

IF I HAD BUT ONE SERMON TO HEAR

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In 1906 Charles Reynolds Brown was preaching in the San Francisco bay area of California. That spring on the Sunday generally designated as Easter, he and the other preachers of the region spoke to full houses. Years later, he mentioned that particular Sunday in his lectures to young men at Yale University and said "How differently I would have preached, if I had only known that many of those in the audience were hearing the last sermon they would ever hear". Neither the preachers nor their listeners could have possibly known that the great San Francisco earthquake was to come on the following Wednesday morning and that many of them would be killed before another Sunday had arrived.

In almost any audience of size (including this morning's radio audience) there may be one who is hearing his last sermon. The danger of death is very ominous and should be sobering.

I realize that if I only had one more sermon to hear before my death I would want it to be one that would explain what God wants me to do to be saved... I would want to hear one that would help save my soul... I would want to have eternal salvation and know what I needed to do to have it.

We do not know that this will be the last sermon you hear... but it might!! "Come now, you who say 'Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit'; whereas you do not know what will happen tomorrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away" (James 4:13-14).

THE UNCERTAINTY OF LIFE

We can't depend on being alive when the sun sets on this day. There are too many things that could happen which would change that.

Chances are it will not happen to you... but don't allow that to lull you into a false sense of security. The risk is too great to take the chance with our eternal destiny at stake.

People are killed in automobile accidents and freak accidents at home or on the job all the time. That is something we think always happens to "the other guy". But think for a minute... What do you suppose "the other guy" thought? I imagine he thought the very same thing!!

Because life is so uncertain it is very important that we prepare for our eventual death. Death is the doorway to an everlasting life -- either in heaven or hell. The Bible teaches that the majority will be lost, "Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it" (Matthew 7:13-14). That fact should send shivers up and down our spines and cause us to prepare for that eventuality. Most people don't like to talk about hell because it is such an unpleasant place... but The Lord spoke often of it.

How many sermons must we hear to know what to do to be saved? If you knew this would be the last sermon you would ever hear, what would you want me to preach? I know what I would want to hear! I would want to hear a lesson which would convict and convince me! I would want to hear one like the Ethiopian Eunuch heard.

PHILIP AND THE EUNUCH

Please turn in your Bibles to Acts 8:26-39. Philip met this eunuch on the way from Jerusalem to Gaza. He was reading from the prophet Isaiah. Philip asked him "Do you understand what you are reading?" (8:30). The eunuch responded "How can I, unless someone guides me?" And he asked Philip to come up and sit with him (8:31). "The place in the Scripture which he read was this: 'He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb silent before its shearer, so He opened not His mouth. In His humiliation His justice was taken away; And who will declare His generation? For His life is taken from the earth'" (8:32-33). The eunuch, seeking enlightenment, asked Philip "Of whom does the prophet say this, of himself or of some other man?" (8:34). The eunuch had a very open mind as the preacher expounded on the passage and preached unto him Jesus" (8:35).

PHILIP PREACHED UNTO HIM JESUS

This was probably the first sermon he ever heard. Surely ^{Philip} realized it **could** be his last. So he preached to the man what he needed to know to be saved. The text simply says "he preached unto him Jesus" (8:35).

What did he preach? Well, we don't know for certain. But perhaps he spoke of:

- The words of John, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whoever believes on Him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). Or as he wrote "And the Word became 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).
- The announcement of His birth by the chorus of angels who sang "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men" (Luke 2:14).
- How Jesus grew in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and the people (Luke 2:52).
- The baptism of Jesus in the Jordan when the Father spoke from heaven "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased" and the Holy Spirit descended upon Him in the form of a dove (Matthew 3:13-17).
- How Jesus was tempted by the devil in the wilderness 40 days so He could be able to identify with the temptations of men (Matthew 4:1-11; Hebrews 4:15).
- The miracles which Jesus performed. How He gave sight to the blind and healed the sick. The times on the raging Sea of Galilee when Jesus calmed it and when He walked on it. Jesus' great exhibitions of power in raising Jairus' daughter and his friend Lazarus (who had been dead four days) from the dead.
- Jesus' ministry and teaching. Maybe he told the eunuch about Jesus' Sermon on the Mount in which were some of His most profound teachings -- the Beatitudes and the Golden Rule (Matthew 5:7). Maybe he related some of Jesus' more well-known parables -- the parable of the sower, and of the lost sheep).
- The events surrounding Jesus' death. His groaning in the Garden, petitioning God to allow this cup to pass from Him, sweating great drops of blood. The betrayal of one of His friends, Judas. The trials and mistreatment before Jewish and Roman authorities.

Perhaps he talked about Jesus' crucifixion, graphically portraying it to emphasize the horror and injustice. Possibly he told of Jesus' matchless love

in His tender words "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do". And then the darkening of the sun, tearing asunder of the rocks, and the great earthquake there.

Perhaps at that point the eunuch said "Is that all there is?". "Oh no, that is just the beginning" Philip says.

- After three days in the grave He was resurrected from the dead. He appeared to many of disciples many different times for 40 days and then from Mt. Olivet He ascended into heaven.
- Then on the following Pentecost, the church that Jesus promised to build was established with 3000 people baptized and added to the Lord's church following Peter's first gospel sermon (~~Acts 2:22-47~~).
- Jesus' great commission was to "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned" (~~Mark 16:15-16~~). That was exactly what Philip was doing at this moment.

Philip preached unto him Jesus. He realized the importance of that one sermon because the eunuch might never get to hear another one. So he preached what would convict the man to save his soul. And it worked!! Philip not only preached the "man" but also the "plan". That is obvious because the man knew what he needed to do as soon as they came to some water.

THE EUNUCH'S DECISION

He realized that he must react to the teaching of Philip to be saved. After only one sermon he knew what to do to be saved.

The first step was not complicated. In order to be baptized, Philip said "If you believe with all your heart you may" (~~8:37~~). How much does one have to know and believe? The eunuch said "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God" (~~8:37~~). Then Philip baptized him (~~8:38~~) and the eunuch went on his way rejoicing because from that point God had saved him from his sins (~~8:39~~).

How much do you have to know? If you listened to today's lesson, then you now know enough to be saved. This may be the last lesson you will ever hear. Will you, like the eunuch, believe and be baptized? Is it really worth the chance? Let us assist you as you render obedience to the gospel. Please contact us!!

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MORE THAN A CARPENTER

INTRO: About 2000 years ago a man named Jesus was born in an obscure little town in a small insignificant country. He was born into a poor family and worked as a carpenter with His father until He was 30 years old.

He set out on a personal ministry which lasted a little more than three years. While still a young man, the tide of popular opinion turned against Him... He was betrayed by a friend, denied and rejected by His followers.

His enemies scourged, beat and crucified Him on a cross -- a fate reserved for worst and most despicable of criminals. Roman guards gambled for the only material possession He owned -- a seamless robe. After dying He was taken down and put in a borrowed grave.

This man never wrote a book... never held an office... never owned a home. He didn't attend any college or school of higher learning. And except for His early life, He never traveled more than 200 miles from home. Yet, He has had more influence and impact on humanity than any other person in history.

I. JESUS OF NAZARETH

A. Statement About Jesus. Philip Schaff (a noted historian) wrote of Him:

"... this Jesus of Nazareth, without money and arms, conquered more millions than Alexander, Caesar, Mohammed, and Napoleon; without science and learning, he shed more light on things human and divine than all the philosophers and scholars combined; without the eloquence of schools, he spoke such words of life as were never spoken of before or since, and produced effects which lie beyond the reach of orator or poet; without writing a single line, he set more pens in motion, and furnished themes for more sermons, orations, discussions, learned volumes, works of art, and songs of praise, than the whole army of great men of ancient and modern times".

B. Jesus Was A Paradox Of Sorts. Many would attribute the great wisdom and influence of any great man to:

1. Education. But Jesus had none. At least no formal education any more than any other normal Jewish boy of that time.
2. Worldly Power and Influence. Again Jesus had none.
3. Overwhelming Physical Presence. Jesus was a meek man, with no outstanding physical characteristics (cf. Isaiah 52:14; 53:2-3).

C. Skeptics Have To Admit To His Influence On The World. Whether they accept His deity or not, they must admit that!

So why does He influence so many? What makes Jesus of Nazareth so unique? What makes countless thousands martyrs for His name? JESUS CLAIMED TO BE THE SON OF GOD... AND HE PROVED IT!!! His resurrection from the dead proved that He was the Son of God (Romans 1:4).

One of the biggest cop-outs for those who do not believe but cannot deny the evidence is that Jesus was a great teacher and religious leader... even perhaps a man ahead of His time and an idealist. That sounds intelligent and appeases the mind and conscience... but it just cannot be true! Jesus made some claims which complicate that idea.

II. THE CLAIMS OF JESUS

A. Jesus Claimed To Be The Son Of God. Now, that claim is either true or false.

1. Suppose The Claim Is False. That leaves us with two options. Either Jesus knew it was false or He did not know.

- a. Liar. If He knew it was false, He was a liar. The Jews labeled Him a liar (John 10:30-38). But Jesus challenged them to show just one thing He had ever done wrong... They were silent!

How could a man who lived the purest, noblest, most righteous life of any man, teach astounding truths, and yet live the most colossal lie ever lived? It would be impossible. It would take a Jesus to invent a Jesus!!

- b. Lunatic. If He didn't know His claims were false, He was a lunatic. The disciples thought that at one time (Mark 3:21). They thought He was getting carried away because of His effect on others.

But a lunatic shows signs of imbalance and mental instability. Yet Jesus' teachings bring comfort to all such men who are distressed.

J.T.Fisher (noted psychiatrist) said that if you were to combine all the material written by reputable psychologists on mental health, take out the meat without all the excess verbiage, you would have an awkward and incomplete summation of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. This was no lunatic!!

2. Suppose The Claim Is True. That leaves us with only one other alternative.

- a. Lord. Jesus is really Lord. That is the most sensible... It is the only thing which can explain Jesus' claims, teaching, miracles and wisdom (Matthew 16:15).

B. The Claims Of Jesus. Jesus made some very serious claims which cannot be taken lightly. He put Himself on the spot. To even **claim** these things He must be either a Liar, Lunatic, or Lord.

1. Claimed Equality With God (John 5:17-18; 10:27-33; 14:7-10). Such a claim made by a mere man was worthy of death. Was He a liar? lunatic? or Lord?
2. Accepted Worship. He taught that **only** God was to be worshipped and none other was worthy of such a display (Matthew 4:10; John 4:23). Yet He accepted worship many times (leper-Matthew 8:2; ruler of synagogue-Matthew 9:18; blind man-John 9:35-38; disciples-Matthew 28:9). Was He a liar? lunatic? or Lord?
3. Claimed His Blood Could Acquire Remission Of Sins (Matthew 26:28; Acts 20:28). He died for this belief and this cause and His disciples began teaching that from His death onward. Was He a liar? lunatic (fanatic)? or Lord?
4. Which Was He? Jesus proved His claims by the miracles and signs which He did, thus proving Himself to be Lord (John 20:30-31; Acts 2:36).

CONCLUSION: The proof is set before us in the New Testament. Jesus is truly "more than a carpenter"!!

Now **we** must do something in response to that claim... we must have a reaction to the evidence. "What think ye of the Christ?" Jesus asked one time (Matthew 22:42).

1. Reject Him. If you reject Him and the proof of His deity, then you are dooming yourself (Hebrews 10:26-31)
2. Apathy Toward Him. Maybe you don't care enough to make a decision. But here your decision has been made (Matthew 12:30).
3. Obey Him. If you love Him, obey Him and He can be the source of eternal life for you (Hebrews 5:9).

Answer the question this morning my friend and choose your destiny!! Was Jesus a liar? Was He a lunatic? or was He "more than a carpenter"... was Jesus Lord?

CAN WE UNDERSTAND THE BIBLE ALIKE?

- *Introduce Program
- *Invite People To Worship (Friendly Church)
- *Dial-A-Bible-Moment

INTRO: Whenever discussing religion with people, we often hear statements made to the effect that:

- "The only difference between us is our **opinion** of what the Bible teaches"
- "We just see and understand things differently. There is room for differences in the church today and God allows such"
- "It is impossible to get everyone to believe the same thing. We cannot be expected to agree on everything"

Is that true? It sure sounds convincing...but is it? Actually, God's word is not that way at all!! (1 Corinthians 14:33). Let's not blame this mess on God... this is our own doing!! Man just cannot leave out his own philosophies and theologies. Many of our divisions come in areas where God has not spoken.

Many blame the Bible itself for all the confusion. "It is just too hard to understand". That is the explanation for all the differing views about its teaching. If the Bible cannot be understood, we are wasting our time studying it. If you really believe that it cannot be understood, then you should just go ahead and turn the radio off.....

Are you still there? Then you **do** believe that it can be understood. You are right (Ephesians 3:3-4; 5:17). Some of you have been told by your preacher, pastor or priest that you are not capable of understanding it by yourself without their guidance... Be careful of that my friend (Matthew 15:14).

Now, it is possible that you **do not understand** the Scriptures, but it is not possible that you **cannot understand** them! And remember this one thing through the rest of our study this morning... "We may **misunderstand** the Bible differently, but we cannot **understand** it differently" (Ephesians 4:5; Jude 3; 1 Corinthians 1:10).

I. NECESSITIES FOR UNDERSTANDING THE BIBLE

A. Standard Of Authority. To be consistent, we must have some basis of authority, some standard by which to measure our opinions, beliefs, and practices.

1. Without a standard measure for one gallon which is consistent, we might drive into one gas station and get a pint of gas for \$1.09, and then another and get a whole gallon for \$1.09, and still another and get about a gallon and a half for the same price (by the way, if you know about one of those, get in touch with me).

A standard is necessary to be consistent and fair. We agree that double standards are unfair, but then we want to be judged by one religious faith and have others judged by another... Is that fair or not?

God has given us a standard to govern our lives (Psalm 119:105; John 12:48). So in order to know what is right and wrong you must

consult that standard!! When questions arise, that is to be our standard, and that alone!! Did you know that most preachers, pastors, and priests use a man-made creed book which they preach out of along with the Bible? It might shock you to know that your preacher may use one... Ask him this morning. And if he does, refuse to accept it because it is dividing us!!

The Bible, and it alone, is the revealed mind of God (1 Corinthians 2:10-11). And man is arrogant to think He can know God's will apart from God's revelation!

- B. Ability To Understand.** Can God's word be understood?? The writers of it said it can (Ephesians 3:3-4), although admittedly some things may be difficult (2 Peter 3:15-17). Many of these people Paul addressed may not have been as well educated as we are, yet they could understand.

In order for someone to understand, he must have some mental capabilities. Perhaps he is slower than most other adults, but the messages of the Bible are simple enough to be understood by children. There are only two groups of adults who cannot understand the Bible.

1. Mentally Handicapped. They do not have the reasoning capability necessary to understand. Therefore, God does not hold them accountable.
2. Unwilling. He has the ability to understand, but is foolish for not taking advantage of that ability. This typified many people Jesus came teaching (Matthew 23:37-39). Such people are accountable (Acts 17:30).

- C. Desire To Understand.** Here lies the crux of much of the problem. Man does not really care to know and understand. Perhaps the word condemns his life and therefore he does not want to accept it.

Without the desire to know and understand, the word of God does us no good at all... but anyone who wants to know the truth, shall know the truth (John 7:17). If we are willing to do His will and obey his word, then we will understand it (John 8:31-32).

And perhaps here lies the reason for so many different and false beliefs which are being held today. God allows it because man desires it and does not love the truth (2 Thessalonians 2:9-12).

- D. Open Mind.** If your mind is already made up about something, it will do you no good to appeal to the Bible for your answer. Too often we appeal to it with the attitude of trying to justify what we are doing, rather than trying to find out what God wants us to do. My friend, that is a dangerous position to be in!!

Prejudice blinds a man... If you or I am not willing to take all God has said on a Bible matter, then we are better off without Bibles, because then the truth will just get in our way!!

When examining the Scriptures (even when doing it with me each Sunday morning), realize that **they** are right and pattern your life after them rather than patterning them after your life. (2 Timothy 3:16-17)

- E. Honest Heart.** Jesus talked about the word of God being scattered on men's hearts like seed on the ground, in His parable of the Sower. (Luke 8). The ones which fell on the good ground are those "having heard the word with a noble and good heart, keep it and bear fruit with patience" (Luke 8:15).

Is that you, my friend? An honest heart will not try to justify itself by saying "Well, we just cannot understand the Bible alike". If you and I do not understand the Bible alike, it is because at least one of us is wrong!!

CONCLUSION: Today men are divided over a multitude of different teachings, doctrines and faiths. But God's word can be understood if we are **willing** to understand and **honest** enough to accept it!!

We will be judged by all of God's words (John 12:48; Revelation 20:12). Do you honestly believe that God will judge and condemn men for misunderstanding something He made so vague that we could not understand what He would have us to do?? I don't believe that... and I know you don't either.

Remember this last thought as our time runs out "When a man is honestly searching for the truth and finds that he is mistaken, he either ceases being mistaken... or he ceases being honest".

THE CHURCH MAKES KNOWN GOD'S WAY

* Introduce Program

INTRO: The relationship between Christ and salvation is clear and virtually undisputed by the religious world. Even before His birth, His mission was clear. The angel spoke to Joseph and said "She shall bring forth a son; and thou shalt call His name Jesus, for it is He that will save His people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21).

Jesus Christ was the perfect sacrifice which could appease God's wrath against sin and also show His love for man. Redemption is found in the precious blood of Christ (1 Peter 1:18-19). Therefore, He is our Saviour, Mediator, and Redeemer. That fact is accepted in the religious world.

What is denied is the place of the church in salvation and redemption. Is the church important to God's plan for man's salvation??

The church is viewed with contempt in the eyes of many of the world today. To a degree this is understandable. Their ideas of the **Lord's church** are formed by viewing various **denominations** which masquerade as the church.

Unbelievers are repulsed by this view of the church because of:

- * Its involvement in tax-free business
- * Its money making schemes
- * Its continual begging. They look on the church as a parasite which plagues modern society.
- * Its compromises with disgusting sins (homosexuality, abortion, etc.)
- * Poking its nose into politics and government involvement.

To be truthful, those things sicken me too. The church is a spiritual kingdom (John 18:36). Thus, its work is spiritual.

I. THE CHURCH IN GOD'S DIVINE PLAN

A. The church has an important function in God's divine plan. It was part of His eternal purpose (Ephesians 3:10-11). Before the foundations of the world were laid, the church was planned by God. Today it makes known to man "God's manifold wisdom". It is the personification of the wise master plan of God.

B. Therefore, the church is not an afterthought of God. Premillennialists tell us that when the Jews rejected Christ, He had to set up the church until later when He could return and have them accept Him (John 6:15). However, if the church is part of God's eternal purpose, it could not have been an afterthought.

True, the Jews rejected Christ, but God's plan was working in spite of their rejection. God knew He would be rejected by His people and was able to use them in carrying out His plan (Acts 2:22-24).

Imagine the face on the Devil when Peter unveiled God's plan for the first time on the day of Pentecost. The devil had succeeded in having Christ put to death... but He raised from the dead to destroy the power of the devil.

C. The church came into existence because God planned it and Jesus built it (Matthew 16:18). The church exists because God wants it to. God has a purpose and definite function for it.

II. THE CHURCH IS TO MAKE KNOWN GOD'S WAY

A. The church is a result of God's plan and announces the way for man to be reconciled to God. It is to make known God's way of reconciling men to Himself through Christ (Ephesians 2:16).

1. "To Reconcile" means to 'make friendly again'. Friendship with the world is enmity with God. Sin destroys our relationship with God because sin separates from God (Isaiah 59:1-2). God cannot fellowship sin (1 John 5-6). It is totally against His nature, therefore we must be reconciled and brought back to God.
2. All have been separated from God (Romans 3:23; 6:23). Man can only be reconciled to God through the blood of Christ (2 Corinthians 5:18). Reconciliation occurs in the one body, the church (Ephesians 2:16,18; 1:22-23).

The blood of Jesus redeems us and it is the same blood which bought the church (Acts 20:28). Therefore, the church is the group of blood-washed disciples. It is the blood-bought body of Christ.

Thus, those who are being saved (Acts 2:47) were being added to the church.

3. The church is not the dispenser of salvation but the recipient of it. One is not saved by the church, but one who is saved becomes a part of the church.

This is God's plan for reconciling man to Himself and this occurs in the church. The church is a monument to God's way of salvation. We had better not overlook its importance.

III. UNSCRIPTURAL ATTITUDES TOWARD THE CHURCH

A. "You Can Be Saved Without Being A Member Of The Church". People have been told this so often that they have come to believe it. They 'get saved' and then after they feel that ordeal is over, they can go their way with no concern about being part of the local church.

Such a statement implies that God's church is unnecessary, unessential, and unimportant. If so then:

1. Jesus died for nothing (Acts 20:28; Ephesians 5:25-26)
2. One can be saved in the kingdom of Satan (Colossians 1:13-14)
3. One can be saved without being reconciled to God (Ephesians 2:16). Therefore, no one could possibly be lost.

Why did God go to so much trouble to establish something which was totally unnecessary?

B. "You Don't Have To Go To Church To Remain Saved". Many people believe that whether they admit it or not. Their lack of attendance and work convicts them of such an attitude.

1. Did the Lord not know what He was talking about when He instituted the church and required weekly service? (Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 16:1-2; Hebrews 10:25).
2. The church is treated like some spiritual luxury which is nice to have but really unnecessary. That is a false idea of the church.

C. "One Church Is As Good As Another". They all have shortcomings, so 'find one which fits you and stay with it'.

1. Christ promised to build His church (Matthew 16:18). Not churches.

2. Was He being narrow-minded? We are told **we** are if we insist that there is only "one body".
3. The church which Jesus built is perfect (Ephesians 5:25-27). The imperfections lie in the humans which make it up... not in the pattern which God gave.

CONCLUSION: Is the church essential to salvation? Christ died for it... presented it to Himself... It is His bride... He is the Saviour of the body... God adds all the saved to it... It is the "fulness of Christ" (Ephesians 1:22-23).

The church is not just one of many religious organizations or denominations. It is the fulfilment of God's plan... It is the body of the saved... It is the kingdom of God... and so through the church God's way is made known to man

* Offer "Christ And The Church"
Searching the Scriptures
Special Issue

WHO IS ON THE LORD'S SIDE?

* Introduce Program

INTRO: There have always been times in God's dealings with his people when the spiritual men had to be separated from the boys. It seems that after a few generations would come and go the attitude of His children changed. They inherited their religion rather than being converted to it. Second and third generation Christians who have not had to fight the battles against error can become weak and insipid (non-stimulated).

Sadly, the solution to bring us back to life is often persecution or church problems -- then you must either take a stand or fizzle out. It is easy for us to just coast along without ever fighting any battles against Satan. Sometimes we are called on to make a stand.

After coming down from Mt. Sinai following the reception of the Ten Commandments, Moses saw Israel frolic and worshipping a golden calf which his brother Aaron had made for them. Moses was so enraged that he threw down the tables of stone. He burned the calf and forced the people to drink the water sprinkled with the beaten gold dust.

As he witnessed their behavior, Moses called for the Lord's faithful to stand up and be counted -- "Who Is On The Lord's Side?" (Exodus 32:26). The Levites stood up with Moses and slew 3000 that day.

Jesus had thousands following Him after feeding the multitudes with five loaves and two fish. They were **"for"** Him, even wanting to make Him their king (John 6:14-15). But after Jesus preached to them, and said some difficult things, He determined "who was on the Lord's side". Only twelve men remained and one of those men was not really with Him (Judas Iscariot).

We are either on God's side or Satan's (Matthew 6:24; 12:30). There is no fence-straddling. The man who is never very strong **"for"** anything is never very strong **"against"** anything. To the same degree that one loves good he will hate evil.

We are either in God's kingdom or Satan's (Colossians 1:12-13). Being a child of God necessitates our soberness, watchfulness, preparation, and readiness, lest we slip into the same unprepared state as those in the darkness (1 Thessalonians 5:5-9). We must stand on God's side completely (not just with one foot in and the other in the world) (1 John 2:15). We must stand **"with"** God or we are not on His side!!

I. ARE WE **"FOR"** THE LORD OR **"WITH"** HIM?

A. There is a world of difference in being **"for"** the Lord and His people and being **"with"** them.

1. Example. We can sit in the grandstands and cheer our favorite ball team on or sit at home and watch them on TV. Everytime I watch the "Kentucky Wildcats" I am **"for"** them, wanting them to win... But I am not **"with"** them!! I would have to play for Coach Pitino or be on the coaching staff to be **"with"** them.

B. We too can sit in the grandstands and be **"for"** God. We might be behind and support every bit of work that the church does... but until we are busy working we are not **"with"** the faithful!

"Who is on the Lord's side?" The one who will stand in the trenches and fight it out with his Commander and fellow-soldiers. We must stand **with** God.

II. BEING ON THE LORD'S SIDE

- A. **Standing With Him** (1 Corinthians 16:13; Philippians 4:1). As Moses called for those on God's side, the Levites stood to be counted. They were not ashamed to let their brethren know where their loyalties lay.

Paul stood by the Christ through imprisonment and suffering, unashamedly and encouraged Timothy and us to do likewise (2 Timothy 1:8-14). The advantage in the war with Satan is found on the Lord's side.

- B. **Defending Him In His Absence.** Even though the world is against us we need not fear their intimidation for "If God be for us, who can be against us?" (Romans 8:31).

Therefore, we must boldly stand up and defend our faith in Him (1 Peter 3:14-15). Jesus wants disciples who willingly confess His name before others (Matthew 10:32-33). We stand with Him, defending Him to the world.

- C. **Following Exclusively** (Luke 9:23; Matthew 11:28-30). In standing "with" the general, we take orders and obey. Obedience is necessary to stand with Christ. When He leads we follow.

1. Example. Air force flying formations. All other pilots have complete trust in their leader. Thus, they follow him exclusively -- turning when he turns, diving, climbing, rolling when the leader does, conforming to his every move. Four pilots slammed into a desert bed following their leader (1982).

- D. **Not Walking Ahead Of** (2 John 9; Matthew 7:21-23). We must be satisfied to let the word of God lead us. How ridiculous it is to shine the light behind us when walking in the dark. The lamp must go before us (Psalm 119:105).

When we substitute our methods for carrying out God's appointed work we are walking ahead of Him. We must work with Him, not ahead of Him.

- E. **Cannot Lose** (Romans 8:31; Psalm 118:6). When we stand "with" Christ we are standing on the victor's side (Romans 8:37; 1 Corinthians 15:57). I want to be on the side of a winner... What about you?

CONCLUSION: Who among us are on the Lord's side? We must stand up with Him in the heat of the battle. We must follow Him exclusively without question or reservation... and never try to walk ahead of Him.

The victory is His... Let us walk with him. Let us stick to His precepts and commands and learn not to go beyond what is written (1 Corinthians 4:6).

"Who Is One The Lord's Side?" "Master here am I!!"

BLUEPRINT FOR BUILDING THE LORD'S CHURCH

- * Introduce program
- * Remind about Dial-A-Bible-Moment
- * Tell about correspondence course

INTRO: Do you remember the first time you, or your brother, or your father, or your best friend built a treehouse. You used whatever you could find, and built it however all those pieces of scrap lumber would fit together... Would you build a house like that? Would you build a place of business like that? To build a structure like that you need some sort of plans and specifications for the builders to follow to erect what you want. You need to follow some sort of blueprints when building. A blueprint is essential for all the different workers who must work together to achieve a common end.

God gives a pattern like that when He tells us how to build the church... He gave Noah a pattern for the ark... Moses received a pattern for the tabernacle (Exodus 25:40)... and Solomon received a pattern for building the temple (1 Chronicles 28:10,19). All three of these items are OT types and shadows of the Lord's church which Jesus Himself would build (Matthew 16:18).

Unless the Lord's pattern is followed, thus involving Him in the building of the church, then we are building a church in vain (Psalm 127:1; Matthew 15:13). My friend, let's follow God's blueprint for building the church.

I. GOOD FOUNDATION

A. The Chief Cornerstone. The first thing that is needed in building any kind of structure is a good foundation. The foundation is the secret and source of its strength and durability. We always build buildings on bedrock or a deep foundation of concrete and stone.

1. Jesus Christ is the chief cornerstone of the church (Matthew 16:13-18). The church is established on the fact that "Jesus is Christ the Son of the Living God". The church rests on the deity of Jesus... not Peter. Peter is not the foundation of the church... he would be a weak and wavering foundation.

Peter was not the first pope and therefore the foundation of the church... Jesus Christ is!!

2. Jesus is the tried and precious stone (Isaiah 28:16; 1 Peter 2:4,6). He was tried and proven (Hebrews 5:8-9). He is precious to us because He is the source and foundation of our spiritual and eternal life.
3. Jesus Christ is the only foundation (Acts 4:11-12). He may have been rejected by those He came to save, but He remains the only foundation on which man can build (1 Corinthians 3:11).
4. Jesus Christ is a mighty foundation. And if He is rejected, He will crush those who reject Him (Matthew 21:42-44). Those who reject Him ("fall on this stone") shall be injured. Then this rock of offense will fall and crush man as God's judgment on him for rejecting.

B. Apostles And Prophets. Jesus' apostles and prophets laid this foundation (Ephesians 2:20) by teaching Christ's will to men. The apostle's doctrine, outlined in the New Testament lays the groundwork

(Acts 2:42). The apostle's laid the foundation through the word they taught (1 Corinthians 3:10)... and that foundation was their teaching about Christ and the instructions He had left for them to preach (1 Corinthians 3:11; Matthew 28:19-20).

With a solid foundation like that we cannot be moved!! No creed book or conference of church leaders can ever be a solid foundation.

II. THE STRUCTURE

- A. **Living Stones.** The church is not made of bricks and mortar but of living stones built upon Christ and His apostle's teaching (1 Peter 2:5). Thus we, His people, are "God's building" (1 Corinthians 3:9). He dwells in our hearts taking up residence within us when we accept Him and become part of His church (Ephesians 2:20-22). We are His Holy Temple.

Every soul which is built on that foundation (Jesus Christ) is tried and tested. His faith is "put through the fire" so to speak and tested to see what kind of depth and conviction it has (1 Corinthians 3:11-15). Through our efforts, we see people converted to Christ... some of them have the faith and conviction to stand and others are burned away. Then those which remain make up the holy habitation of God.

Some souls are precious because they are lasting... others are dross and will be lost.

III. TOOLS AND SUPPLIES NEEDED

- A. **Plummet.** To insure a good strong building, you have to use the proper tools. A plummet (or plumbline) must be used to make sure the walls are straight up and perpendicular to the ground. A plumb is a string with a weight attached and is held at the top of the wall to make sure the walls are positioned perpendicular to the ground so they will not topple.
 "Righteousness is the plummet" (Isaiah 28:16-17). Put the string of justice and righteousness against our lives to see if we are standing straight and lining up.
- B. **Measuring Line.** Justice is the measuring line... the tape or rule that, when followed, insures that the building is built the right size. Justice is the measuring line and we are measured to see if we conform to the pattern (Isaiah 28:17).
- C. **Cement.** This is what holds the stones together, holds them in place, fills in the gaps and bonds them to one another. Each stone fits together and is cemented throughout, by that which each one supplies (Ephesians 4:16).

The things which bind us together are things like love, kindness, good deeds, unity, esteeming others better than ourselves. All these things unify and the strength of the Lord's building depends on how well its stones are cemented together.

CONCLUSION: Some want to make alterations in God's blueprints and build the "churches of their own choice". But such efforts are vain (Psalm 127:1). Unless God established the church we are a member of and we use His blueprints to the letter, then our efforts are vain and our teachings are vain (Matthew 15:9).

Jesus Christ built "His church" founded on His deity, his death, burial and resurrection... and He tells us He has only one body (Ephesians 4:4; 1:22-23). My friend, you need to make absolutely sure you are a part of that "one church" built according to the pattern in the New Testament. It will stand forever and be found in heaven (Hebrews 12:22-23). ~~28~~

Are you sure you are a part of it?... Let us find it together!!

JUST SUPPOSE HE HAD NEVER BEEN BORN

INTRO: Read Luke 2:1-20

What a wonderfully, special day that was... what a grand display of praise that echoed through the countryside that night... what a beautiful song that was sung by angels as a new era was dawning on mankind -- an era of great blessing and consolation.

Man's fellowship with God had been breeched centuries ago when Adam and Eve introduced sin into the world. Separated from God because of our own sins, man gropes in the darkness with no guidance... no life... and no hope.

Knowing man's inadequacy to save himself, "when the fulness of the time came God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, in order that He might redeem those who are under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons" (Galatians 4:4-5).

Jesus Christ is the answer to man's problem. Through Him, all those who have fallen can be redeemed back to God. Jesus is the solution to the dilemma of sin... But just suppose for a moment that He had never been born. Knowing the pain He would experience and the rejection of those He would come to save, suppose Jesus had said 'I don't think I want to go through with it. No one will appreciate what I am doing, so I think I will just stay here in heaven where I am appreciated'.

Where would that leave us??

I. NO FORGIVENESS (Hebrews 9:22)

- A. God cannot passively overlook our sins as if nothing ever happened (Acts 17:30). He is a just God who cannot condone sin. We expect him to betray Himself, but He cannot do that (1 John 1:5-6).

Without some kind of sufficient atonement or covering for our sins, they lay open in the sight of God and He cannot pretend like they did not happen. Without forgiveness or some adequate sacrifice to make up for those sins we are doomed (Romans 6:23).

Without Jesus' sacrifice and death for us, God could not harmonize His mercy with His justice. "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8).

Thus, Jesus has become God's only way of making His mercy consistent with His justice (Romans 3:23-26). Jesus bore the punishment for our sins so we don't have to... Forgiveness is now within our reach (Acts 13:38-39).

II. NO SALVATION (Acts 4:12)

- A. Without forgiveness there can be no salvation. There never could be salvation from sin apart from Christ... there is no other way!!

Without the spiritual life offered to us in Christ we would remain "dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience" (Ephesians 2:1-2). Only spiritual death awaits.

To benefit those of us dead in sin, the announcement was made by an angel to Joseph "And she shall bring forth a son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21).

Thank God that Jesus was born... that He did live a perfect life... that He did become the sacrifice for our sins... and that God did accept His death in our place!! Thank you Lord for doing for us what we could not do for ourselves!!

III. NO HOPE (Ephesians 2:11-12)

- A. When we finally come to realize that our own personal sins form an insurmountable wall between ourselves and God, hope is destroyed!! We cannot anxiously await a home in heaven when we know that "there shall by no means enter in anything that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie, but only those who are written in the Lamb's Book of Life" (Revelation 21:27).

Without the hope of something better in the future, life is futile and worthless!! Without hope we fall into a ditch of despair from which we cannot arise!!

Therefore, God left us a ray of hope "which is Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Colossians 1:27). As waves of despair and heartache beat against us, we have an anchor which holds us steadfast and sure ... we have a hope which grounds us in the heavenly places (Hebrews 6:19-20).

CONCLUSION: God be thanked that we do have hope in Christ (Colossians 1:27)... that we do have salvation (Matthew 1:21)... that forgiveness can be ours through Jesus (Acts 13:38-39).

My friend, Jesus **was** born (John 1:29). But if we don't live our lives by faith and obey His will, then as far as we are concerned He might as well not have been born... His advent will not have benefitted us and His second advent will be our greatest curse ever!!

Haven't you taken for granted the opportunity that is now yours in comparison with the dilemma your soul is in? Have you taken advantage of God's provisions for salvation through Christ (Luke 13:5; Acts 2:38; 1 Peter 3:21)?

Will you be saved today??

THE FRIEND OF PUBLICANS AND SINNERS

WPAH ~~Sept~~ October 1, 1989
(Circleville, OH)

INTRO: In a century when there are more people than there have ever been on the earth before, it seems strange, but there are more lonely people than there have ever been... Lonely people are lonely even in a crowd!

So many are distraught and downtrodden because they know that no one cares about them... Well to all those listening who might be alone and feel that you have no friend "there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother" (Proverbs 18:24) -- Jesus of Nazareth!!

To those of us who need companionship... a moral and spiritual boost... Jesus offers His friendship to us.

I. JESUS IS A FRIEND

- A.** We All Need A Friend, Don't We? Man is a social creature needing love and companionship. All of us form friendships because we need friends. What better friend could we turn to than Jesus Christ?

Jesus is a friend who will never forsake us (Matthew 28:20). He is a friend who can relate to our tragedies, sorrows, and pain (Hebrews 4:15-16). He is a friend who gave up the last thing a man could ever give for His friends (John 15:13).

- B.** Jesus Is A Friend To All Those Who Have No Friend! It is not hard to be a friend to someone rich, or famous, or a celebrity, or star athlete. The proof of one's love for his fellowman is in his ability to love those whom all others hate!! This Jesus did!!

The insults of the Pharisees actually glorify the Son of God. They said He is the "friend of publicans and sinners" (Luke 7:34), and thank God for that!! This sinner appreciates that more than words can express!

The common people heard Jesus gladly because He treated them like they were important and as far as He and God were concerned, they were special!!

Jesus came seeking the friendless, down-trodden, and broken-hearted (Luke 4:16-22). These very ones of you who are listening this morning are the very ones Jesus came to relieve and befriend!!

II. THOSE JESUS BEFRIENDED

- A.** Jesus Befriended Those Who Needed Friends. Jesus took the tender souls of those who had degraded themselves and "hit rock bottom" (morally and spiritually speaking). He befriended them and delicately worked to repair them and make something useful out of these derelict souls (see Matthew 12:20)! He can do the same for you!!

1. Mary Magdalene (Luke 8:1-3). Who would want to be a friend of a woman possessed of demons? How lonely would this person be? When others would cast her aside... she was important to Jesus!!

And how loyal Mary proved to be to her newfound friend! She did what she could ministering to His needs (Matthew 27:55-56)... She stood by Him at the base of the cross unafraid as Jesus was crucified (John 19:25)... She was at His tomb when they buried Him (Matthew 27:61)... She came to His grave on the first day of the week (Matthew 28:1-10).

Jesus stood by her when she needed a friend and so she stood by Him as a tribute to Him for their mutual love and friendship. And then, as a tribute to Mary, Jesus appeared to her first, before any of His other disciples (even the eleven) (Mark 16:9).

Jesus was the most important person in Mary's life. He befriended her when she needed a friend... That is the kind of friend that Jesus was, who brought out the best in others.

2. Matthew The Publican (Matthew 9:9-13). Publicans were about the most despised people in the world to the Jews in Jesus' day. They were tax collectors. The Jews hated being subject to Roman government... but even worse than the Romans they hated the publicans who were Jews who collected taxes from their fellow Jews for the Romans.

Jesus earned His reputation... He befriended many publicans... He sat to dinner with them whose only other friends were probably fellow-publicans.

Matthew became a special disciple of Jesus'... He became an apostle and friend (Matthew 10:1-4). Matthew spent enough time with Jesus to author the second longest account of Jesus' activity while on earth -- The Gospel According To Matthew.

Jesus was truly a friend to the friendless... and still is!!

3. Judas Iscariot (Matthew 26:50). Most of us don't think of Judas as a friend of Jesus, but he was. Jesus loved him and befriended him in the hope that this man would become a spiritual giant. Judas betrayed Him... but He betrayed Him as a friend (John 13:18; cf. Psalm 41:9 where this passage is quoted from).

The New Testament writers always refer to Judas in a negative way. But out of all the disciples who followed Jesus, Jesus chose him after much consideration to be part of His band of 12 apostles (Luke 6:12-16).

I have always wondered "Why did Jesus choose Judas?" He knew what kind of evil Judas was capable of (John 6:70-71). But He also knew what kind of good Judas was capable of. Jesus chose men who could be spiritual giants. None were assured of success in the kingdom... yet every apostle (even Judas) had his strengths and the potential to be great.

What a wonderful friend Jesus was that He was willing to stick out His own neck on the hope that Judas could be faithful! Don't we all need a friend like that??

Jesus befriended the worst of men and tried to make something good out of them... And He never forsook them, even when they forsook Him! Whatever kind of person you are Jesus wants to be your friend!!

CONCLUSION: Jesus can be your friend... but Jesus chooses His own friends (John 15:14-17). Jesus says His friends understand and obey Him.

The text asks of us "Are you a friend of Jesus?" We cannot answer in vague terms "I consider myself to be a friend of Jesus" or "I think He likes me". The friend of Jesus is the one who learns His will and obeys it.

Jesus is the kind of friend all of us are looking for... He offers His friendship to you, whatever kind of person you are. Jesus will be your friend if you let Him into your heart and obey Him... Will you?

ANDREW

INTRO: The Bible is full of characters whom we know little about. They may have been important to the cause of God in their own time, but God only saw fit to make mention of them in passing. Some such characters have enough references made about them that we can deduct certain things about their character and learn some valuable lessons from them.

Andrew was one such man. His name is only mentioned 12 times in the New Testament, and 4 of those times are his inclusion in the list of 12 apostles. It is amazing what valuable lessons we can learn from the life of this one man.

I. BACKGROUND OF ANDREW

A. Andrew's Background. Let me take just a couple of minutes to relate to you what we know of Andrew.

1. Son of Jonas, brother of Simon Peter. He lived in Bethsaida on the Sea of Galilee (John 1:44).
2. He was a fisherman -- partners with James and John, and his brother Peter (Luke 5:10), and lived there with Peter and his family (Mark 1:29).
3. He was a disciple of John the Baptist and was directed by John to Jesus (John 1:35-42). After meeting with Jesus, going home with Him, and talking to Him, Andrew was convinced that Jesus was the Messiah. He proceeded to find his brother Peter who believed.
4. Jesus called him and Peter a second time to leave their nets, follow Him and become "fishers of men" (Matthew 4:18-19). They dropped their nets and followed Him. Later Andrew was named an apostle.
5. Andrew may have been on the fringe of the "inner circle of apostles" -- Peter James, and John. We see them together at times (Mark 13:3-4). His name is also mentioned in the same group division with those three when the lists of apostles are recorded.
6. Tradition has it that he did most of his preaching in Scythia and was crucified in Achaia on an X-shaped cross. He died a martyr's death.

II. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF ANDREW'S WORK

A. Importance Of Andrew's Work. We may get the impression that the work of the apostles Peter and Paul was far more important than Andrew's or the others. That is not true. Notice how significant Andrew's work was:

1. Andrew Preached Too. The Great Commission was given to and carried out by all the apostles (Matthew 28:18-20)!! On the day of Pentecost, he too, with the other 11, was speaking in tongues to men of every nation so they could understand the message of the gospel in their own language (Acts 2:1-4,8,14-16).
The apostle's teaching is the foundation of the church. Andrew's was as much a part of that as Peter or Paul's (Ephesians 2:20).

2. He Baptized People Too. The result of gospel preaching is faith and baptism. That was the commission Jesus gave to Andrew and the other apostles (Mark 16:15-16). He helped convert souls to Jesus Christ.
3. He Performed Miracles. The purpose of miracles was to follow after and then walk along with the apostles to confirm that the message they spoke really was from God (Mark 16:17-18,20). Andrew had those same miraculous powers, and convinced many people of the truth of the gospel through them (Acts 2:43)
4. He Was An Example Of Personal Evangelism. After hearing Jesus and being convinced He was the Messiah, he first went out and got his brother Peter (John 1:40-42). Peter also believed.

Andrew may not have been as outspoken as Peter. There is no record of Andrew's sermons, but had it not been for him, Peter might have never become a disciple. We do have his letters. We do have his sermons. Although Andrew is not well-known to us, he did bring someone who became well-known, mighty in the Scripture, a bold and fearless preacher!!

We can take courage from his example... Not everyone can fill the pulpit and proclaim the word publically, but perhaps through your work of reaching the lost, someone will come to Christ who can do all those things!!

III. ANCIENT AND MODERN DAY ANDREWS

A. Andrew Was A Lot Like Many Of Us. Andrew appears to be a man much like the majority of those in the Lord's church.

1. He Was A Quieter Follower Of Jesus. But also one who acted. He was content to sit at Jesus' feet and learn and then convicted to stand and follow those truths. He was a humble man, content to accept his position in the Lord's work and take a back-seat to those more outspoken disciples, rather than wanting preeminence over the others because he had been with Jesus longer (Mark 9:41).
2. He Was Not Widely Known. You don't have to be a Bible scholar or great preacher to teach someone the truth that will save their soul. God has given to each of us an ability (Romans 12:3-8).
Don't be afraid because of your lack of ability... do what you can for the Lord with the ability you do have!! The greatest revival for Christ occurred when Jewish Christians had to leave Jerusalem and all went everywhere preaching the gospel (Acts 8:4).
3. Apparently Small Work Had Great Results. We might think Andrew did a small thing by bringing another to Christ... but that other one became a preacher of the gospel with great results.
Nothing ever done for the Lord is insignificant or unimportant (Zechariah 4:10; 1 Corinthians 1:27-29).
4. He Received The Same Reward As The Other Apostles. Our works may go unnoticed, unthanked, and unappreciated, but God will reward us in the end (Hebrews 6:10).

CONCLUSION: Andrew was a great apostle, a hero of faith, because Andrew accepted his place in God's plan and did the great and small works alike. Christ needs steady, dedicated disciples... like you!! God knows that if you are faithful in the small things, you are just as faithful as those who do the great ones (Luke 16:10). Do what **you** can for Christ (Romans 1:15)!!

MEN AND EMOTIONS

INTRO: The psalmist David said "I will praise thee for I am fearfully and wonderfully made" (Psalm 139:14). From the way our bodies function with their delicate balances... to the way our hearts and minds function, so different from animals or any of God's other creation.

Man's heart is an amazing thing... not the physical muscle which pumps blood to all parts of his body... but the heart which each of us has which can't even be seen or traced in any physical way.

- * The heart has an intellectual function. It is capable of thinking (Genesis 6:5), believing (Romans 10:10), and understanding (Matthew 13:15).
- * The heart has an emotional function. It is capable of feeling. It is able to love (Matthew 22:37), desire (Romans 10:1) and trust (Proverbs 3:5).
- * The heart possesses will power. It is capable of acting. It will purpose (2 Corinthians 9:7) and it can obey (Romans 6:17-18).

Our hearts are capable of thinking, feeling, and acting in accordance with what we feel we should and what we know we should. Therefore, we are responsible to control our hearts and not allow them to run wild!

We learn our responsibilities to God through our intellect, reading and studying God's word (2 Timothy 2:15) but then sometimes it takes a shock to arouse a person to his sense of responsibility. The shock does not produce faith or increase understanding, but it might arouse the emotions. We already know what we should do, but we are not doing it!

Sometimes the death of someone close, a close call of our own, hitting rock bottom, or some other shocking experience pierces to the depths of our hearts and makes us act on what we know we should do... It brings us to our senses!!

Notice some examples from God's word:

I. PETER AND HIS DENIAL OF JESUS

A. Peter Knew The Right Way. He knew it was a sin to lie... He knew it was cowardly to fail to be counted on the Lord's side... He recognized the error of taking an oath falsely... He knew it was a sin to curse (Matthew 26:69-74). His intellect told him that what he was doing was wrong even while he was doing it.

B. Peter Needed A Shock. And he got one. It took only one look from the Lord to prick his emotions and bring him to his senses to see what he had done (Luke 22:61-62). He remembered the Lord's prediction (Matthew 26:34). He remembered how Jesus told him that He would pray for Peter that after he did deny the Lord, he would regain his faith (Luke 22:31-33).

The weight of his transgression came crashing down on him and Peter was a changed man. His emotions brought him to his senses. You and I should remember that God's eyes are always watching us too (Proverbs 15:3). That truth should shock your emotions too!!

II. JUDAS AND HIS BETRAYAL OF JESUS

- A. **Judas Knew The Right Way.** He knew it was a sin to turn Jesus over to His enemies. Whether he thought they would find Jesus innocent of all the charges, or have them thrown out of court, he knew it was wrong to betray a friend. Maybe he somehow thought it would help Jesus' cause to be imprisoned and thus spark greater revolutionary action out of his disciples. How could he not know the right way after being with Jesus so long?? (Matthew 26:47-50)
- B. **Judas Got A Shock.** He saw that Jesus was condemned, but then it was too late to do anything about it (Matthew 27:1-5). It took the shock of seeing the consequences of his own conduct to make him realize the enormity of his sin. He could not bear that emotional pain -- he could have repented and changed, but instead he went out and hanged himself.

Many people have been brought to their senses by the consequences of evil conduct. An alcoholic sees his sin when he kills someone while behind the wheel of a car. A parent fails to attend all the worship services of the church and then regrets later his child's lack of respect for the Lord and His church. A husband or wife may show a lack of concern for the home and family life and then one day awaken to the realization that the home has been destroyed.

I hope that considering the lives of these men may be enough of a shock to awaken in you a greater effort to do something now about them!!

III. THE PRODIGAL SON

- A. **The Prodigal Knew The Right Way.** But like most of us he was tempted with the glamor of "the good life". He was willing to give up his relationship in the family... just give him what was his and he would be gone. He wasted it all (Luke 15:11-14). In his severe want and lack of substance he finally came to himself (Luke 15:15-17).
He had sinned and he knew it, against both his father and God (Luke 15:18).

- B. **The Prodigal Needed A Shock.** It wasn't until this boy hit rock bottom though, that he started to look up. Some of us are like that too. We are unwilling to consider the eternal destiny of our souls until we descend to the depths of sin. Any time though, that we sin and are separated from God, we have dropped as low as a man can fall.
We too need a shock to realize that we are depraved in the depths of sin.

CONCLUSION: These men didn't need to be taught anything about their sinful conduct... They knew what they were doing was wrong... They just needed their conscience to be awakened!!

God's word can do that for you (2 Timothy 3:16-17). When it reproves and corrects you, you must not turn a deaf ear!! It is touching your emotions and feelings and pointing you to God. God's word is trying to touch you... to break down your barriers and prick your heart... if you feel it, don't quiet your heart, let it lead you to do what is right (Acts 2:37-38). Then, like those on the day of Pentecost, you will gladly receive those words and be saved by them (Acts 2:41). My friend, what is your heart telling you to do right now??

THE JOY OF BEING A CHRISTIAN

INTRO: These are some very unhappy and depressing times for many. That seems strange when you consider all the advancements of this age, and the fact that so many have greater luxuries and privileges than ever before. Yet, in spite of all those advantages, life seems frustrating and worthless to many of us... it seems like such great vanity (Ecclesiastes 1:2-11).

At a time when everyone else is so miserable, a group of people stand out who are happy even in the midst of such turmoil and trouble... who have found the greatest joy out of the most simple of lives. Those people are Christians!! Some people have the idea that Christianity takes our joy away from us -- that's because they have never experienced Christianity!!

God has always intended for us to have the best of lives as we serve Him (John 10:10; 15:11). Joy is not just for the lucky people... it is what the kingdom of God is all about (Romans 14:17).

I. WHAT MAKES IT SO JOYOUS?

A. Sins Forgiven (Colossians 1:13-14). Sin is a weighty burden. Most people don't realize it, but sin is the source of all their problems. They try to escape themselves and the guilt they feel because of the sins they have committed. They try to escape through drugs, alcohol, promiscuous sex, and many of a number of different things. But those sins merely intensify the feeling of guilt and after it's all over, they must return to reality and still face themselves!!

In Christ, something is accomplished which otherwise never could be done. Those sins are forgiven... treated like they never happened! (Hebrews 8:10-12)

What greater joy can we have than to know that all the terrible things we have done have been completely forgotten and treated as though they never happened by God!!

B. Child Of God (1 John 3:1). God is the Creator of the universe... the eternal Father... the Almighty God... the Lord of Lords... and I am His son!! That makes me royalty!! If I endure to the end, then I will one day reign with Him (2 Timothy 2:12).

As a child of God I can reign with Christ, or as a child of the devil I can be a slave to him (Romans 6:16). How could sin ever make me truly happy? Yet, there is great joy in being a child of God!

C. Fellowship With God (1 John 1:3-4). It is wonderful to be in the company of someone rich and famous... it elevates our own self-worth in our eyes if we can be in fellowship with one such as that! How much more wonderful when our fellowship is with God??

When God created the world, He fashioned a garden where man and God could dwell together in fellowship with one another (Genesis 3:8). Because of sin all that was lost... yet there remains this great yearning in man's heart to renew that fellowship (Acts 17:25b-29).

The Christian's joy is full because he is sharing in that relationship which God always had planned between Him and man, which will ultimately be fully restored in heaven! (Revelation 21:22-26)

- D. **Clear Conscience (1 John 3:18-22).** That means a lot. The reason most people are so miserable is because we cannot live with ourselves. Our consciences convict us of right and wrong whether we have grown up "going to church" or not (Romans 2:14-15). There is an inborn knowledge in us of a system of right and wrong... men can sear their conscience (1 Timothy 4:2), but there is pain anyway!! Guilt and a defiled conscience are the main sources of mental health problems... We simply cannot live with ourselves!!

But when I become a Christian, a disciple of Jesus Christ, I know I have done what God wants me to instead of trying to find excuses not to do it (1 Peter 3:21-22). When I am baptized, my conscience is cleared, knowing that I have done exactly what God wants me to do and He has forgiven all the sins of which my conscience had condemned me!! My friend, you could have that too!!

- E. **Enjoy The Abundant Life (John 10:10).** Christians may not be "jet-setters", nor will you likely find Robin Leach in their homes filming a segment for "Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous". But a Christian's life is full, complete, lacking nothing and abounding in everything (Philippians 4:11-13,18).

My friend, you will never find a fuller, more rewarding life than the life of a Christian!!

CONCLUSION: Who tells you that you cannot be happy being a Christian? Certainly not a faithful Christian! Doesn't that tell you something? The only people you will hear telling you how unhappy Christianity will make you are backsliders, sinners, hypocrites, perverts, the ungodly and the cowardly!! Why would you listen to them in the first place (Revelation 21:8)?

My friend, there is no greater satisfaction or joy that you can get out of life than living the Christian life... I can guarantee that!! The only thing that remains is whether or not you can have enough faith to believe that. Do you? Come share in the joy!!

THE JUDGMENT DAY

INTRO: No law has ever been made without a penalty. The very nature of law is that it is not to be broken. Therefore, punishment is due to the person who disobeys. No human legislation has ever passed or enacted a law without also stating the penalty for the violation of it. Without a penalty there is no way to enforce the law.

It is no different with God's law. Citizens of this world are expected to abide by the laws He has established to govern us. If we do not we can expect to pay the consequences.

Courts in our land are set up to execute judgement on the offenders. But with those ~~who~~ who disobey God's laws there is no justice or court for sin here on earth. We are unable to judge one another fairly because we too are guilty of sin. Therefore, God has reserved a day to judge us through Jesus Christ who is best qualified to judge (Acts 17:30-31). He is best qualified because He has experienced humanity (Hebrews 4:15).

We will stand before the righteous judge whether we want to or not... so we need to take this seriously!

I. CERTAINTY

A. This Event Is Undeniable (Hebrews 9:27). Just as sure as Jesus died for our sins there will be a day of judgment. We become disillusioned because everything continues to go on as it always has. We develop a false sense of security... that the Lord really won't destroy the world and judge us (2 Peter 3:4,7).

There is no fooling ourselves... This day is coming! Yet, we can have comfort. God is not waiting for us to slip up and say "Aha! I gotcha!" The man who lives faithfully does not have to fear (1 John 4:17). There is confidence to be had.

II. WHO ARE THE DEFENDANTS?

A. This subject should interest us all because all of us will share in this event. No matter how different our lives are from one another, we will experience judgment! Each will stand before the righteous judge.

1. All Who Are In The Tombs (John 5:28-29). No one will escape, no one will get lost in the crowd, no one will be overlooked (Revelation 20:13). Even the sea will give up its dead.

Men will be resurrected in order to stand before the judgment throne of God -- the one who has the right and power to condemn.

2. The Saved And The Unsaved (1 Peter 4:17-18). Judgement will be just as fair and stern on believers as unbelievers. The Lord will not overlook our unforgiven sins just because we call ourselves Christians.

3. God Is No Respector Of Persons (Acts 10:34). He judges you by the same standard as me.

4. All Men Will Be Judged. But each will be judged individually. No one will stand beside us and help plead our case (Romans 14:11-12). To the unprepared man that will be a lonely and frightening time.

No one else will answer for our actions. Not father, mother, husband, wife, son, daughter, etc. I don't get to stand up as a character witness on your behalf nor do you on mine. Each individually stands before the judgment throne of God (2 Corinthians 5:10).

III. THE JUDGE

- A. **Christ Will Judge.** He is well qualified. He has experienced human desires and temptations and is living proof that they can be overcome. The Father has given the act of judging to His Son (John 5:22).
This judge cannot be bribed. He will not judge through prejudice. He is not a "hanging judge" nor is He the patsy that many make Him out to be. He is not so lenient as to let every one off easy... that would not be justice!
- B. **Gospel Will Be His Guide (John 12:48).** That is why study is so important. God's judgment is fair because He has given us a manual for our lives. It is understandable and easy to get. Therefore it is left up to us to take advantage of it.

IV. EVIDENCE ENTERED

- A. **Thoughts.** Judgment would not be fair if you or I were the final judge because we cannot know another's heart. But Christ will judge us by our thoughts because He knows them (1 Corinthians 4:5; John 2:24-25).
- B. **Words.** The very words which we speak will be judged. Thus, man's religion is vain if he cannot control his tongue (James 1:26).
All those dirty things we say... every time we gossip... every time we lie... all these will be taken into account and remembered (Matthew 12:36-37).
- C. **Actions.** Of Jesus' commandments He said "If you know these things you are blessed if you do them" (John 13:17). Judgment is based on our actions because they show a submission to God's word or rebellion to it.
- D. **Lack Of Action.** We will also be judged for what we have failed to do. Sin involves, not only a rebellion against a command, but also not obeying one God has given us... sins of omission and commission (Hebrews 2:3; James 4:17).

CONCLUSION: When we stand before God we will hear one of two verdicts (Matthew 25:34,41,46). There will be no suspended sentence, no chance for parole. There will be no appeal to a higher court... Who are you going to appeal to?

We will not stand before God to plead our case. That will have already been decided. We will stand before God to have sentence passed. We need to ready ourselves now to stand before God because we may stand before Him today!! If you are to stand before Him in a few minutes, what will your sentence be??

7-3-94

"SET YOUR HOUSE IN ORDER"

INTRO: Read 2 Kings 20:1-11

God's prophet came to King Hezekiah with a message -- that he was going to die. Because of Hezekiah's pleading God spared his life for another fifteen years.

God made an exception with this good king. He extended his life. Sometimes God might do that with some of us. About the time it looks like life should be over for us, He heals us and places us back in the mainstream of life. God may or may not extend our time like Hezekiah's... but that really doesn't matter anyway!

I. LIVING IN VIEW OF DEATH

A. **A Christian Lives In View Of Death.** His entire life is lived knowing that he is going to die and there will be something greater awaiting him after death (2 Corinthians 4:16-18).

He lives the way he does because he knows he is going to die!! And that is where he makes his preparations and reservations.

B. **Death Takes Something Away From Us.** But it also gives something to us that can never be taken away (Philippians 1:21-23). So although death is tragic for the Christian, he accepts it as a reality (Hebrews 9:27) and a necessity to be clothed gloriously and dwell with God in heaven (2 Corinthians 5:1-4).

II. SET YOUR HOUSE IN ORDER

A. **"Set Your House In Order".** Since death is a reality and necessity, therefore, we too, must set our house in order and make our preparations... and we need to do that now because it may just happen to you today!

Take care of all the loose ends of your life without any hesitation:

1. **Unforgiven Sins.** Any sin which still separates you from God needs to be forgiven and cleansed by the blood of Christ. If you die without doing that you cannot see God (Isaiah 59:1-2).

You have likely heard the message before and know that you must believe in Jesus, repent of your sins, and be baptized in water for the remission of your sins (Acts 2:38; 22:16). But you've not done it yet..... you need to "set your house in order"

Maybe there are sins you are too proud or stubborn to give up. They are not worth your soul if you should die (Acts 8:22-23).

2. **Rifts Between You And A Brother Or Sister.** Perhaps you have wronged another, or been wronged by another, either way, you need to immediately right the wrong (Matthew 5:23-24).

The bitterness that you take to either one's grave is a never-ending pain!! Settle it today!! "Set your house in order".

3. Get Rid Of Your Anger. Some of us hold on to anger until it leaves a painful, bitter taste in our mouths. You weren't supposed to let the sun go down on your wrath (Ephesians 4:26-27). You have already held it too long... let it go!!
Put it away today and replace it with love and forgiveness for that person (Ephesians 4:31-32). "Set your house in order" and don't wait until tomorrow to do it!
4. Make Up With Your Spouse. I'm not sure why, but if there is one person who we become angrier with than anyone else it is our spouse. Maybe you are purposefully sitting in different rooms in the house right now because you are not on speaking terms or just trying to make your point to one another.... look at one another right now and do something about it.
"Set your house in order" right now!! What a terrible thing it would be for death to take away your marriage partner while you were angry with one another and not allow you to say "I'm sorry" and "I love you". My friend, you cannot make up for that!! (Colossians 3:19).
5. Say The Kind Things You Have Been Meaning To Say. How regretful when someone leaves or dies and we no longer have a chance to say all the kind and loving words we intended to... then it is too late.
Do all the kindness you have longed to do now! Send flowers today while people are alive, don't wait until they die. Spend the day with someone who is healthy, don't wait until they are in their deathbed. "Set your house in order" so when your time comes to leave this world there is nothing regrettably lacking.

CONCLUSION: My friend, don't leave anything undone! Time's wasting!! Maybe you won't have a chance to do everything you want to do in this short life, but don't leave anything undone when you exit this world.

I'd like to invite you to come and worship with us today and begin setting your house in order and mending your broken relationship with God. Christ's invitation is always offered and our doors are open to assist you in whatever way we can!

THE CHURCH VERSUS DENOMINATIONS

INTRO: I have been preaching now for 8 years and must confess to you that there is something that I still don't understand. When I talk with most people they think that in matters of faith and religion "I'm OK, you're OK".... that we all have a right to our own beliefs and opinions about the Scriptures.... we are very tolerant of other faiths (unless one is a Jehovah's Witness, or Mormon, or Holy Roller, or member of the Church of Christ). Many people think the others are too weird and the Church of Christ is too restrictive and narrow-minded.

This is what I cannot understand -- if denominationalism is alright then we need to quit condemning any religious group... but if it is wrong, we need to put a lot of teaching to the test to see if it measures up (2 Corinthians 13:5).

The reason this is so important is because if God is not behind a church it has nothing to stand on and is doomed to be done away (Matthew 15:13; 7:21-23).

The simple and right course is for us to look at what the Bible says and then see if churches today are measuring up to that.

I. THE CHURCH COMPARED WITH DENOMINATIONS

A. Is There A Difference? Is there really a difference between the church Jesus established and all of today's denominations? Or are they part of the church Jesus set up?

1. The Church Was Built By Jesus (Matthew 16:18). All denominations were established by men looong after Jesus' church was established.
2. The Church Is Built On Christ (1 Corinthians 3:11). Denominations were all built on men, movements, or theories. They were established to protest something, or based upon some new revelation, or new truth supposedly discovered. Some of these denominations would never have existed if it were not for some distinctive doctrine on which they are built rather than Christ.
3. Jesus Built Only One Church (Matthew 16:18). He did not promise to build others. He has only one body (Ephesians 4:4; 1 Corinthians 12:20). Men have built many denominations. When they cannot find one which suits them, they build another. Very little restoration is done trying to get back completely to the church which Jesus built. We cannot keep adding more when Jesus built only one!
4. The Church Was Purchased With Jesus' Blood (Acts 20:28). He did not purchase denominations with His blood. He does not die again for them each time a new one is established and built.
5. Jesus Is The Head Of The Church (Colossians 1:18; Ephesians 1:20-23). Today, men serve as heads of various denominations -- they are popes, presidents, claimed apostles or prophets. These have the final authority of the church on earth. Jesus never delegated that kind of authority to any man (Matthew 20:20-28). in His church.

6. Jesus Christ Is The Lawgiver Of The Church (Matthew 28:18; James 4:12). Men give the laws which govern various different denominations. They get together in councils, synods, conventions and other groups of high ranking church officials and they revise, change, and vote on church by-laws. No man has that authority in Christ's church!
7. The Church Is Governed By The Word Of God (Acts 20:32; 2 John 9). Denominations follow man-made creeds. Creeds are books which give statements of a certain denomination's beliefs and bylaws which make them distinctive from all the others. The church which Jesus built uses no creed but the Bible.
8. Christ Is The Saviour Of The Church (Ephesians 5:23). He did not promise to save each successive church which would come on the scene after His was established. Therefore, it is not narrow-minded to say that all the saved are in the church (Acts 2:47; 1 Corinthians 1:2). Denominations claim to possess only some of the saved.
I honestly would like to believe that all of us are OK..... but the Bible won't let me, it won't support that belief!
9. The Church Which Jesus Built Began In Jerusalem About 33AD (Acts 2). All denominations have begun since that time at other places than the one which was prophesied (Isaiah 2:2-4; Daniel 2:44-45).

B. **Does It Make A Difference?** Does it really make a difference whether or not churches match these identifying marks? It sure does!! The church was not designed to be just some organization to take care of our spiritual needs, it is a haven of assurance and hope in the midst of a world gone wrong, filled with sin!
It makes a difference to God (2 Corinthians 13:5; 1 John 4:1).

CONCLUSION: We'd like to invite you to come and investigate the truth with us, here at the Harrodsburg Church of Christ. Now, you won't find any perfect people among us, but you will find people committed to walking by **only** the Bible.... and people who have had to give up a lot they once cherished to follow that ideal and become a Christian.

Won't you come and study with us? If you will drop us a little note we will be glad to mail you a little pamphlet on "The One True Church" which gives Scriptural references to help us determine what we should be looking for as we search for the Lord's church in the midst of all this religious confusion.

Mail that to Harrodsburg Church of Christ, 232 S. College St., Harrodsburg, KY 40330

NOBLE MEN

INTRO: What kind of people does the word "nobility" bring to your mind? Kings, queens, princes? What about the men and women of a town called "Berea". The men and women of Berea have gone down in history as being very high and noble-minded. Nothing more is known of them than the mere mention of them in Acts 17. The faces of these people still remain obscure. The only one we are introduced to is Sopater who was from Berea... and that not until later (Acts 20:4). Even then, nothing is said about him except for his name.

These unknown faces could be just like the faces of those listening to this message here today. Are we as noble as these people? What exactly is said about them? "These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether these things were so" (Acts 17:11).

What was it that made these people so memorable?

I. RECEIVED THE WORD OF GOD

A. They Received The Word Of God. They payed close attention, evaluated what was being said, realized it was God's word and took hold of it (Hebrews 2:1-4). They made it their own... They didn't just hear sermons, they took them home. They would not neglect this great salvation.

Once they received it, they also obeyed it (Acts 17:12). This was also said of those who "received the word" on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:41). They received the word of God for a number of reasons:

1. Because It Was The Word Of God. Not simply because they liked what was being said, or liked listening to the preaching or the preacher. They received it just because it was God's word (1 Thessalonians 2:13).
2. It Sustains Spiritual Growth. The nourishment necessary for spiritual growth comes from God's word (1 Peter 2:2). Any time you remain apart from periods of Bible study and instruction, you are being spiritually malnourished.
3. Able To Save Their Soul. There is no other way for a man to know how to be saved (Romans 1:16; James 1:21).

Are we noble enough to receive God's word no matter how much it disagrees with our lives or ideas? Do we walk away from each sermon more dedicated to God or unphased?

II. READY MINDS

A. They Were Eager To Learn God's Will. They wanted to then act on the truth and neither weakness nor prejudice would hold them back. They had one of the qualities necessary to enter the kingdom (Matthew 5:6).

Are we this ready minded or do we have to be coaxed and urged to obey God's will? Are we too slow to change?

1. After the people of Israel were restored to their land under the leadership of Ezra and Nehemiah, they had ready minds in regard to hearing the Law of Moses read. They are a wonderful example of people eager to hear God's word (Nehemiah 8:1-9).

- a. They asked him to read the law (8:1)
- b. All who could understand assembled (8:2)
- c. Read from early morning to midday (8:3)
- d. People were attentive (8:3)
- e. People stood at opening of book out of respect (8:5)
- f. Blessed God (8:6)
- g. Lifted hands, bowed heads, and worshipped (8:6)
- h. Wept at reading (8:9)

Are you too ready to hear, or are the Bereans more noble than you?

III. SEARCHED THE SCRIPTURES DAILY

- A. **They Searched The Scriptures.** They did not consult one another..... they did not ask their Rabbi (preacher)..... They simply opened the Scriptures and examined for themselves whether these words were so. They appealed to the Scriptures for very good reasons:
1. The scripture cannot be broken (John 10:35)
 2. The wisdom of God is higher than the wisdom of men (1 Corinthians 1:21-25).
 3. The words of men are vain (Matthew 15:9)
 4. They are profitable (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

- B. **They Searched The Scriptures Daily.** Do you spend much time reading and studying the Bible? The Bible contains the "words of life". If you don't study them, you won't know them.

There is a purpose for daily Bible study (2 Timothy 2:15). That purpose is stated here to show ourselves approved to God, so we don't have to be ashamed, so we can rightly divide the word of truth.

Make it a point to study your Bible daily. Use study aids when you can. Programs like "Message of Truth", our Dial-A-Bible-Moment program (734-2118). We also have many study guides on various topics which you might find beneficial, along with a correspondence course in which you can study the Bible in your own home for 8 lessons. Drop us a line if we can help you..... But most importantly, study your Bible daily!!

IV. SEARCHED WHETHER THESE THINGS WERE SO

- A. **They Took The Time** to understand what was being said and evaluate it. God commended them for being skeptical. You should be skeptical.... Don't accept what anyone tells you (not even me) unless you can read it in your Bible (1 John 4:1).

Too many good people have been led astray by false teachers who sound very good. They seem so sincere that we accept at face value what they say. My friend, that is dangerous (1 Thessalonians 5:21-22; 2 Corinthians 13:5).

CONCLUSION: Has the spirit of the Bereans died? We must seek for the truth at any expense.... not just look for convenient truth. If we are too lazy and don't have a proper love for the truth God will let us believe a lie and we be responsible for our own destruction (2 Thessalonians 2:10-12).

My friend, are you as noble as the Bereans? Do you even care?

HEAVEN AND HELL

* Remind of cassette tapes

INTRO: Jesus said "Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it" (Matthew 7:13-14).

Deny it all we want, but the Bible clearly teaches two eternal destinations for our undying souls. Every living person is traveling one of those two paths.

God offers man two choices (Deuteronomy 30:19). We can either live according to His commands, in fellowship with Him now and ultimately enter into His presence forever in heaven... or... live according to our own will, separated from Him in our sins, and ultimately leave His presence forever in hell!! Actually, God is not unloving or unjust to send any souls to hell. We make the choice and we must live with the consequences if we choose not to live with Him eternally!!

The Bible describes both heaven and hell. Understand that in these descriptions God is describing spiritual places and realms with physical terms which are familiar to our five senses.... He could not describe it in any other way and have us understand. Yet, that fact does not detract from the ecstasy of heaven or the horror of hell.

I. HEAVEN

A. Heaven Is Depicted As A Wonderful Place. Words cannot adequately describe the beauty, glory, and splendor of heaven. Even the Bible's descriptions must surely pale in comparison to what we will actually see there.

1. Jesus Promised His Disciples A Mansion (John 14:1-3). It is there within God's own house.... a place where we will always be in His presence.
2. Heaven Is A Prepared Place For A Prepared People. You will not stumble into heaven or "get lucky" and find yourself there. We must daily live in view of eternity if we are to hear Jesus say "Come ye blessed of my Father..." (Matthew 25:34-40).
3. Heaven Is More Splendid Than The Most Magnificent Place Man Can Imagine. I would say that you have possibly seen some beautiful and marvelous places in your travels.... But you have never seen anything like heaven!! It is a place of eternal life, where the pain of death and separation will never again be felt, and the tears we shed in this life will be dried up (Revelation 21:4).
4. Heaven Holds A Better And Enduring Substance (Hebrews 10:34; 11:16). Whatever treasures this world offers, heaven has greater treasures which cannot be destroyed nor taken away (Matthew 6:19-20).
5. Heaven Holds An Incorruptible Inheritance For Us (1 Peter 1:3-4). No words can describe heaven's glory any greater than those of the apostle John who was permitted a view of it (Revelation 21-22).

Heaven is not the product of some man's fantasy. It stands as a testimonial of God's love for man.... and as a foundation on which our hope of eternal life can rest.

II. HELL

A. **Hell Is A Horribly Unpleasant Place.** It is an unpopular subject, but just as certainly as heaven exists, its counterpart hell also exists! Satan doesn't want us to believe in hell because he wants us there with him (cf. Matthew 25:41). God does want us to believe in hell so we can be warned and beware of its curse.

Regardless of our inability to understand how God can reconcile His wrath with His love, He does (Romans 11:22)!!

1. **Hell Is Worse Than The Worst Place Man Can Imagine.** It is a place of eternal torment, which will never cease nor relax its intensity. (Matthew 25:41,46).
2. **Hell Will Be Filled With Everlasting Shame** (Daniel 12:2). Who there will be able to lift his head with pride? Who can boast of any accomplishment in this world?
3. **Hell Is A Furnace Of Fire** (Matthew 13:49-50). The apostle John, speaking of the eternal state of the wicked, described it as a lake of fire and brimstone (Revelation 20:11-15; 21:8).
Many today scoff at the idea of "fire and brimstone", but so did the people of Sodom (Genesis 19:13-14) and God destroyed every one of them with it (Genesis 19:24-25)!
4. **Hell Is A Place Of Desolation.** With decayed souls cast upon the rotting spiritual garbage heap, where the worm dies not (Mark 9: 43-48). In hell is the doom of "outer darkness", totally void of God and anything pertaining to the light of God (Matthew 25:30; 2 Peter 2:17).
5. **Hell Is A Place To Share With Satan And His Sinister Band Of Fallen Angels** (Matthew 25:46; Jude 6), and all the vile, ruthless, wicked human beings who have ever lived (1 Corinthians 6:9-11).
6. **Hell Is A Place....** where the greatest blessing and only comfort would be a complete extinction, to rest from the pain and torment. But there will be no such reprieve!!

CONCLUSION: Personally, I don't like to think about hell, but I do so, so that I will always fear what my unbelief and disobedience to God will bring me.

We don't have to believe in heaven or hell.... but that will not make them any less real! There is a heaven and there is a hell, therefore we can either live to be saved or live to be lost. The choice is yours, my friend!

God is "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9). Won't you prepare for life in heaven (see John 8:24; Romans 10:9-10; Acts 2:38; Mark 16:16).