent by God to carry out a task faithfully. *Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the LORD thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest—Joshua 1:9.* We are only required to remain faithful in our performance of the work set before us. *Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful—1 Corinthians 4:2* We can only be faithful in proclaiming the Word then hope and pray that people who hear will awake before it is eternally too late.

I was once pastor of a church in a rural area, which had an organist who rarely ever missed a service. Sunday morning, Sunday evening, mid-week prayer meeting or mostly any other meeting that was ever called. Her husband was just the opposite. He never came to the church during the many years I was there as Pastor. He seemed to be a friendly man to others and me who knew him. I became burdened for him and after much prayer about the matter, I finally went to see him and received courage enough to ask him if he knew Jesus as his Savior. His answer was surprising to me to say the least. His eyes filled with tears; he began to tell me he had received Jesus into his life many years before. The church records had shown that at one time, about eighteen years before, he had been regular in his attendance. The man assured me that he had really at one time accepted Jesus but told me that he had decided to stay away from one service and then another until he had lost all interest in attending any church meeting. Years later, I heard indirectly that the man came back to the church and the Lord. We are told not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together. *Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching—Hebrews 10:25.* We Christians should awake from our sleep. Many Children of God are sleeping

overtime and are not getting the blessings from their Christian experience that the Lord wishes them to receive. They are asleep while the world is being lost. Many lost people also are sleeping through their lives and may never wake up until it is eternally too late and find themselves in Hell lost forever. This is the tragedy of all tragedies.

I often hesitate to be thought of as a prophet of doom, but at the risk of being called one, I offer this day a solemn warning to all sinners who are under the sound of my voice to listen to the precious Gospel of Christ and all Christians to heed the call of this Scripture to *Awake thou that sleepest*—Ephesians 5:14! People all over the world today are sleeping through the wonderful day of grace and I am afraid that they will not awake until it is too late.

One of the prayers I pray continually is that the Lord will not let anyone under the sound of my voice leave the service without knowing the plan of salvation. This is the most important consideration in all of this life here on this earth. Also, my continual prayer has been that every child of God will be able to say that their soul has been fed this day on the true Word of God. God forbid, that I should ever preach anything that the Bible does not teach. God grant that we preachers will know just what the people need to hear in any given service. The only way that we can know this is by the Holy Spirit.

Sometimes after I have preached a certain message I wonder just why I ever spoke on that particular subject. Then while the congregation would be filing out of the church, one would tell me as they shook my hand that this was just what they needed that morning. They would sometimes ask me how I knew they needed to hear this message. Of course, I knew it was not my great mind but the mind of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit knows exactly what we need. I believe He certainly knows we need this message today. Think about this: What if we should die before we wake up? How would it be for us as we stand before the Lord of the universe? Would it be well? Would He be pleased with us? Or yet, would we be satisfied with ourselves? Oh, friends, we need to *Awake thou that sleepest!* I pray that we all will remember this message today and always be influenced by what His Word is teaching us today. Think now about what this lesson could be saying to us: If you are not regular in your attendance, the time to change that is right now. If your Bible study or your prayer life is not up to date, the time to change that is now also. You could be missing some of the most wonderful fellowship on earth by not taking advantage of the great promises and enjoying the great and glorious hope, which is for you, in Christ Jesus. You cannot become a mature Christian without reading the holy Bible, which is the Word of God.

John tells us: *We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death*—1 John 3:14. The apostle writing to a Christian friend in the letter says: *Beloved, I*

*wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth—3 John 1:2.* Suppose the Lord God would give us exactly the same measure of physical health and strength as our Spiritual strength and health? I ask you right now if you would be happy with the outcome? I have the feeling that many of us would be suffering with a bad case of heart failure or we would be developing chills and fever to match our fluctuating devotion to the Lord. I'm afraid we would develop many other symptoms that would disturb us greatly. Friends, this is cause us to examine ourselves. *But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup—1 Corinthians 11:28.*

If you have lived fifty years and have served the Lord only half-heartedly, I believe you have missed at least one half of your life. On the other hand, if you are fifty years of age and are still without Christ Jesus in your heart, my friend, you have never really lived. If you die without Christ, I believe it would be better for you if you had never been born. Please consider what I am saying to you this morning. It is of the utmost importance. The things I speak of this morning are Eternal things. Jesus said: *Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth—John 17:17.* Paul said that it is possible for even Christians to remain babes in Christ.

*And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able. For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men—1 Corinthians 3:1-3?*

The Holy Spirit wishes us to grow up and become a mature Child of God. This can only happen when we read the Word of God prayerfully.

Brethren and sisters, whatever company we keep will largely determine the kind of conversation we engage in. God wants us to meet together often in Christian worship services: *Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching—Hebrews 10:25.* I used to have a deacon in one of our missions who often prayed, "Thank you, Lord, for this day, the very best day of the week." This was because we were singing the old hymns of the Church, praying, and preaching the pure Word of the Lord. We counted it a great privilege to be assembled together in one place watching the mighty hand of God working among us, saving souls and helping us to grow in maturity. We are told by Luke: *I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance—Luke 15:7.* Show me just one place in the Bible where we are told of an instance where the Angels are so grateful of something that is happening here on the earth before our very eyes. Brothers and Sisters, we are standing in God's grace in a time and at a place where God is saving souls.

*Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls. Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into—1 Peter 1:9-12.*

This tells us how the men of God, as they were being inspired to write the prophecies that God was laying on their hearts, asked if this would be in their lifetime. They were told that it would not happen then. I have the feeling deep down in my heart that when we are assembled together in a place where The Holy Spirit is convicting souls and Heaven's emotions are so affected, we are in the Center of God's Will. I feel like it must be the very center of the whole universe. Praise God, this to me is cause for great rejoicing and shouting! The real place to be is at the foot of the cross. There, the love of God can be felt and seen and surely there is no power shortage at the foot of the cross. Jesus shed his kingly blood there on that old rugged cross. *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness—1 John 1:9.*

In my opinion this day of grace is the most wonderful day in which anyone has ever lived. We are living in the beautiful day when *whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved—Romans 10:13.* How are people able to sleep through it? Both the saved and the lost should be thoroughly stirred to action. Yet, to some people this morning this wonderful good news is running off their hearts like water off a duck's back. Sinner's ears are deaf and the hearts of many Christians are tuned to another channel I'm afraid. The world thinks it has a lot to teach us but the best news we can hear and heed this morning is the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. Hear the voice of the Lord while it is the day of salvation. *For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation—2 Corinthians 6:2.* If the message of God's Word seems to be foolishness to you, read: *For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God—1 Corinthians 1:18.* If you are not saved, give your heart to Jesus Christ. If you are saved: *Awake thou that sleepest—Ephesians 5:14!*

I never get tired of telling the old, old story of Jesus and his Gospel. I believe that when we get to glory one of these days we will still be telling that wonderful story of Jesus and his love. Imagine what the angels must have seen when Jesus left his home in glory.

*Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into—1 Peter 1:12.*

Jesus could call to them and they would respond in perfect obedience to His command. He left Heaven and became a man. *And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth—John 1:14.* Paul tells us how He became obedient unto death; even the death of the cross for us: *But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross—Philemon 2:7-8.*

There were men hanging on either side of Jesus at Calvary that day; but they were there for their own wrongdoing. Jesus Christ was not there to die for His own sins but for the sins of the whole world. God the Father allowed Him to be sin for us that we could put on the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus. *For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him—2 Corinthians 5:21.* When Jesus said: *It is finished,* He was telling us that the price for our sins had been paid in full and that every righteous requirement that God had exacted for us to enter Heaven had been met by Jesus' death on the Cross. *When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost—John 19:30.*

Folks, the most wide awake Christian you know this morning could know still more joy in the Lord just by waking up now. There is no limit to the joy we can have in knowing the Lord. Each day we live close to the Lord can be a sweeter one. Yet I am aware of many people who seem to be living complacently in a state of spiritual sleep. I have observed people sitting in the pews of the church who literally sleep during the sermon. I know that there are physical problems that can make some people sleepy on Sunday morning. Some of this may have been due to my own poor presentation of God's message, but generally speaking, it seems to me that those of us who are wide awake in the Lord should be so elated when we hear the Word proclaimed we should straighten up and listen to the Spirit of God speaking to our hearts.

*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ—Ephesians 1:3.*

*And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus—Ephesians 2:6.*

*To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God—Ephesians 3:10.*

One of these days Jesus will appear in a cloud to gather His church away in the rapture and I fear these people will still be sleeping their time away as they are today. Paul speaks of the lost who were sleeping the sleep of death: *And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins—Ephesians 2:1.*

What is this call that we are hearing sounding out this morning asking us to awake? It is the Gospel being preached from the pulpit over the radio and television and all over the world telling us to wake up and become alive to the things of the Lord. Where is this message coming from? It is coming from the Holy Spirit calling the sinful world to repentance. The Holy Spirit is the author of the Bible. It is His message to a lost world. If you agree with this, say “Amen.”

Who is this message written to? Obviously it is written to the saint and sinner alike. Listen people, the time we are sleeping through will soon be past: *And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment—Hebrews 9:27.* The Bible tells us that your life is a vapor: *Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away—James 4:14.* *For all our days are passed away in thy wrath: we spend our years as a tale that is told—Psalm 90:9.* When the story of our lives is finally told at the judgment, will it be said that we had been asleep through most of our lives? Will it be said that our effectiveness in this life had been diminished by the enemy called mediocrity?

I have actually heard people say that they were satisfied to live the life of a nominal Christian here in this life and in the great here after they would be very well satisfied with a cabin in Heaven. Let me tell you right now that Jesus said that in His Father’s house there were many mansions. *In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you—John 14:2.* I do not wish to settle for a cabin when Jesus has paid for a mansion, do you? If you feel the way I do this morning, say “Amen.”

One of these days, if I’m understanding what my Bible is saying to me, we will hear the voice of the archangel and the sound of the trumpet calling the redeemed of the Lord to meet Him in a cloud.

*For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first—1 Thessalonians 4:16.*

This is the blessed hope of the church. Will you be one of those who will be taken away with Him when this call comes? I am thinking now of the many times



I have heard the good news of this blessed hope spoken of by those who are ready to meet Him in the air. I remember some of the voices of the great preachers who have and still are reminding us of this soon to happen event. This wonderful message should ring with loud clarity today in the ears of all who are looking for His return. It should be preached from the housetops so all will be warned to *Awake thou that sleepest*—Ephesians 5:14!

I believe that sometimes the Lord uses the experiences of illness or death in the family of a loved one or even other tragedies to remind us of the truth that life is short and we need to apply our hearts to wisdom and understanding.

*My son, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee; So that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding; Yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding*—Proverbs 2:1-3.

Despite tragedy in our individual lives, all things work together for good to those who love the Lord. *And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose*—Romans 8:28. This morning I believe that no matter what happens to us, God will turn it to our advantage if we love God and are in His will. I was speaking to a person in my study this very morning and heard a wonderful testimony. The person said that a relative who had recently given her life to Christ. Prior to her conversion, she had been waking up in the night and tossing on her bed; but now when she wakes up in the night she opens her Bible and begins to read. Soon she falls off into a peaceful sleep for the remainder of the night. When one looks into the Word it is like looking into a mirror and seeing oneself as he really is. The Bible is like a yardstick. It tells us just how far we have fallen away from the center of God's will. *Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent*—Revelation 2:5. Many of us today are choosing the things of the world rather than the things of God.

I sometimes wonder today in my finite mind how the Lord feels today as He looks down on a world for which He gave His life on a cruel cross and sees how many people are not yet awake to the great hope which we should have in Christ Jesus. These who sleep are not aware of the goodness of the wonderful God who was pleased to bruise His loving son for their sins. *Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand*—Isaiah 53:10. *Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light*—Ephesians 5:14. To whom is He speaking this message? Is He speaking it to you today? Listen! Let a man examine himself. *But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup*—1 Corinthians 11:28.

We would enjoy a great deal more in our lives if we would take this message to heart. The Lord is anxious, I believe, to help us reach the unlimited potential He knows we possess in Him. Have you ever had the privilege of leading a lost soul to the Lord Jesus Christ? I feel certain that the greatest experience a person can enjoy is to receive Christ into his own life. But, after that the greatest moment he can live through in this life is to help someone else find Jesus as his or her personal Savior.

Just think. If everyone in this church would allow God's Holy Spirit to revive him or her, it would be such good news that I believe that the church in all the earth would hear of it. I believe that there would be another Great Awakening that would be felt in Heaven and to the ends of the earth. Jesus said: *The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly—John 10:10.* Have you thought about how useless a person is when he is asleep? I am speaking, of course, of natural sleep. Of course we must have out natural sleep in order to maintain our good health. But what I am trying to say is as in natural sleep, so it is in spiritual sleep. Nothing can ever be accomplished while we are asleep.

We should be busy about our Father's business because of our great love and obedience toward Him. *And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever—Daniel 12:3.* A real child of God gets his rest in the service of the Lord.

If you do not know Jesus this morning, this message is a solemn warning to you to wake up before it is too late. Call on the name of the Lord and be saved: *For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved—Romans 10:13.* If you are saved already He is telling you to wake up and walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time because the days are evil.

*See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, Redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is. And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit—Ephesians 5:15-18.*

In the eighteenth verse He is telling us to be filled with the Holy Spirit. Walk according to the teachings of the Bible. When the Bible tells us to pray without ceasing, that is what it means. When we read that we should assemble ourselves together, it means for us to be faithful in our attendance to His services: *Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching—Hebrews 10:25.* And so we learn His will is by reading His Word. We should proceed to obey it.

Now we are going to have a time of invitation. During these next few minutes I hope each and every one of us will examine our hearts, and our lives to see if we need to awake. Redeem the time right now. Let us pray.

**Ninth Sermon: But Whom Say Ye that I Am?**  
**(Matthew 16:13-20)**

*13 When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am? 14 And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets. 15 He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? 16 And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. 17 And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. 18 And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. 19 And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. 20 Then charged he his disciples that they should tell no man that he was Jesus the Christ—Matthew 16:13-20.*

I'd like to have you direct your attention to verse fifteen. This is our test for this sermon: *He saith unto them, but whom say ye that I am?* He first asked them: *Whom do men say that I the son of man am?* I am quite sure that Jesus already knew what they were thinking and that the disciples themselves believed that He was the Son of God. He was personalizing this all-important question and causing them to come to grips with it and give Him an answer to it once and for all for their own sakes. He was the Son of God and had come down from Heaven and He was God: *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God—John 1:1.* He became flesh and lived among us: *And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth—John 1:14.* So, He truly was the Son of God. He was also the Son of Man born of the Virgin Mary. He was made under the flesh, under the Law: *But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law—Galatians 4:4.* He filled both the Law and the Prophets: *Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill—Matthew 5:17.*

I can't help thinking of another verse Paul wrote: *To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation—2 Corinthians 5:19.* Yes, my Savior was both God and man. Paul said: *Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God—2 Corinthians 5:20.* Now, while Jesus is in Heaven making intercessions for us, we are to continue to ask people to surrender their

lives to Jesus Christ: *Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching—Hebrews 10:25.* Jesus is in our hearts now in the person of the Holy Spirit. Paul said: *I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me—Galatians 2:20.*

So He lives within our hearts and lets His light shine through our lives. I believe that the entire lost world hears about the saving power of God today. They hear it by the lives and proclamations of Christians.

I believe also that everything that God ever wanted to say to the world concerning His love for us, He said in His coming to this world and His death on the cross at Calvary. I want you to remember this: Jesus was the One who revealed God to a lost world. He was the One who not only told us about the Father, but also was God Himself. John wrote in his epistle: *That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life—1 John 1:1.* Paul asked those who heard his message to be reconciled to God.

Often when I take the time to meditate on these wonderful things of the Lord, I am reminded of the great privilege the Lord has extended us by giving to all Christians His Great Commission.

*And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen—Matthew 28:18-20.*

*But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth—Acts 1:8.*

This makes me fill up with joy when I think of how we are able to share the Good News with others and see the Holy Spirit change the lives of sinners by that transformation that can only come from above: *I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God—Romans 12:1-2.*

I would like to share with you this morning by the power of the Holy Spirit the urgency I feel in my heart for each of us to get into the right relationship with God. This we are told can only be accomplished by the power of the Spirit of God through the Lord Jesus Christ.

*Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed: and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost—1 Corinthians 12:3.*

*Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me—John 14:6.*

The Bible teaches us that there is no other way or no other name whereby we must be saved and have this proper relationship with our Heavenly Father: *Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved—Acts 4:12.*

There is a tombstone in one of the local cemeteries, which bears on it a very well known name. This stone bearing this name has been standing in the same place for many years now. I remember seeing it many years ago when I was a mere lad. I remember thinking that this kind of thing could only happen to someone else. To me death seemed so very far in the future. But let me tell you that as the years of my life continue to roll on, and the fearful breakers of the chilly waters of death can almost be heard, I take refuge in the Holy Bible which tells us: *And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation—Hebrews 9:27 to 10:1.* This ought to be of the greatest urgency in our lives. We must get right with God while we are in this life or it will be eternally too late. My sainted grandmother used to tell me that the old must die, but the young can die. Very young people are having their lives taken away unexpectedly these days more than ever. I am saying today to impress upon all of us that now is the time to get right with God and be saved. The day of Grace may soon be over and we will find ourselves standing before a righteous God giving an account of our deeds done in the flesh.

I believe that Jesus is lamenting over this lost world today as He sees those in sin and rejection of His marvelous Grace. I believe His heart is just as sad as it was that day while He was looking over Jerusalem and said: *O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not—Matthew 23:37!* I have a feeling that Jesus looks down on the peoples of the world today and sees some nice moral people who while they are listening to the wonderful Gospel of Christ are still rejecting His gracious invitation. How sad this is because morality will not save us. We must call on the name of the Lord to be saved: *For*

*whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved*—Romans 10:13.  
The Gospel of Christ is the greatest news on this earth.

I have lived long enough and preached long enough to see many people die in their rejection. This is a sad sight for even a Christian to witness. According to the Word of God, people who reject Christ and finally come to their death without the Lord die lost forever. *Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it*—Matthew 7:14. Jesus was so concerned over what the people believed that He asks His Disciples: *Whom do men say that I am*—Matthew 16:13? *When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am*—Matthew 16:13? Later He personalized that question: *He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am*—Matthew 16:15? What a person believes is very important. In Romans Paul says: *For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation*—Romans 10:10. In Matthew, Jesus was moved with compassion as He looked over the multitudes of people: *But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd*—Matthew 9:36. I am sure that Jesus knew what the people were thinking about Him even before He asked them the question. But, I believe He wanted to awaken their consciousness and awareness of what they themselves believed about the Son of God and the Son of Man. Jesus knew the minds of people with whom He spoke. He looked down into their hearts and knew them. He said once to some hypocrites: *Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me*—Matthew 15:7-8. When we stand before Him one day at the Judgment He will look down into our hearts as He does this very minute and He will see and know the innermost recesses of our minds.

*For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do*—Hebrews 4:12-13.

He who knows our minds and hearts asked His disciples that all-important question: *But whom say ye that I am?* It was Peter who gave Jesus the correct answer: *And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God*—Matthew 16:16.

Today, the most important question before us, who hear the Word, is to make sure we know who Jesus really is. After we have been convinced that He is the Son of God it is then necessary that we make Him our Lord and Savior. I talk sometimes to a well-educated woman who is a member of another religion. The

question often comes up concerning what we believe about the person of Jesus Christ. It seems to me that in every case the lady tries to change translations and she usually gets one that says that Jesus was just a god. Friends, Jesus was not just a god. He is God: *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God—John 1:1.* We must believe that He is the only begotten Son of God: *For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life—John 3:16.* Do not allow anyone to lead you astray concerning this important point. I do not really believe that a person can get salvation by believing that He is just a god. We must hear the Word preached correctly and must believe in Him correctly that He came down to earth in the flesh (1 John 4:1-3) and Rose again from the dead to justify all who believe and trust Him (Romans 4:25).

*Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world—1 John 4:1-3.*

*Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification—Romans 4:25.*

The only way to be reconciled to God is to have Jesus pick us up out the mire of sin and degradation and wash our sins in the precious Blood of Calvary and present us clean and spotless into the righteous hand of the pure and perfect God. That is the only true way to become reconciled. I have heard students of the Bible get together and discuss the validity of the virgin birth of Jesus Christ and the necessity of the shedding of the Blood. Brothers and Sisters, I don't believe that there can be any salvation for those who deny these two important truths. It surely does matter what one believes about this wonderful Jesus. We are saved by the precious blood of Jesus. He is the Lamb of God without blemish.

*Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot—1 Peter 1:18-19.*

Every sacrifice in the Old Testament included the blood of animals. But when Jesus came along the Jordan River, John the Baptist proclaimed: *Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world—John 1:29.* Today you and I enjoy that same privilege as John had when he said these words. Every day of our lives as we live in this dark and sinful world we ought to be crying out: *Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world—John 1:29.*



The world today is filled with hatred, murder, and all kinds of sin. The time is right now for us who are the Children of God through Jesus Christ to tell the world that He is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of men. Do you really believe what I am telling you this morning? If you do, let it be known by a great big Amen.

Let us take a look at what some of the people near Jesus thought about Him. Some said that He was one of the prophets; others said He was John the Baptist. One man who stood near the cross said that He was the Son of God: *Now when the centurion, and they that were with him, watching Jesus, saw the earthquake, and those things that were done, they feared greatly, saying, Truly this was the Son of God—Matthew 27:54.*

Another said that He was a Righteous Man: *Now when the centurion saw what was done, he glorified God, saying, Certainly this was a righteous man—Luke 23:47.*

Another who was one of the malefactors who hung on a cross by Jesus' side said: *And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom—Luke 23:42.*

*And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God—John 20:28.*

*And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God—Matthew 16:16.*

All these witnesses had the recollection that the Lord had not been dragged to the Hill of Golgotha begging for mercy for Himself but as the Scripture tells us: *And it came to pass, when the time was come that he should be received up, he stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem—Luke 9:51.* Friends, Jesus went to His death willingly for your sins and for mine. Jesus said: *No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father—John 10:18.*

Some have referred to my religion as a “slaughter house religion”; but I am so happy He was willing to lay His very life down on the cross for my sins. We should praise the name of Jesus for all He has done for us. Without that precious blood I would be lost forever. What a holy moment that centurion must have lived through as he stood at the cross the day of Christ's Crucifixion and realized that Jesus was the Son of God. Jesus had said: *And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me—John 12:32.* He was truly lifted up that day and He has been making the greatest impact on the lives of the people of the world ever since that day. That centurion really had to be drawn to Jesus to be as bold as he was to make that statement concerning what he had seen.

Some of the people, who had been present at the fake religious and civil trials, stood around the cross and called Jesus a deceiver. But, I 'm so very glad that the Holy Spirit has revealed to many of us that He is the Son of God who has come to earth in the flesh and who died for the whole world on the cross. I am reasonably sure that there is not a person here this morning who thinks of Jesus as a deceiver. Still there are those who hear this wonderful story of redemption and are not willing to surrender their lives to His will and make Him the Lord of their lives. Those who witnessed much of His life and ministry said: *And when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto his disciples, Why eateth your Master with publicans and sinners—Matthew 9:11?* Aren't you glad that Jesus loved sinners? If that were not true, how lost I would be today! Even the wife of Pilate came to her husband and warned him not to have anything to do with this just man: *When he was set down on the judgment seat, his wife sent unto him, saying, Have thou nothing to do with that just man: for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him—Matthew 27:19.*

When My Lord was being sentenced to death on the cross, the people had made their choice. They asked Pilate to release among them a man named Barabbas who was the lowest form of a criminal. A man whose name is not worthy to be mentioned here this morning, but nevertheless a man whose name could have appeared on the pages of the Lamb's Book of Life if he had turned to Jesus at a later time. I, as a Christian, this morning sure hope that he did come to Jesus and call on the name of my precious Savior and receive salvation. I sure don't know whether he ever made this confession of faith.

Another thought I'd like to leave with you is that a person can never believe on Jesus and call Him Lord except by the Holy Spirit. *Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed: and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost—1 Corinthians 12:3.*

In the book of the Acts of the Apostles, there is a very interesting account of a conversion experience. We read that this man was told that if he would believe with all his heart that he could be baptized. He was then baptized and went on his way rejoicing and forever saved.

*26 And the angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert. 27 And he arose and went: and, behold, a man of Ethiopia, an eunuch of great authority under Candace queen of the Ethiopians, who had the charge of all her treasure, and had come to Jerusalem for to worship, 28 Was returning, and sitting in his chariot read Esaias the prophet. 29 Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot. 30 And Philip ran thither to him, and heard him read the prophet Esaias, and said, Understandest thou what thou readest?*

31 *And he said, How can I, except some man should guide me? And he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him. 32 The place of the scripture which he read was this, He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth: 33 In his humiliation his judgment was taken away: and who shall declare his generation? for his life is taken from the earth. 34 And the eunuch answered Philip, and said, I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man? 35 Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus. 36 And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? 37 And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. 38 And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him. 39 And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing—Acts 8:26-39.*

We have mentioned the answers that several people gave to this all-important question, *Whom do you say that I Am?* Now it becomes our responsibility to answer it for ourselves. This has all to do with where you will spend eternity. It is of utmost importance. I don't know how I could make this message clearer. Paul said that the *Gospel of Christ is the power of God unto Salvation to all who will believe. For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek—Romans 1:16.* It is up to you this morning to let the Holy Spirit wash you in the blood of the Lamb. Answer this all-important question for now and for all eternity.

## **Tenth Sermon: The Fly in the Ointment (Ecclesiastes 10:1)**

Dead flies cause the ointment of the apothecary to send forth a stinking savour: so doth a little folly him that is in reputation for wisdom and honour—Ecclesiastes 10:1.

As I came up the isle a few minutes ago toward the pulpit, one of my good friends sitting near the isle called quietly to me and said, “Pastor, you’ve been away quite some time. You must be refreshed. I expect you to lay one on us this morning.” I was glad for one thing that the Lord had given me a relationship with my people that would make this man feel comfortable to share this kind of feeling with me. As I continued slowly up toward the platform, I thought of my responsibility to people who came to hear just what God has put into my heart to share with them. I also thought to myself that while I studied the text this week that the Lord has certainly been laying one on me. I feel sure that you who listen today will feel the same way I feel about this message.

I would like to read just one verse from God’s Word this morning in your hearing. It is a strange sounding verse. I’ve never heard anyone preach on this verse before. Let me read it:

*Dead flies cause the ointment of the apothecary to send forth a stinking savour: so doth a little folly him that is in reputation for wisdom and honour—Ecclesiastes 10:1 KJV.*

I looked this verse up in one of the modern versions and would like to read to you what it says:

*As dead flies give perfume a bad smell, so a little folly outweighs wisdom and honor—Ecclesiastes 10:1 NIV.*

Here is test I would like to use this morning for your consideration and edification. It is described this way, however, to bring out very graphically a much more important truth. We know what the word wisdom means and we know what the word folly means. I looked in the dictionary to get the true meaning of these words. Wisdom means good judgment and folly means reckless action, or lack of good sense. “Apothecary”, even in my day, means a place where medicine or perfume is made or today it would be a drug store.

The real picture we are to create this morning is that of a person going to a drug store and purchasing a bottle of sweet smelling perfume. After he brings it home and opens the bottle he would notice a dead fly floating on the surface. How repulsive! The first thing you would do is return the bottle with the sales slip to the place where you bought it. God has expressed Himself and His wishes

so many times and in so many ways telling us how repulsive even a little folly in the lives of His people is to Him, that we need desperately this morning to realize that He is worthy to receive the very best that we can offer Him. God deserves the very best and we dare not offer Him less.

In the Book of Revelation, Jesus in dictating a letter to the church of the Laodiceans charged them of being lukewarm and told them that He would spew them out of His mouth. They were neither hot nor cold and their testimony and life were unacceptable to Him: And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write: *These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God*—Revelation 3:14. I'm glad this morning that the Lord is reminding us in His Word what it is that is not pleasing to Him. I do not want to go through my life with a false feeling of security and find out as I stand before Him in the judgment that my life was sadly lacking in something I could have corrected. That's the reason I am reading God's Word today. This is the way we can learn what the will of the Lord really is for our lives.

*I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God*—Romans 12:1-2.

That is why I am preaching this sermon to my people while there is time to get right with God.

Now we are Christians not because we have something to offer God, but because we have believed and received by faith what Jesus did on the cross for us: *For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast*—Ephesians 2:8-9. It is by His grace that we have eternal life. I believe these two verses are among the strongest verses found in the Bible telling us that we are not saved by works but by the grace of God.

God requires perfection in those who will worship Him around His throne. It would be impossible for us to meet this strict requirement, but for the marvelous grace that has been given us by the love of God. *For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life*—John 3:16. As we assemble here today and imagine a far distant day when we will be out there in eternity praising The eternal God and realizing that we will be perfect before Him; it is hard to grasp with our finite minds. We could never accomplish this great change but for the fact that He sent Jesus down here on this earth and He lived a life of sinless perfection and then gave it yonder on the cross. With His precious blood, (1 Peter 1:18-19) He paid for our sins and bought us back (1 Corinthians 6:19-20),

and satisfied every righteous requirement that the Father had made in His righteousness for us to be perfect and merit Heaven.

*Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; 19 But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot—1 Peter 1:18-19.*

*What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's—1 Corinthians 6:19-20.*

*1 The word of the LORD came unto me again, saying, 2 What mean ye, that ye use this proverb concerning the land of Israel, saying, The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge? 3 As I live, saith the Lord GOD, ye shall not have occasion any more to use this proverb in Israel. 4 Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sinneth, it shall die—Ezekiel 18:1-4.*

We understand that we are not perfect beings in this life. Once justified, we begin the process of sanctification: *Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ—Romans 5:1.* We have been justified by faith in the Lord Jesus. In the book of Romans, we are assured that at no time in the future will we ever have to answer for the sins we have received forgiveness for: *There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit—Romans 8:1.* There will never again be any condemnation for our forgiven sins. Praise God! Then in John 17:17, Jesus described a process by which the Holy spirit brings us nearer and nearer to this day when we will be perfect before Him. This process called sanctification starts at the moment of salvation and is not completed until we see Jesus. *Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is—1 John 3:2.* This is the process that is called sanctification, which means to set apart, or grow in grace toward a greater Christian maturity. Justification is experienced once when we believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. Sanctification is a process by which the Holy Spirit makes us grow through reading the Word of God prayerfully. Therefore, as we have seen in 1 John 3:2 when Jesus comes and we see Him, the process of sanctification by which the Holy Spirit is the agent and the Word of God is the medium will be complete, and we will be ready to live with the Lord as perfectly redeemed people.

It may surprise people of the world, but not us who are the children of God that the sweetest fellowship of people on this earth today is seated right here in this building. Not only those who sit in this particular building, but all of God's children around the world who have accepted Jesus as Savior and who have made Him Lord of their lives. If you believe what I am saying, say Amen! It makes me very happy to hear that you agree with this wonderful truth. But, let me warn you of one disastrous fact. There is such a thing as something very beautiful becoming contaminated by something very ugly. What is that ugly thing called? Let us see how the Holy Spirit describes it in God's Word: Solomon describes it as a fly in the ointment: *Dead flies cause the ointment of the apothecary to send forth a stinking savour: so doth a little folly him that is in reputation for wisdom and honour—Ecclesiastes 10:1.* There are people teaching today that they are living above sin, but according to my Bible and according to my own Christian experience we still do things that we know to be wrong.

*14 For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin. 15 For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. 16 If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good. 17 Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. 18 For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. 19 For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do—Romans 7:14-19.*

We know that we all have sinned and come short of the Glory of God: *For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God—Romans 3:23.* Also, in John we read that if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins: *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness—John 1:9.* Do you know what God really wants us to do? He wants us to give our hearts to Him. This is real wisdom: *The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: a good understanding have all they that do his commandments: his praise endureth for ever—Psalm 111:10.* *The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding—Proverbs 9:10.* Also in the book of Psalms we are told: *The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good—Psalm 14:1.* *The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. Corrupt are they, and have done abominable iniquity: there is none that doeth good—Psalm 53:1.*

This morning the Holy Spirit is speaking to us who are children of God, born again Christians. It is not an unnatural sight to see a sinner drunk. It would not surprise us to see a sinner commit adultery, visit an indecent sideshow, or view an X-rated movie. But it is not expected that a person who calls himself a Christian would be found in such circumstances. If he does, he should immediately call on the name of the Lord and claim His promise: *If we confess*

*our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness—1 John 1:9.* You have, as a Christian, said to the world, “I have found someone who has paid the Supreme Sacrifice for my sins, and I have appropriated the salvation He purchased on the cross to myself through faith in Him.” Paul said: *Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new—2 Corinthians 5:17.* The child of God has found the remedy for sin and the only remedy for sin is the blood of Jesus. You certainly would never enjoy sin again once you are saved. Your conscience would always prick you when your fellowship with the Lord were threatened. If you can sin willfully and enjoy sinning, I recommend that you examine the profession of faith because there is something inconsistent with what the Bible teaches: *Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new—2 Corinthians 5:17.*

I used to have the idea that a worldly man would like to see a Christian slip and sin. But at this time in my life, I believe that in a world that is rocking back and forth because of sin, and when no one knows what to expect, and when men’s hearts are failing them because of what is coming upon the earth, there are many without hope secretly hoping that we have what we say we have. They hope that we are firmly planted on the solid Rock we tell them about. I heard a man some time ago say that as soon as he became a Christian he heard some of the worldly men around his place of employment making bets about how long his newly found salvation would last until he would be back into the world again. It must be remembered, however, that these were men who were being kicked around in this old sinful world and had not as yet found peace and security in the Lord Jesus Christ. Secretly in my heart, I have a feeling that if this man’s conversion experience were genuine, it would certainly bring a ray of hope to them. I believe that I am one of the people who has felt the failure of my physical heart: *Men’s hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken—Luke 21:26.* Other people also have experienced apprehension as we have, and I believe they would be inclined to welcome the Good News of the Gospel if they could be convinced that it was the answer to the greatest problem on earth—sin.

So are you able to see the reasoning and the significance of the great Old Testament text? It is telling us that as a dead fly will make a whole bottle of perfume stink, so a little bit of folly will make a life which is supposed to be Christian very repulsive also. I’m going to begin with the pastor of the church. I feel rather safe doing this because I feel I can talk about myself all I care to and no one has the right to be offended with me. Suppose you were walking down the street and happened to see me, your pastor, coming out of a bar room. You would more than likely ask me what I was doing in that bar. If you found that I had been drinking alcoholic beverages, how would you feel? I hate to think about what the outcome of that would be. You would have a perfect right to ask me for my resignation during the next business meeting. If I stand up here and



claim I know Jesus as my Savior, and attempt to be a leader of the people of God and proclaim the Gospel, I should surely try at least to be what I say I am. But as bad as this looks in your eyes, it is no less serious for anyone who names the name of Jesus as his Savior. If you are a Sunday School teacher, a deacon, organist, music director or just anyone in the church who is a witness, Luke in Acts tells us that we are His witness whether we wish to be or not. We are a good witness or a bad one. This is the truth as I see it as found in the Word of God: *But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth—Acts 1:8.*

People all over the country are saying, “Let me live my life in the way I want to.” But when I became a child of God, and especially when I became a leader in the Church of the Living Christ, I gave up the right I once claimed to do my own thing. My life as a minister is not just my business and nobody else’s. Listen! My life, brethren and sisters, is not my own and neither is yours. I must try the very best I can to keep from becoming a false prophet or a hypocrite in the sight of my God. People who see the lukewarm life of a nominal Christian will use the same expression. They will say that your life stinks.

Luke tells us: *Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved—Acts 2:47.* We can add your name to the local church, but only the Lord is able to add your name to the invisible church, which is made up of all saved people both living and dead. Has your name been called out in Heaven? Have the Angels of God heard your name and had an opportunity to rejoice? *I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance—Luke 15:7.* If you are a true member of the church of the Living Christ, you have as much responsibility to carry out the Great Commission and witness to a lost world as the pastor of your church has. Do you believe this? Have you ever wondered why the Lord did not take us away from this life right after we became a Christian? We would have been spared all the heartaches and temptations of this sin cursed world. That would have been the easy way out, wouldn’t it? This however was not the plan of our loving God. He has extended to us the greatest privilege that anyone could enjoy next to the glorious experience of accepting Jesus Christ into our lives. Praise the Lord! How He must love and trust us to do the right thing for Him here in our witnessing: *And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth—Matthew 28:18.* The mission of the church is twofold: First to preach the Gospel to the entire world, and secondly to help them grow in Christian maturity. If you know Jesus, you are a part of the church and you have the Great Commission firmly strapped to your shoulders. Set your heart and He will guide your steps.

As I sat here today and looked over the congregation, I thought to myself: There are many things I have learned to bear in my ministry. Many

circumstances I have become inured to, but there are some I don't believe I will ever get used to. I can marry people, I can bury those of my dearest friends who have gone on to be with the Lord, I can prepare sermons and give my best each week. But I have never learned to be satisfied with empty pews in the Sunday morning and Sunday evening services and mid-week prayer meetings. This is a thought that just came to my mind while I was sitting here this morning waiting to preach this sermon. I know why some of the folks could not be here this morning; but there are those whose cars are parked in other places this morning. Brethren, where you park your car on church days and during church hours is testimony to how you regard Jesus Christ and all He has done for you.

I heard a few years ago some members of a certain church talking to an Evangelist who came to their church. They asked the Evangelist to tell them how they could get rid of their Pastor whom they had for over twenty years. The wise Evangelist asked them if the pastor preached the Word. And being told he was that kind of pastor, replied that the least they could do was to keep the 63-year-old man until he was of retirement age.

Just as Jesus asked: *Where are the nine—Luke 17:17?* so many pastors are asking similar questions. *And Jesus answering said, Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine—Luke 17:17?* We are told: *Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching—Hebrews 10:25.* In my opinion it is a little folly for a Christian to constantly absent himself from the assembly of church.

If there is anybody in the church who says things about the church to lost people causing Satan to gain even a small victory over the church, he had better beware: *Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap—Galations 6:7.* I might add that if you are a Christian and do not sow the seed of the Gospel, you are sowing the seed of nothingness and will reap emptiness. (In Hebrew, the word *Jezreel*, means to sow and to scatter. If one does not sow, then one is scattered.) If you doubt what I am saying, turn to an account of Christians who have never grown up at all and are like old gray-haired men and women sitting on the floor of the church not able to eat the meat of the Gospel, but having to be fed on the milk of the Gospel: *And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. 2 For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. 3 And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling—1 Corinthians 2:1-3.* These are carnal people trying to hold on to the world with one hand and reaching for Heaven with the other hand. My friends, you cannot eat from the Lord's table with one hand and from the devil's table with the other. Jesus said: *No servant can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon—Luke 16:13.*

We need to perform the work given us in the service of the Master. Sin in our lives is like a fly in the ointment. In the book of Samuel we read: *And Samuel said, Hath the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams*—1 Samuel 15:22. God desires obedience. He said: *Abstain from all appearance of evil*—1 Thessalonians 5:22. Wonderful Christian friends, if you are living a double life, straighten up before the world. One time I went into an old church in which I had heard that there was much trouble between some of the members. During the first invitation over fifty persons came forward to rededicate their lives; and I was almost afraid to go there. But the Holy Spirit was there. We could feel Him as He worked that morning in all our hearts. Deacons came forward arm in arm with other deacons kneeling down at the front of the church, weeping and asking each other to forgive them. That meeting turned into a real revival that morning. Praise God! What a meeting!

In that meeting, over fifty people removed the fly from the ointment. The ointment spoken of in this Scripture, I believe, represented the service that Christians were offering to their Lord. **The greatest privilege I have ever enjoyed was to come under the precious blood of Jesus. The next greatest was to be given the opportunity to serve my God through Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit.**

Suppose you would read in your newspaper that our beloved president of these United States had done something today that was utterly foolish or beneath the dignity of his high office. What do you think would be the effect on the people who trusted him to make important decisions that have national or international implications? I think we would soon hear people saying that they no longer trust him as they had in the past. Thank the Lord that He has given us a president who fears God and is a born-again Christian. But do you see how that would appear like a fly in the ointment? We expect our pastors to be men of wisdom. We have a right to expect our pastors to portray an image of wisdom. Then don't you believe that the world is expecting from us, who name the name of Jesus as the One who has changed us, a clean image and testimony also?

I dislike going to the dentist very much. But, what I feel about going to the dentist is a pleasure compared to the feeling I get in the pit of my stomach when I see some of my dear Christian friends leaving Sunday school week after week and not attending the Sunday morning worship service.

It remains to be seen what the testimony this church could have in this community and this association. We surely will stand before the righteous Judge, the Lord Jesus Christ one of these days. We will either hear Him say: "Well Done," or we will hear Him say: "I never knew you." Which will it be? You can change your eternal destiny right now.

If you are lost, give your life to Him. If you are saved, you may wish to get the fly out of the ointment by rededication of your life.