

IS ANY MAN TOO EVIL FOR GOD TO SAVE?

\* Dial-A-Bible-Moment

**INTRO:** Dear listener.... are you a sinner? Do you feel that your sins are too great, too black to ever be washed clean? Are you burdened and weighed down with your unworthiness? Have you reluctantly conceded your soul to Satan, convinced that God cannot save you as vile as you are? Then brother..... have I got a Savior to tell you about!!

Jesus came into the world to seek and save the lost, not the righteous (Matthew 9:12-13). He came to save men who were guilty of sin!! Is any sin too horrible to be forgiven? (Isaiah 1:18)

Jesus pleads gently, calling the broken and lost back to Himself (Matthew 11:28-30). His gentle, yet strong touch, can heal the beaten and bruised and nurse you back to health. He gives up on no one, but will patiently fan the smoking candle to flame again, rather than dousing it and giving up on it (Matthew 12:20).

Jesus is the good shepherd who hazards every danger to find the sheep who has strayed so far away from the flock and rejoices with the angels in heaven over the one sinner who needs repentance and salvation, more than those who are already safe in the Master's fold (Luke 15:1-7).

**I. IS ANY MAN TOO EVIL FOR GOD TO SAVE?**

**A. Are You Living An Immoral Life?** Are you a homosexual, adulterer, thief, or drunkard? God forgives men such as these who repent and turn to Him (1 Corinthians 6:9-11).

**B. Have You Killed Christians?** Saul of Tarsus persecuted the church and killed Christians and God saved him (Acts 8:3; 9:1-2; 1 Corinthians 15:9-10).

**C. Have You Done Anything So Terrible As Crucifying God's Own Son?** God saved those men on the day of Pentecost who crucified His Son. Peter convicted them of their sin -- slaying the one Son of God sent to save them from their sins (Acts 2:36).

These people were desperate.... they knew of their guilt and that Jesus was the only way anyone could be saved. They wanted to know if there was anything they could do to remove this guilt from their souls (Acts 2:37). Peter gave them hope through simple submission to Christ and obedience to His will (Acts 2:38-41).

**II. IS ANY MAN WORTHY OF SALVATION?**

**A. God Loves Us Even Though We Are Unloveable.** The secret of God's love is not in that we are great, but that He is great!! My friend, God loves you no matter what your life is like (Romans 8:35-39).

**B. Do You Feel Unworthy Of Salvation?** Who is worthy? Take courage.... because the man who is humbled and brought down low by the load of his sins is the very one of whom God's kingdom is made!! "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:3; cf. Psalm 51:16-17; James 4:6,10).

1. Woman Who Washed Jesus' Feet (Luke 7:36-50). She loved Jesus much because He had forgiven her of much. He was the one person in the world who still recognized her worth in the midst of her sinfulness.

Even though Simon scorned and looked down on her, Jesus recognized in her a precious soul worth saving!! Dear listener, He can forgive you too of much sin!!

2. The Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32). He had to hit "rock bottom" before he ever looked up. And when he finally "came to his senses" and decided he wanted to humbly return, His father received him joyously, with open arms.

Friend, the Father is waiting for you too!!

**CONCLUSION:** Shake yourself out of despondancy. Seek after God and even you can be saved!!

God has mercy and grace enough to take the vilest sinner and wash him as white as snow. You can be saved in the same way as Saul the Christian-killer and the Christ-killers on the day of Pentecost.

They both believed that Jesus was the Son of God (Acts 22:6-8,10; 2:37). They both repented of the sins they committed (Acts 9:9,11; 2:38). They both were baptized to wash away the guilt of every sin and iniquity they had committed (Acts 22:16; 2:38).

My friend, what keeps you from leaving the shackles of sin and being washed in the blood of Christ today?

My friend, if you are searching for God now, let me send you a little tract entitled "What Must I Do To Be Saved?" You need to know and you don't need to wait. Write to me: Rob Harbison, Harrodsburg Church of Christ, 232 S. College St., Harrodsburg, KY 40330. I will send it to you immediately.... It will cost you nothing, but if you don't do something about the sin in your life, it will cost you your soul!!

10-7-94

IS ANY MAN TOO GOOD FOR GOD TO SAVE?

- \* Remind about taped messages
- \* Dial-A-Bible-Moment

**INTRO:** I believe that the majority of the listeners of this program are good people.... I have met many of you in the six months that we have been here and am very impressed with how kind, gentle, and generous you are. It is a fine thing to have a community of moral men and women making up the populace of Harrodsburg. All this makes a pleasant community in life.... but what kind of preparation is that for the community after life?

It is noble for a man to choose to be honest, pay his debts, treat his wife and children well, be a good citizen and keep out of jail, and to help the poor when he comes in contact with their need. That is a wonderful type of life to live.... but the question is "Can morality save us?"

Jesus met a man like that one time and was so enamored with him that the Bible says "He loved him" (Mark 10:17-21a). That kind of man is a special person and Jesus truly appreciates such a man.... but that does not make him a saved man (Mark 10:21b-27)!

Last week we asked the question "Is any man too evil for God to save?" The answer was a relief -- No! This week we need to ask the question "Is any man too good for God to save?" Is any man so good that He doesn't need to come to God through the blood of Christ? Listen carefully for the answer to that question.... because, my friend, this may be about you!!

**I. A MORAL MAN (CORNELIUS)**

**A. Cornelius.** The Bible relates the story of the salvation of a moral man for the benefit of those who already live such a life. Cornelius was such a man. Notice his wonderful qualities:

1. A devout man (10:2).
2. Feared God with all his household (10:2).
3. Gave alms generously to the people (10:2).
4. Prayed to God always (10:2).
5. Had a good reputation among all the nation of the Jews (10:22). That is quite a statement about his piety, realizing the hatred and evil feeling the Jews had toward Gentiles.
6. Influenced his relatives and friends to listen to God's word (10:24)
7. He wanted to hear everything God and His messengers had to say (10:33).

Does this sound like a man who needs saving? This sounds like the best of moral men!!

**B. He Needed Something Else.** He needed to hear "words by which he and his household would be saved" (Acts 11:14) the angel told him. What were these words? Words about Jesus and the command of the apostle to be baptized. He needed to believe in Jesus Christ (10:43).... He needed to fear God and work righteousness (10:34-35).... and he needed to be baptized in the name of the Lord (10:47-48).... because until he had done all those things he was not saved!!

## II. A MORAL MAN (YOU)

**A. Maybe You Are A Mason.** You don't get to be a Mason by being cruel, heartless, and selfish. You are invited to become a Mason because of your good character and charitable nature. The Lodge is a fraternal, social, benevolent organization (it is religious too even though many don't realize that).

You are undoubtedly a fine person..... but Christ came to establish the church, not the lodge (Matthew 16:18; 1 Corinthians 3:11). It was never said of a Lodge that Jesus gave up His life for it (Ephesians 5:25), or that He purchased it with His own blood (Acts 20:28).

Being a member of a Lodge can never help your standing before God.... since it is a religious organization too of a different nature it will hinder your standing before God.

**B. Maybe You Go To Church.** And by going to church every Sunday you are sure that makes you a better person, more moral and acceptable to God. But just going to church weekly is not enough to save anyone. Some people like that will be surprised on the judgment day to find out that wasn't sufficient (Matthew 7:21-23).

**C. Maybe You Don't Do Bad Things.** That is commendable.... I wish more people were like that, then the world would be a better place. But those things that you do not do is only part of Christianity. The other part is what you do!! (James 4:17; Hebrews 5:8-9).

Many think that morality is living by the "Ten Commandments". The rich young ruler lived by those, but that wasn't enough. We cannot live again under a system of "thou shalt" and "thou shalt not" because all that system can do is condemn and never justify (Galatians 3:21-25). We are no longer under a law like Moses' because now we have come to Christ.

**D. Can A Good Man Be Saved Outside Of Christ?** In the middle of this discussion, someone will say:

1. "There are as good of men outside the church as in it". Granted!! But it is a matter of being saved by the blood of Christ, not by our own goodness (Ephesians 2:8-10). Those in the church aren't there because they are better than you, but because they are forgiven and have entered a new life with Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17; Romans 6:3-7).
2. "I am better than some in the church". And you are worse than some not in the church.... what's the point? What difference does that make?
3. "I had a good mother. She went to church for all of us and had enough faith for all of us". I am happy to hear that she was such a wonderful woman. Unfortunately, we will all be judged by our own lives (2 Corinthians 5:10).

**CONCLUSION:** Is any man too good for God to save? Hardly... We all need the salvation that only God can provide (Romans 3:23; 6:23).

Is anyone lost anymore? We don't act like it. Moral men will be lost... good men will die and go to hell.... because only through Jesus Christ can we come to God (John 14:6). Please contact us if we can assist you in setting your life right with God!!

THREE TYPES OF BELIEVERS*\*Baptism - Separation from World*

**INTRO:** Faith is the heartbeat of spiritual life. Without it, that life shrivels up and quickly slips into spiritual death. Jesus said "I said therefore to you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am He, ye shall die in your sins" (John 8:24). Without faith, no man can ever please God (Hebrews 11:6).

Many people believe in God and His Son. That is wonderful!! I meet people every day who believe that Jesus is God's Son. But not all believers are alike. Actually, there are some believers that God cannot accept!!

Let's take time to consider three different kinds of believers.

**I. BELIEVE BUT DO NOT DO**

**A. Some People Believe But Do Nothing About It.** Belief brings no changes into their lives. They never worship God on His day.... never open the pages of their Bible.... and are not made any better people by the lessons they hear. Are you such a person?

Such people say "I know what I am doing", "I've not fallen away completely, I still believe", "Me and the Lord have our own little thing going and He understands". But all of this is wishful thinking!!

1. Faith Involves Acting On What You Believe. Real faith goes a step far beyond mere belief (James 2:19,24,26). Note some prime examples of men who believed but did nothing about it... and consider "What was the condition of their soul?"
  - a. Felix (Acts 24:24-25)
  - b. Agrippa (Acts 26:27-28)
  - c. Jewish Rulers (John 12:42-43)
2. The Bible Admonishes Us.... to "be doers of the word and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves" (James 1:22). Have you deceived yourself?

**II. BELIEVE BUT DO WRONG THING**

**A. Some People Believe And Work But It Is The Wrong Thing.** Believing God and doing something for Him is commendable. But if those things are not commanded by God and acceptable, then they are worthless. Doing exactly what God said is important (Matthew 7:21-23).

1. Many People Work Very Zealously For What They Believe.... but if that belief is wrong, naturally, the practice will be wrong (as good as the intentions were). The Jews were very enthusiastic about their own system of righteousness, but showed little interest in God's (Romans 10:2-3).

Although satisfactory to us, sincerity and enthusiasm, are not enough to save a man. Think about the zeal and sincerity of Saul of Tarsus who persecuted Christians because of his belief and convictions (Acts 8:3-4; 9:1; 26:9). Was he justified in his belief?

2. Believing And Practicing Error Is Destructive To One's Soul (2 Thessalonians 2:10-12). Are you practicing and believing truth?

### III. BELIEVE AND DO RIGHT

A. **Some People Believe The Truth And Do The Right Thing.** The Bible teaches salvation by grace (Ephesians 2:8), faith (Ephesians 2:8; Romans 5:1), and works (James 2:21-22,24). Neither teaching is opposed to either of the others. Rather each doctrine complements the others. Therefore it is important to believe and obey the truth (Galatians 5:6).

1. When The Church Was First Established It Was Comprised Of This Kind Of Believer. When the Jews on the day of Pentecost heard the preaching about the resurrection of Christ they believed and were pricked in their hearts (Acts 2:36-37). They immediately inquired what they must do, and Peter answered "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins" (Acts 2:38). Those who believed and gladly received his word were baptized (Acts 2:41).

**CONCLUSION:** The faith which saves is the faith which obeys. My friend, are you a believer? Then what type of believer are you?

It really does matter.... Look very closely and honestly.... The consequences are eternal!!

REMEMBER NOW YOUR CREATOR

\* Remind of DABM (Lessons on Sermon on Mount)

**INTRO:** Some of the best words of advice for young men and women are found in one of the obscure books of the Old Testament -- the book of Ecclesiastes (Ecclesiastes 12:1).

Youth is a critically important time in a person's life.... perhaps the most important time!! The course of a young person's life is charted as he/she chooses consciously or unconsciously, the direction for his life to travel.

Youth is a wonderful time.... but also a difficult one.... and the Bible has a lot to say to young men and women alike.

### I. YOUTH IS A TIME TO ENJOY

**A. Youth Is A Time To Enjoy.** God has never asked anyone to live a miserable, uneventful life. Such has no spiritual advantage. God wants the young to relish life (Ecclesiastes 11:9). Many things in this life appeal to the young. God knows that and wants you to enjoy life, seek adventure, and meet challenges. But He also warns of the consequences of wrong decisions in the completion of that earlier quotation "... but know that for all these things God will bring you into judgment".

### II. YOUTH IS A TIME TO REMEMBER

**A. Youth Is A Time To Remember.** "Remember now your Creator...", because what we do as young adults shapes our lives and maps out the direction we will travel through the years. Young people, if you do not follow God now, you will not likely seek Him later.

Remember God with the strength of your youth, because those who have lived only to gratify themselves look back on their youth with remorse and regret, wishing they had chosen the path of right, only finding it too late to undo the damage (cf. Ecclesiastes 2:10-11).

### III. YOUTH IS A TIME TO OBEY PARENTS

**A. Youth Is A Time To Obey Parents.** As difficult as it may be, the Bible teaches children to obey their parents (Ephesians 6:1-3).

Parents do not punish you and deny you certain things because they hate you, but to keep you from having to learn the difficult lessons of life they faced. Such discipline is necessary, as even God so chastens us for our benefit (Hebrews 12:11). Give your parents credit for their love, concern, and smarts.

### IV. YOUTH IS A TIME TO LISTEN AND LEARN

**A. Youth Is A Time To Listen And Learn.** You have ideas. You are quick to speak them. Perhaps you are right... but don't be so presumptuous. We must first show respect to our elders and listen.

A young man named Elihu, bubbling over with answers to questions Job and his three friends were asking, held his opinions to himself until the older men had spoken (Job 32:4-13). We must all be "swift to hear, slow to speak...." (James 1:19). The worst thing either generation can do is to tune out the other one!! Young people should listen and learn from the voice of experience. Then, the older generation should listen to the young!!

V. YOUTH IS A TIME TO SET GOALS

A. **Youth Is A Time To Set Goals.** Success in any aspect of life is the result of setting some kind of goals. Youth is a critical time, because it is the time when we choose the direction for our lives. Once you have chosen that course, set some goals for yourself and work hard toward that end.

Don't forget God and His Son in those goals (Colossians 3:1-2).

VI. YOUTH IS A TIME WHICH WILL PASS AWAY SOON

A. **Youth Is A Time Which Will Pass Away Soon.** Ready yourself now to take on "real life". Seek God's help while He can be found. The way adults view you depends very much on what you show them you can be (1 Timothy 4:12).

**CONCLUSION:** I love you and am pulling for you... Don't forget God! If you are listening this morning or you know of some young person who could benefit from it, I would like to send you free of charge a little booklet entitled "The Three R's Of Youth". It is a booklet I wrote for young people a couple of years ago and if it can help one young person make it through this difficult time and be faithful to God, it will be well worth the time spent.

Send a note to me: Rob Harbison c/o Harrodsburg Church of Christ  
232 S. College St. Harrodsburg, KY 40330. Or call our Dial-A-Bible-Moment message at 734-2118 and leave me a message.

God bless you.... and hang in there!!



## SIMPLE NEW TESTAMENT CHRISTIANITY

\* Remind about DABM (Sermon on the Mount tapes)

**INTRO:** Many people are apprehensive and cynical about organized religion... perhaps you are one of them. Shamefully, the religious world is one big divided entity with professed Christians going every conceivable way, claiming each way leads to Christ. But Christ said that there are only two ways (Matthew 7:12-14).

We boast of the many different denominations we have to choose from. There is one to suit the taste of everyone. Such is an empty boast! The word "denomination" means a fraction or division, which is clearly condemned by the Bible (1 Corinthians 1:10).

In an increasingly complicated world, the simplicity of Christianity is a refreshing deviation. God did not make the gospel simple to attract simpletons, but so that every man, woman, and child could understand His will easily and become His disciple (John 1:12).

Most everything about Christianity is uncomplicated and elementary.

### **I. SIMPLICITY OF WORSHIP**

**A. Worship.** The worship of New Testament Christians was designed so simple that everyone could participate, not just the multi-talented. Early Christians set aside one special day, Sunday, in commemoration of Jesus' resurrection, along with other special meetings during the week (1 Corinthians 16:2; Acts 20:7; 12:12).

They sang spiritual songs to praise God and admonish one another, needing no musical instruments, which few could play anyway, but all plucked the strings of their hearts (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16; James 5:13).

They lifted up holy hands praying together (1 Timothy 2:1,8; Acts 1:14; 12:12).. They met at the Lord's table to break bread and drink the fruit of the vine to remember Christ's death, proclaim it, and anxiously await His return (1 Corinthians 11:23-29), and while assembled on the Lord's Day, they took up a collection (1 Corinthians 16:1-2).

### **II. SIMPLICITY OF ORGANIZATION**

**A. Organization.** The organization of each functioning local unit of the church was uncomplicated. Each congregation was subject to its own leaders, independent of any other church or higher supervising authorities. Elders ruled every church, where qualified men could be found and appointed (Acts 14:23; 1 Timothy 3:1-8; 1 Peter 5:1-4; Titus 1:5).

Deacons were appointed, caring for the needy and serving the needs of the church (1 Timothy 3:10-13; Acts 6:1-6). Christ kept the organization of His church simple so it would be remembered that He was its head, and so the entire church would never be threatened by any corruption or apostacy from those at the top!!

### **III. SIMPLICITY OF WORK**

**A. Work.** The work of the early church was also simple and unassuming. They were to spread the message of Jesus (Acts 8:4), take care of one

another (Acts 2:44-45; 4:34-35), and spiritually uplift one another (Ephesians 4:16). Their goal was not to feed the hungry of the world, care for the nation's indigents (as worthy as those goals are), or build impressive temples and architectural structures. Their goal was to "seek and save that which is lost" (Luke 19:10), just like their Master had done.

They sent out missionaries and evangelists to preach, and using such simple, yet dedicated, methods they evangelized the whole world (Colossians 1:23).

#### IV. SIMPLICITY OF LIFE

A. **Lives Of Its People.** What about the personal lives of these people? They stood out from all the rest, identified as those of "the way" (Acts 9:2; etc.). They were godly, did what they personally could for the poor and needy (James 1:27; Galatians 6:10), and encouraged one another. Their worship was not overly pretentious, but designed to please God and spiritually edify one another. They just tried to be servants of God in every aspect of their lives.

So you say "I am doing that!". Then don't do it alone! Seek us out and join with other committed people, as a unified force for Christ in Harrodsburg. Becoming a Christian does not make you part of some big religious conglomerate, it makes you part of the body of Christ..... each Christian being a different part of the Lord's body (1 Corinthians 12:22-27).

Each had his own work, but also a responsibility to work together with other members of the body (Ephesians 4:16).

**CONCLUSION:** Are you looking for a plain, simple group of Jesus' disciples who accept God's plans for us and the church without adding to or taking from them? Then visit us this morning at the Harrodsburg Church of Christ. We meet at the corner of College and Office Streets in the middle of Harrodsburg and will count you an honored guest to visit with us.

You've been thinking about coming sometime.... why not this morning? Thanks for listening, and tune in again next week.

## THE BOOK OF REVELATION

**INTRO:** Most religious conversations these days ultimately lead to a discussion of the Book of Revelation. Why? Perhaps because of its mystery and science-fiction type scenario or maybe our "special effects" mentality. Talk turns to the famines, earthquakes, and wars blanketing the globe as evidenced daily on the 6:00 news. Fears surface concerning the dreaded number 666, the Mark of the Beast, and the Battle of Armageddon.

Many people know just enough about the Revelation of John to be confused, and to hamper a legitimate study of its contents. When people talk about the Book of Revelation, their minds leave reality and travel to another world. Our challenge is to bring them back and rationally discuss the meaning of this book.

A few basics, which the book tells us about itself, will be helpful in your study and understanding of the book:

### **I. GUIDELINES FOR STUDY**

**A. Revelation Is Written In Symbols (1:1).** The message was "signified" ('to give a sign.... expressing by signs' W.E.Vine, p.1043). It was put in symbols and given to the apostle John to relate. Any claim that most of the book is literal is a direct contradiction of the book's own explanation of itself!! The same people who demand that the 1000 years (20:1f) be interpreted literally, deny the reference to tribulation for 10 days to be literal (2:10).

On what basis can they be consistent and do that?

**B. Revelation Discusses Events To Take Place Shortly After They Were Written (1:1,3; 22:6-10).** The book begins and ends noting its depiction of impending events, not events 2000 years into the future (in our present generation as so many are claiming). When John the Baptist and Jesus came preaching the kingdom of God was "at hand", they meant that people listening to them would see its coming (Matthew 3:1-2; 4:17; 16:28).

However we understand the book, we must accept John's time element! Notice a similar prophecy:

1. Daniel received a vision in 550BC (Daniel 8:1) which was historically fulfilled in 164BC (Daniel 8:13-14). He was told to "shut up the vision; for it belongeth to many days to come" (Daniel 8:26). If God considered 400 years to be a long way off, what about the fulfillment of those events which must shortly take place?

**C. Revelation Was Written To The People Of John's Day (1:4).** What did the book mean to them? If it spoke of the 20th or 21st centuries it meant **absolutely nothing** to them! John transcribed his heavenly vision for the seven churches of Asia. Its promises and blessings were for those who overcame what they were presently facing (cf. 2:7,11,17,27-28, 3:5,12,21; etc.).

**D. Revelation Teaches That Jesus Christ Is Reigning Now (1:5,9; 17:14; 19:11-16).** Most religious people believe that Revelation depicts

life on the earth before and during Jesus' future thousand year reign on earth. The book plainly teaches that His kingdom is **already** in existence and we are partakers with Him (1:5,9; 19:15-16). This is consistent with the teaching of the rest of the New Testament (Matthew 28:18; Ephesians 1:20-23; Colossians 1:13; etc.).

- E. **Revelation Depicts The Avenging Of The Saints (6:9-11; 7:13-14; 16:5-7; 17:6; 18:20,24; 19:2; 20:4).** This is the primary message of the book. The saints will be vindicated though presently persecuted, whereas the enemies of Christianity will be destroyed because they oppose it. Revelation teaches that Satan and evil sometimes have the upper hand, but Christ will win the battle and reward those who overcome.
- F. **Revelation Depicts The Spiritual Realm (21:5).** John saw the spirit world. He saw God, Jesus, and the martyred saints. He saw Satan, angels, and others which man in the physical realm cannot see (see 1:10). He was told to write about all those spiritual things with physical symbols and words. Is it any wonder that Revelation is written in the style it is?
- G. **Revelation Does Not Conflict With Any Other Bible Teaching (22:18-19).** Without a doubt, Revelation is a highly speculative book, but one thing must be remembered -- no one can attach any meaning to any symbol which is inconsistent with the rest of the Bible.
  - 1. The claim that Jesus is not presently reigning is opposed to Bible teaching (cf. Ephesians 1:20-23).
  - 2. The claim that these events depict the return of Christ are likewise inconsistent with the rest of Scripture (cf. 2 Peter 3:10-12).

**CONCLUSION:** The message of Revelation is comforting in the midst of trials. Don't overlook it because of its difficulty. It, more than any other book, can inspire hope in troubled times.

But at the same time, don't get so caught up in what everybody is saying about it and today's events, that you lose sight of what the book is really about.

TO WHAT ARE YOU A PRISONER?

**INTRO:** You are a citizen of "the land of the free and the home of the brave"... but are you a free man or a captive? We take great pride in our freedom in these United States, but does that very freedom hold us a prisoner?

Jesus told His Jewish countrymen "And you shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free" (John 8:32). They were insulted, "We are Abraham's descendants, and have never been in bondage to anyone" (John 8:33). That sounds like a typical response from an American too. Yet these people were in bondage, "Most assuredly I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave of sin" (John 8:34).

We too can be enslaved by any number of things!

**I. TO WHAT ARE YOU A PRISONER?**

- A. Sin?** Are you a prisoner to sin? All men sin, but does sin reign in your body (Romans 6:16)? Is your life lived with the world or apart from it (Romans 12:2)? Is there some vice or sin that you just cannot give up?

Such organizations as Alcoholics Anonymous and Gamblers Anonymous exist because of the reality that such sins can put strangleholds on us. What sin enslaves you? Covetousness? Greed? Hatred? Are you a prisoner of sin?

- B. Worry?** It burdens us with a crippling weight and confines us to the cramped cell of fear. Worry locks the door of hope and throws away the key. It has been termed "the gravedigger which digs an untimely grave".

Worry confines us and not does allow us to freely "walk by faith" because worry is evidence of "little faith" (Matthew 6:30-31). Are you a prisoner of worry?

- C. Discouragement?** "Man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward" (Job 5:7). The feelings of a despondant Job are the sentiments of many people today too.

Life's inequities discourage us so we withdraw into our shells, and thus become prisoners of our own depression. We cut off our ties with others and become captives of our own feelings!

Discouragement is a ball and chain, therefore, a hindrance to our race (Hebrews 12:1). Jesus endured the cross because of the "joy" that was set before Him (Hebrews 12:2). Are you a prisoner of discouragement?

- D. Selfishness?** A selfish individual is a slave to himself!! Selfishness barricades you inside yourself.... giving up yourself opens up your world and frees you from yourself (which may be the mightiest captor of all).

Many think they are their own master, making their own rules.... Actually, such people are their own slaves!! (2 Peter 2:19)

Selfishness builds thicker prison walls from the inside! The man who is selfish constructs his own "solitary confinement". Are you a prisoner of selfishness??

E. **Pride?** Pride chains you to misconceptions about yourself and you are never free to see the truth. It shackles us to our weaknesses and sins. Pride keeps us from ever growing or breaking loose from our sins and faults.

Many people hold tenaciously to their pride..... Pride is not your strength, it is your impregnable prison wall!!! "Pride goes before destruction" (Proverbs 16:18). Are you a prisoner of pride?

*they will allow their entire world to be destroyed because they are too proud to admit they are wrong. I have seen people in tears who refuse to say sorry because they are wrong.*

**CONCLUSION:** We all make our own prisons. None are inescapable though unless we refuse to leave them.... and leave them we must to be free (John 8:35-36).

Are you a free man or a prisoner (2 Peter 2:19)? If you are a slave to anything, then be sure you are a slave of Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 7:22).

You can become a servant of God by believing in Jesus, confessing that faith, and being baptized into Christ and becoming a new man having repented of your sins, then giving your life over to God to serve Him (Romans 6:4-18).

My friend, which master will you choose?

## JESUS' PLEA FOR RELIGIOUS UNITY

**INTRO:** The religious world is in a shambles. Division and dissension exist in every town in our nation, including this one!! People boasting allegiance to Jesus Christ meet at opposite corners of the street because of discrepancies in practice and belief.

Many people praise this predicament, and are pleased that we can choose from so many different churches and faiths. Therefore, everyone can choose a church which suits him. Is this the way it should be? More importantly, is this the way Jesus wants it to be?

### **I. WHAT DOES JESUS WANT?**

**A. How Would Jesus React....** if He entered the world today and witnessed the division among those who claim to follow Him? Wouldn't His heart be torn apart? Before His death, Jesus prayed for the unity of believers (John 17:20-21).

**B. Jesus Wants United Followers...** to the same extent that He and His Father are one (John 17:11,21). In what sense are the Father and Son one? Does the Father teach something opposed to the doctrine of the Son? Does the practice of the Son contradict that of the Father (John 5:30; 12:49-50).

If not, then how can we honestly affirm that such division among Jesus' followers is acceptable?

### **II. IS THIS WHAT WE HAVE?**

**A. Is This Unity Of The Father And Son....** a characteristic of denominationalism? Not at all!!! The word "denomination" itself signifies division!!

Each denomination contradicts the other, which is exactly the reason why each one exists separate from the others!! Denominationalism destroys unity and accord.

**B. Many, Recognizing The Discord....** among various religious groups, have proposed a "unity-in-diversity" plan to attain union. They propose a plan to combine those of different religious persuasions and beliefs into a "melting pot", thus establishing a "united church".

But how can different religious groups, which teach a multitude of different doctrines concerning any Bible subject, be united?

1. Can those who practice infant baptism be united with those who practice baptism for believing, penitent adults?
2. Can unity exist when one group sprinkles, another pours, and another immerses people in water? How can unity survive just the differences of belief concerning baptism's purpose?

If we want unity, we must take all the Bible says on that subject (see Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; Romans 6:3-7,17; 1 Peter 3:21). Attempts to unify those of such drastically different beliefs cannot be done without compromising some truth (Amos 3:3)!!

### III. HOW CAN WE ACHIEVE UNITY?

A. **The Religious World.....** can unite and it must to please God!! God is not the source of this confusion (1 Corinthians 14:33). He condemns division as carnal and worldly (1 Corinthians 3:1-3). He commands us to "mark those who cause divisions" (Romans 16:17-18) and begs us to dispel divisions among us (1 Corinthians 1:10-13).

The Bible tells us there can be oneness (Ephesians 4:4-6). The Bible's plan of oneness spells unity for believers..... man's plan of denominationalism spells division!!

Which coincides with the prayer of Jesus? (John 17:20-21)

B. **Unity Cannot Be Achieved By Compromising The Truth.** But rather, by casting aside all error. The religious world can unite, but not until we get rid of every command and tradition of men. Then we must follow the Divine guidance outlined in the Bible (Matthew 15:8-9).

**CONCLUSION:** Are we willing to try??!!

I've got a little tract entitled "Does God Approve Of Religious Division?" that I would like to send you completely free of charge. If you would like one or more copies of this little tract, with no obligation on your part, please drop me a postcard or letter to:

Rob Harbison  
Harrodsburg Church of Christ  
232 S. College St.  
Harrodsburg, KY 40330

I'll be looking forward to hearing from you and want to encourage you to tune in again next weeeek to "Message of Truth"



## MORALITY AND IMMORALITY

**INTRO:** Times change. New customs evolve with every generation. Standards of morality change. Society accepts behavior today that it never would have condoned years ago. We think of ourselves as an "enlightened age". Yet, society's standards do not determine acceptable behavior..... God's standards determine that!! (Jeremiah 10:23)

Today, society accepts behavior which is disgusting and perverse in God's sight. It is not a matter of today's morality versus outdated, Puritan morals of the past. Morality and immorality never change throughout the generations.

God cannot tolerate immorality very long (Romans 1:18). God abandoned the Gentile world to engage in all manner of perversity and deviant behavior because they had rejected Him. Then He delivered the full force of His wrath against them, annihilating them from the face of the earth, replacing them with new nations and new people with the same choices. God is serious about His hatred of sin and immorality.... He will not tolerate it!!

### **I. THE "NEW MORALITY"**

**A. The "New Morality".** Men today approach us, advocating a "new morality". But this "new morality" is nothing more than that same "old immorality" boxed up and presented in a more attractive package.

It is a Pandora's Box, and once opened up spreads misery, heartache, and pain to all who participate.

1. Homosexuality. An increasing minority demands that we accept homosexuality as an "alternate lifestyle". People are "coming out of the closet" and demanding recognition as good, moral, upright citizens. Yet, God calls such conduct "vile affections", "that which is against nature", "that which is unseemly (or shameful)" (Romans 1:26-27).

God destroyed the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah with fire and brimstone from heaven because of their homosexual behavior (Genesis 19:1-29).

2. Fornication. Foundations of morality are crumbling as fornication among teenagers or "consenting adults" is encouraged and glamorized. "Fornication" today is referred to as "sleeping together", "making love", etc., but it is still the same old sin.

Sexual relations are reserved for married couples alone (Hebrews 13:4). The sexual "revolution" and permissiveness of the '80's <sup>and 90's</sup> is destroying morality.

3. Drinking. In the minds of many, drinking alcohol and "having a good time" go hand in hand. Alcoholism (referred to in the Bible as drunkenness) is sweeping the countryside. Our young people are becoming drunks while still in school.

As drinking becomes more socially acceptable, those who refuse to drink are viewed as peculiar misfits. But the Bible says we have wasted enough time with that lifestyle (1 Peter 4:3-6).

## II. WE MUST TAKE A STAND

A. **We Can No Longer Compromise With Rising Immorality.** Society may accept it, but we must stand opposed to all that is wrong. We cannot mouth allegiance to God and live by Satan's rules (Romans 6:16)!!

Many whose lives are filled with these vices and others who support them, do not necessarily want us to agree with their lifestyles.... they merely want us to accept them as they are and tolerate their behavior.

But we cannot!! Compromise will desensitize us, making us tolerant of that which is wrong. If we accept such lifestyles, eventually, we will participate also.... and if we don't then our children will!! (Rom. 1:32)

B. **Ungodly Behavior Cannot Be Tolerated.** The wrath of God burns against those who participate in the "works of the flesh" (Galatians 5:19-21).

Instead, we should bring forth the "fruits of the spirit" (Galatians 5:22-23).

**CONCLUSION:** Christians may be different from most people we know, but Jesus was different too, wasn't He? (Romans 12:1-2; 1 Peter 4:1-3).

Our loyalties must lie with God!! Where are yours??

THE MOST RELIGIOUS PERSON IN THE WORLD

**INTRO:** The most religious person in the world does not sit with his hands folded in prayer daily, nor does he do the most good for mankind. Neither does he worship God with the most enthusiasm and devotion.

Yet, he has been involved in religion for more years than any of us!! Who is he? Probably the last person you would ever consider.... The most religious person in the world is Satan!!

**I. THE MOST RELIGIOUS PERSON IN THE WORLD**

- A. Satan Knows The Bible From Cover To Cover.** When tempting God's own Son, Satan quoted Scripture to Him, and showed that while his head may be full of Scripture, his heart is void of any (cf. Matthew 4:6; Psalm 91:11-12).

God's word has not changed him for the better.

Satan knows more than us about the Scriptures. He has abused and perverted God's word for centuries, using his ministers disguised as ministers of Christ, to spread and teach his pernicious falsehoods (2 Corinthians 11:13-15).

Unfortunately for the souls of men, many have given heed to their perversions (1 Timothy 4:1).

- B. Satan Is Deceptive.** His centuries of practice have made him an adept illusionist. He is crafty and subtle (Revelation 12:9; 1 Timothy 3:7; Ephesians 6:11).

He has the power to blind our hearts to the truth if we are not cautious without a longing to know the truth (2 Corinthians 4:3-4).

Don't think he cannot fool you!! The power of his deception lies in man's vain attempts to recognize him through our own senses and wisdom. We are so sure we could spot him a mile away that we are the perfect stooge to fall for his deception!!

Satan is a "wolf in sheep's clothing" (Matthew 7:15) and no matter how sharp your perception, he looks ~~XXXXX~~ exactly like a sheep!! The only way he can be exposed is through the light of the gospel (John 3:20).

If you want to recognize Satan in his disguise, then familiarize yourself with the teaching of the Bible.... Until you learn that, you are a prime target for Satan's deception!!

- C. Satan Is The Author Of All The Doctrines Of Men.** All the doctrines, commandments, and traditions of men adhered to by religious people all over this land are the brainchild of Satan.

Such doctrines are his "destructive heresies" (2 Peter 2:1) and many have followed them. They are his "seducing spirits and doctrines of demons" (1 Timothy 4:1) and many have fallen by accepting them.

Satan has converted more souls to Mohammed, Buddha, Calvin, Wesley, Knox, Luther, Smith, and other men and women, than we have converted to Jesus Christ

No matter how old a doctrine or tradition may be, no matter who has accepted it, no matter how many people have accepted it, if a doctrine has no basis in Scripture, it has been introduced by man and Satan is the author of it (Matthew 15:9).

D. **Satan Would Advise Us To Be Tolerant.** If a man comes preaching another doctrine than that taught by Jesus and His apostles, Satan would tell us that even if we don't believe it ourselves, be tolerant of those who do!! But an apostle of Jesus Christ said otherwise (Galatians 1:6-8).

Friend, it is serious business to teach the truth.... We must reject every false doctrine!!

**CONCLUSION:** How can we combat Satan and recognize his teachings? "Test all things, hold fast what is good" (1 Thessalonians 5:21-22).

Our salvation depends on what we believe and accept. We must diligently seek for the truth, and in so doing, will raise the veil of Satan's deception, expose him, and then know the truth (John 8:32).

If you would like a free cassette tape of this or any of the other lessons presented on this program please write us and let us know or call 734-7166 and we will be glad to supply you with one or more tapes.

THE SEARCH FOR PEACE

**INTRO:** The world is sick and ulcer-ridden because it is not at peace. Global conflicts and their constant threat rob the world of the peace and tranquility it needs to remain healthy. Yet, the greater threat to men in the world is not the threat of war without, but the reality of the war within!! Man does not need world peace to cure his woes but inner peace.

Stress and pressure are killing us. We meet ourselves coming and going and don't have time to cultivate and nurture peace within. Instead of finding real peace, we accept the absence of conflict in its place. Unfortunately, peace is an active force in the inner man whereas the latter is merely passive. It is inadequate as a substitute. All of life involves a search for peace, yet men persist in seeking it in the wrong places.

Some look for it in any number of things.

**I. THE SEARCH FOR PEACE**

**A. Escape.** We try to run from our problems and responsibilities. The fallacy is that we must always return!! Why do men become alcoholics and drug addicts? Why do men walk out and never return? Escape!! Those substances and situations allow one to leave life's problems behind temporarily. Sobriety brings them in confrontation with those same problems again.... unsolved.

We also use retreats for our minds. Television, recreation, entertainment, hobbies, and such help us escape the pressure for a time.

Escape is not wrong. Sometimes it is necessary in those harmless forms to preserve health and sanity. Jesus even recognized a need to periodically escape (see Mark 6:30-32; Matthew 8:18,24). Employers give us vacations and God even instituted the Sabbath as a day of rest for the nation of Israel. Escape temporarily eases trouble and pressure but it is never a solution or a cure!

**B. Evasion.** Many people refuse to even face their problems. We wish to put them in the back of our minds, rationalizing that if we don't think about them, then we can live with them or even won't have to face them somehow.

No one ever solved a problem by avoiding it though.... They tend to get bigger when you avoid them. The longer we refuse to face it, the worse it gets. The problem, like a disease, can become incurable if allowed to fester untreated for too long. Evasion may bring a temporary relief from conflict, but it can never bring peace.

**II. WHAT IS THE CURE?**

**A. Trust.** No one can ever experience inner peace until he says to God "Thy will be done". Once he has said that, peace like a river, floods his soul (Isaiah 48:18).

When one places complete faith and trust in God, he knows that God will always do what is best for him (2 Timothy 1:12).

Jesus Himself entered the Garden of Gethsemane with a soul so

encumbered with tension and emotional anguish that He sweated blood. There He accepted God's will with unflinching trust, and came out at peace even though He was about to experience the worst pain of His short life (read Matthew 26:36-46).

**B. Prayer.** Prayer is one of the remedies God has given us for these problems. Of course, since prayer is a spiritual blessing, its benefit is for those who are in Christ (1 Peter 3:12). Prayer, regular prayer, fervent prayer can change your life (1 Peter 5:7; Philippians 4:6-7). It can bring you closer to God, change your attitudes and give <sup>you</sup> the peace which passes all understanding.

**C. Working For God.** One of the greatest enemies we have to peace of mind is self. We are frustrated because we are selfish, self-centered, self-pitying, and self-absorbed. Ironically, these are the very things which rob us of peace.

If we will get busy working for God and denying ourselves, then our lives will be meaningful and fulfilled (Luke 9:23; Galatians 2:20).

**CONCLUSION:** Peace of mind then is not something you get from a bottle of tranquilizers, or on a psychiatrist's couch, or in the philosophies of men. Jesus, the "Prince of Peace" will give us the "peace of God which passes all understanding" if we will fully trust in and serve the Lord (Isaiah 26:3).

That trust involves taking God at His word and accepting His will for you — believing in the name of Jesus as the Son of God (Romans 5:1-2), repenting of your sins (Acts 2:38), and being baptized into Christ (Mark 16:16). How desperately are you searching for peace?

JESUS CHRIST THE DISTURBER OF MEN

**INTRO:** When we think of Jesus, we usually think of Him as a peacemaker and a comforter to the soul. How often have we turned to Him in times of greatest need and despondency and found Him there to bless us and comfort us and bring us out of the throes of depression?

That is certainly true of our advocate with the Father. But we have not fully seen Christ if we fail to see Him as a "disturber of men" as well. He said that He did not come to bring peace, but that His coming would mean much conflict in the lives of His followers (Matthew 10:34-36).

The reasons are many that He disturbed men!

**I. CHRIST WAS THE DISTURBER OF MEN**

**A. He Preached A Disturbing Message.** He disturbed the complacent, and the self-satisfied religious leaders among the Jews when He:

1. Rebuked them for their teaching and practice of the traditions and commandments of men over the laws of God (Matthew 15:1-9).
2. Rebuked them for their prejudiced hearts (Matthew 13:15). They were blinded to the truth because they wouldn't open up their eyes to see.
3. Rebuked them for their religious inconsistency (Matthew 23:1-4).
4. Pronounced a scathing series of "woes" on the religious leaders who were leading the people astray because of their own wickedness which was disguised as righteousness (Matthew 23:13-36).

When Jesus preached His disturbing message, openly rebuking and denouncing their sins in public, these leaders reacted in an ugly and violent manner!!

1. They called Him names and said He was possessed (John 8:48). They claimed that His power to perform miracles was also demonic power (Matthew 12:22-24).
2. They took up stones to cast at Him (John 8:59) accusing Him of blasphemy (John 10:33).
3. They sought to kill Him (John 7:1). And finally succeeded in having Him crucified (Matthew 26:3-4; 27:1-2, 24-26, 34-35).

**B. He Asked Disturbing Questions.** When Jesus preached, He asked the kind of questions that made men search deep into their souls. They were questions which tore open a man's heart whether He answered them or not.

1. "For what is a man profited if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Matthew 16:26)

2. "Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?.... But who do you say that I am?" (Matthew 16:13,15)
3. "But why do you call me 'Lord, Lord' and do not do the things which I say?" (Luke 6:46).
4. "And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not consider the plank in your own?" (Matthew 7:3).
5. "He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first" (John 8:7).

You could not walk away from questions and statements like those without having your heart touched or at least your conscience pricked.

**C. He Set Disturbing Standards.** Nothing was easy that He demanded of men, but then, that which is easy cannot make us better men and women. Jesus set some standards that were disturbing in His century, but even more in our age of freedom and everyone do what he wants.

1. He set a strict standard for the home. He said that there must be one husband for one wife and that it was God's will that they remain together all their lives without ever divorcing (Matthew 19:4-6). He taught that there is only **one** reason why a married person can divorce and remarry and that is because of the unfaithfulness of the other (Matthew 19:9).

God set the husband up as the head and intended for the wife to be in subjection and manage the household (Ephesians 5:23; Titus 2:3). Children are to be obedient to their parents (Ephesians 6:1-3).

2. He set a strict standard for discipleship. In order to be a follower of Christ, Christ and His kingdom must come first before everything else (Matthew 6:33), even family (Matthew 10:34-37).  
To be His follower, we must all love one another no matter what differences we may have (John 13:34-35) and must correct our sins against one another rather than having them go untended to (Matthew 5:23-24; 18:15-17).

**CONCLUSION:** So obviously Christ is a "disturber of men" when we are living in sin. He came to seek and save that which is lost, not justify us in that lost condition. Before we will ever do anything about our sins, we have to be disturbed about them!! So Jesus deliberately preached a disturbing message that He might turn men from our sins.

One of the sad things is that in the world today, many don't want to hear any "disturbing" messages.... we like to hear that positive, uplifting type of preaching! There is a place for that preaching to encourage us, but not to tickle our ears (2 Timothy 4:2-4).!

Dear listener, accept nothing but truthful preaching.... no **demand** nothing but truthful preaching!! Could Christ preach where **you** worship?



WHO IS NARROW MINDED?

- \* Announce Gospel Meeting
- \* Give phone numbers for more info

**INTRO:** "You are one of the most narrow-minded people I have ever met" said one who scarcely knows an apostle from an epistle, speaking to a friend who has strong convictions.

We are so accustomed to the idea of broad-mindedness that we cannot bear to have anyone insist that there is only one right way. Honestly, with some things there is more than one right answer, but not with everything. Some of us have become so liberal and tolerant in our thinking that we try to believe anything and everything and if we don't believe it then someone else has a perfect right to believe it..... And in the process we end up believing nothing!!

My friend, do you really know what you believe the Bible <sup>teaches</sup> ~~teaches~~ on any number of subjects? Or are you open to everyone else's interpretations and beliefs? We think that is a more noble way to be.... but is it?

**I. WHO IS NARROW-MINDED?**

**A. Jesus?** Jesus said "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6). If this statement has any meaning at all, it conveys the thought that Jesus is man's only access to the Father. Any attempt to reach God apart from this mediator ignores God's plan of approach (1 Timothy 2:5-6).

That leaves out Judaism, Buddhism, Confucism, and any other number of Eastern religions or Western cults! Was Jesus narrow-minded in presenting this teaching?

**B. John?** John wrote "He who says 'I know Him', and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him" (1 John 2:4). According to John, all who profess to know the Lord but do not keep His commandments are liars!! Only the people who are faithful to the Lord's commands really know Him.

That means that all who sit back and claim to have faith and to be children of God, but are not obeying His commands are boldfaced liars.... sincere perhaps, but liars all the same. Now, was John narrow-minded in making such a statement? According to our tolerant friends, he was!

**C. Paul?** Paul taught "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as you are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all" (Ephesians 4:4-6). Today, there are many bodies, numerous faiths, a multitude of different baptisms and purposes, and it is openly declared that "one church is as good as another".

So which is it? Was the apostle wrong or are we wrong? Was the apostle narrow-minded for telling us that which was delivered to him from God? Surely, we must not be more liberal than the apostle!

- D. **Jude?** Jude emphatically stated that the faith he held to was "once delivered to the saints" (Jude 3). Some modern religions are based on the doctrine of progressive revelation.... That God continues to reveal His will to us today through His prophets and if it is different than what was initially revealed to His apostles and prophets, then they copied it down wrong or didn't understand it fully and today's revelation is to clear up all the misconceptions.

Proponents of "latter-day revelations" tell us that we must be broad-minded enough that we are willing to accept a new message given centuries after the Bible was written. Jude says it was "once for all delivered". Was he being narrow-minded? Should we really listen to the multitude of new and different teachings being proclaimed by men?

- E. **Peter?** Peter wrote that "baptism doth also now save us" (1 Peter 3:21). He urged sinners to "repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of your sins" (Acts 2:38). People tell me that I am bigoted and narrow-minded if I think one must be baptized in order to be saved.

Was Peter a bigoted, narrow-minded preacher? He said it a long time before I did. And the only reason I preach it is because he did! Was Peter narrow-minded?

- F. **James?** James wrote "You see then that a man is justified by works and not by faith only" (James 2:24). Most denominations teach that salvation and justification come at the point of faith, and a person can be saved by "faith only".

When I say that the denominations are wrong on this point and quote the statement of James, people tell me that I am narrow and intolerant. So does that mean that James is narrow and intolerant too? If not, then why is it okay for him to say it but not me?

- G. **Matthew?** Matthew records that Jesus was born of a virgin in fulfillment of prophecy (Matthew 1:18-23). Modern theologians tell us in pious tones that we should be liberal-minded and not argue that Jesus was actually born of a virgin, but should be open to the idea that perhaps, since that has never happened before, the prophecy should be translated differently.

So who is being narrow-minded? The person who believes what the Bible says or the person who can't accept it because it is too miraculous? Was the apostle Matthew narrow-minded? Even worse, was he a liar?

**CONCLUSION:** If it is to be admitted that such persons as Peter, James, John, Paul, Jude, Matthew, and even Jesus Christ our Lord were narrow, then I am in good company when I am charged with being narrow-minded for teaching what they taught. If it is acknowledged that the Bible is narrow, then I gladly plead guilty to the same narrowness, for I believe the Bible!

Anyone who restricts his way of life by following rules and laws will

be considered narrow-minded by all who dislike such laws and rules. Anyone who insists on accuracy and exactness, will be viewed as narrow-minded by all those who loose and careless.

Anyone who thinks, studies, and forms definite conclusions and convictions will be labeled narrow-minded by all who in their indecision and lack of understanding vacillate from one state of mind to the other. Anyone who practices moral restraint is considered narrow-minded by those who desire unrestrained, carnal indulgence in whatever they want.

Anyone who wishes to closely follow a standard will be charged with narrow-mindedness by others who wish to deviate from that standard. A conservative is always narrow-minded to a liberal. A Christian is narrow-minded to the worldly individual and to the unbeliever..... But so be it!! Because Jesus said the way to heaven is "narrow" (Matthew 7:13-14).

Intolerance of people is wrong, but intolerance of teachings which are false is necessary for us to go to heaven. As the apostle Paul said "Have I therefore become your enemy because I tell you the truth?" (Galatians 4:16).

\*\* From article by Irvin Himmel

WHY I BELIEVE JESUS IS THE SON OF GOD

**INTRO:** Mark tells us of a rich young ruler who came to Jesus, puzzled over life's most important question. He confronts Jesus with these words "Good teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" (Mark 10:17). It is not Jesus answer which interests us as much as His reaction to this man's statement.

Some have been surprised at Jesus' reply, thinking He somehow has robbed Himself of dignity. "And Jesus said to him, 'Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone'" (Mark 10:18). There is more here than meets the eye. His answer makes it clear for all time that Jesus of Nazareth must not be confused with a mere man.... not even a good man!! Undoubtedly, this ruler thought he was paying Jesus a compliment.

Jesus challenges this ruler to look at Him more closely and decide whether or not He is more than just a "good teacher".

Many today look on Jesus as a good man, a moral leader, a first-rate teacher, a man ahead of His times... but He challenges us too to look at Him and determine whether or not we will have faith in Him as the Son of God.

**I. NOBODY EVER TALKED LIKE THAT**

**A. Jesus Was In A Category By Himself.** Even those sent to entrap Him marvelled at the words of wisdom, force, and clarity with which He spoke (John 7:31-47).

He spoke as if authority resided in Himself to issue the commands that He did (Matthew 7:29; 28:18). All the scribes and Rabbis cited passages from the Scripture. Jesus spoke as if His words were Scripture!!

**B. Jesus Made Some Unique Claims.** He made some claims about Himself that no other man would dare to make, and allowed those claims to be closely scrutinized. If these claims were accurate then He is the central figure of all history. If not, He is the greatest liar, fraud, and charlatan the world has ever seen!!

1. He Claimed To Be The Messiah Of The Old Testament (John 4:24-26; Mark 14:61-62). Admittedly, many have made that claim, but none other has died innocently of sin because of it!
2. He Claimed To Be The Son Of God. Not "a" son of God.... but God's very own Son!
  - a. He almost lost His life because of it (John 10:30-36).
  - b. He said that that truth would be the foundation of His church (Matthew 16:13-18).
3. He Asserted His Personal Equality With God (John 5:17-18).

4. He Laid Claim To The Most Elusive Trait Of All Mankind.... Sinless Perfection (John 8:46). No man ever spoke so boldly and could prove it!! His closest associates and one-time enemy had to admit that they could not find one taint of sin on Him (cf. 1 Peter 2:19-24; 1 John 3:5; 2 Corinthians 5:21). I couldn't say that or everyone would interrupt trying to speak up first!!

## II. WHAT OTHERS SAID ABOUT HIM

A. **What Others Said About Him.** We have not had the privilege of seeing Jesus during His 33 plus years on this earth. But what did those who did see Him have to say?

1. His Brothers. How did they react to the fantastic things He said about Himself? They reacted much like we would if someone close to us came up and said the same thing. They did not believe Him (John 7:3-5; Matthew 13:54-58). They thought:

- a. "What advantages has He had over us?"
- b. "We grew up with Him, He is just one of the guys"
- c. "He is just like an older brother... He thinks He knows it all"
- d. "Come on Jesus... get serious!!"

But something happened.... They became some of His most loyal disciples, urging others to believe in Him, and dying as a martyr for His name. James and Jude, likely two of the Lord's brothers, later contributed to the Holy record of the Bible, and they saw themselves as bond-servants of Jesus (James 1:1; Jude 1:1).

If Jesus was not truly God's Son, what changed their minds?

2. His Mother. She **never** questioned the accuracy of His claims. In fact, she was sure that His power was limitless before He ever performed a public miracle (see John 2:1-11). Unlike His brothers, she never needed to be convinced! She believed in Him from the start!!

She was the only one who could know beyond any doubt that He was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of a virgin! She never doubted Him! To save His life, she could have spoken up and said He is deluded... but she could not because she knew He was not! After His resurrection, she took her place with the rest of the disciples (Acts 1:14).

3. Saul of Tarsus. I have to believe him. Here was a man who persecuted the followers of Christ, putting them to death for their faith (Acts 22:3-5; 8:1-3; 9:1-2).

But something happened to him. The same story told by one of Jesus' disciples would be skeptical at best... but Jesus appeared to His greatest enemy and confronted him with the truth of His resurrection.

#49c

Saul's life was completely changed after than (Philippians 3:3-11; Galatians 2:20).

**CONCLUSION:** We have merely scratched the surface (John 21:25). But these are written that you might believe (John 20:30-31). So do you believe that Jesus is the Son of God (Romans 10:9; Mark 16:16).

IN THE BEGINNING

**INTRO:** The Bible is a complete book. It covers the entirety of man's existence as it takes us back to the very beginning where it starts with God creating man and then takes us to the end where it closes in the Book of Revelation with God's people at home with Him at last. It begins with Paradise Lost and concludes with Paradise regained.

In order to understand the full story of the Bible and all those things that have transpired in man's history, we need some understanding of what happened in the beginning, and then how God's plan of redemption has unfolded through the centuries.

In the first three chapters of Genesis, we see the beginnings of all those things which affect man today.

**I. THE BEGINNING OF CREATION**

- A. The Creation (Genesis 1:1-2).** Beginning with God, an all-powerful and wise Being, it is reasonable to accept that He could create a world like ours. The debate rages on between evolution and creation today. Was it mindless and unknowing chance that is responsible for creation of this world.... or an all-knowing God working in tandem with the Son, and the Holy Spirit?

Notice the order and purpose in the creation of each thing that was made. Each thing created was necessary for the well-being of those things created on the next succeeding day. It exhibits a grand design and the Genesis account is consistent with everything man has found in his discoveries of the world about him — it may be inconsistent with some of his theories — but, not with the facts discovered.

**II. THE BEGINNING OF MAN**

- A. Man (Genesis 1:26-27; 2:7-8).** Man was created in the image of God, to rule and have dominion over God's creation. According to this account, man was created to rule... he did not ooze out of the slime pit and evolve into a being superior to the rest of the animals and thereby rule because of he stood on a higher rung of the evolutionary ladder!! He was created different for a specific purpose — to glorify God (Psalm 8).

Man is a triune being, made up of three parts. He has a body, a soul, and a spirit (1 Thessalonians 5:23). His spirit is that which is created in the image of God, and therefore God is the father of our spirits (Hebrews 12:9).

As a moral being, man possesses the power of choice. God told him what to do and what not to do. Man has, therefore, always been faced with the choice between obeying and disobeying God. But without a choice, man's love for God could never be tested or proven!

### III. THE BEGINNING OF THE HOME

- A. **The Home (Genesis 2:18,21-24).** Created in the image of God, man by His very nature is a social creature, needing love and needing to give love. God provided him with the companionship of one suitable to him. Thus, we see that the home is of divine origin.... not man's. Therefore, man has no right to experiment with it or change it.

In God's plan, there is one man with one woman, joined together as companions and counterparts. Since God does the joining of two people who agree to live in that relationship, only God can separate them, with death being the only completely honorable way a marriage is dissolved.

### IV. THE BEGINNING OF SIN

- A. **Introduction Of Sin (Genesis 2:16-17; 3:1-6).** There was only one prohibition placed on man: he could not eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. This was a positive, not a moral law. There was actually no reason they would want to eat of that particular tree, unless it was to rebel against God's word! And that by a deliberate choice!!

The temptation came from Satan, who is introduced in Genesis 3 as "the adversary" (of man and God). He presented the woman with a three-fold temptation. She then saw that it was 1)"good for food" 2)"a delight to the eyes" 3)"desired to make one wise". It is in the same way that we are tempted today (1 John 2:15-17).

Their sin was in transgressing God's law, and rebelling against His will (1 John 3:4). This sin brought with it many hidden consequences!!

1. **Fear And Shame (Genesis 3:7-8).** They hid themselves from God and tried to make their own covering for their sin. It was a failure.
2. **Cowardice (Genesis 3:11-13).** Each blamed the other for his sin. None came forward to humbly and penitently confess their sins.
3. **Curse (Genesis 3:15-19).** God placed a curse on the serpent. Snakes would crawl on their bellies and Satan's power would be crushed. The woman would be ruled by her husband and suffer great pain in childbirth. The ground was cursed for the sake of the man who would have to toil hard to eat from it, and would return when he died to the very ground from which he cultivated food.
4. **Separation From God (Genesis 3:22-24).** They were driven from the garden. Sin separated man from his God (cf. Isaiah 59:1-2).
5. **Death.** Death came upon themselves and us (Romans 5:12).



**V. THE BEGINNING OF REDEMPTION**

- A. Promised Redemption (Genesis 3:15).** As soon as man sinned, God set in motion the plan He had throughout eternity (Ephesians 3:10-11; 1 Peter 1:18-21). The "seed of woman" would come... one born of a woman... and complete God's plan for bringing his fallen children back into a relationship with Himself (Galatians 4:4-5).

**CONCLUSION:** In these three chapters in the Bible, we find God's story of "beginnings".... the beginning of creation, of man and his purpose, of the home, of sin, and of redemption.

The unfolding of this plan of redemption is the common message of the rest of the Bible!! In upcoming lessons we will look at its fulfillment.

THE PROMISE OF REDEMPTION FULFILLED

**INTRO:** The theme of the Bible is human redemption. All of the history that is covers shows God's providential hand in the affairs of men, as He brings into the world the Redeemer for mankind. This Redeemer would be His own Son who came through the woman. It also highlights the conflict between the seed of woman and the serpent as God prophesied from the beginning of man's sin.

Bible history falls into three great dispensations which should be remembered....

1. The Patriarchal (from Adam to Moses) in which God dealt with all men who would follow Him through the fathers of households.
2. The Mosaic (from Moses to Christ) in which God dealt especially with the Jews, giving them a law and separating them from the heathen of the world.
3. The Christian (from Christ to the end of the world). This is the period we are living in presently.

In this lesson, I would like to quickly trace the fulfillment of the promise made by God to Adam and Eve in the garden, until its fulfillment in the Son of God. This should help us better understand the overall scope of the Bible message.

## **I. THE PROMISE: FROM ADAM TO ABRAHAM**

- A. From Adam To Abraham.** Wickedness followed the fall of Adam and Eve, as the human family was plunged deeper into sin. The world became so evil that God was compelled to destroy it with a worldwide flood (Genesis 6:5-8).

Although centuries passed before the promise was fulfilled, God never lost sight of it or allowed man to forget it.

## **II. THE PROMISE: FROM ABRAHAM THROUGH THE PROPHETS**

- A. From Abraham To The Prophets.** Because Abraham was such a righteous man, being referred to even as the "friend of God", God made a two-fold promise to him.

1. Physical. Part of the promise had to do with some physical blessings that would come to Abraham's descendants (Genesis 12:1-2). He would be the father of a great nation who would inherit the land in which he sojourned.
2. Spiritual. Part of the promise had to do with some spiritual blessings that would come to all the world through one of his descendants (Genesis 12:3).

The unfolding and fulfilling of these two promises is shown in the history contained in the rest of the Bible. The first part of the

promise was fulfilled in nation of Israel and their possession of the land of Canaan centuries ago. The second part of the promise is fulfilled in Christ!

- B. The Seed Of David.** Years later, after Israel settled in her land and became a great nation, God made a related promise to king David (2 Samuel 7:11-16).

The coming Messiah would be a king to rule on the throne of God (and of David) and would come from David's lineage. David's seed would rule over God's kingdom on a permanently established throne.

About 300 years after David, Isaiah, the great prophet of God, combined the promise made in the Garden of Eden with the promise made to David (Isaiah 7:13-14; 9:6-7).

Many centuries had passed since the first promise made by the Lord, but God had not lost sight of that promise. Gradually, He was preparing for its fulfillment in His own Son who would fulfil all the promises and meet Satan in mortal combat.

### III. THE PROMISE: FULFILLED IN JESUS CHRIST

- A. Fulfilled In Jesus Christ.** As the New Testament unfolds, we find all God's promises coming to a head and coming together to be fulfilled in His Son Jesus.

1. Jesus Was Born Of A Woman (Galatians 4:4). This fulfilled the promise made to the woman and the curse placed on the serpent.
2. Jesus Was Born Of A Virgin (Matthew 1:22-23). This fulfilled Isaiah's prophecy and portrait of the coming Messiah.
3. Jesus Was Of The House Of David (Luke 1:30-35). This fulfilled the promise made to David.
4. Jesus Was The Seed Through Whom All Nations Would Be Blessed (Galatians 3:8,16).
5. Jesus Crushed The Power Of Satan At The Cross. In His conflict with Satan He bruised Satan's head (destroying his power) as Satan bruised His heel (having Him put to death on Calvary).

**CONCLUSION:** Though many centuries had lapsed, though scoffers had ridiculed the faith of the believers, and though the believers themselves had struggled with doubts about God fulfilling His promises, God never forgot them.

My friend, have you taken advantage of the redemption Jesus purchased for you with His blood? (Acts 2:36-38,41,47).

GOD'S TWO COVENANTS

**INTRO:** God expects us to study His word well enough that we can distinguish its proper divisions (2 Timothy 2:15). Many Bible teachers and students have failed to make the proper division of God's word, making no distinction between the Old and New Covenants, and thus adding more confusion to an already confused religious world.

First of all, we need to understand that God has had two separate covenants with His people through the centuries. And second, we need to understand the purpose and passing of the first and the establishment of the second, because they cannot both be in operation at the same time!! (see Hebrews 10:9).

**I. WHAT IS A COVENANT?**

- A. What Is A Covenant?** "An agreement by two or more parties to do or refrain from doing some act." It binds the parties who enter it and excludes everyone else. It is entered into voluntarily, but once entered, compels the parties to abide faithfully by it.

**II. THE OLD COVENANT**

- A. The Old Covenant.** This covenant was an agreement between God and the nation of Israel. When we read the Old Testament books, for the most part, they deal with God's relationship with His chosen people of Israel.
1. The covenant was made between God and Israel when the nation was brought out of Egyptian captivity to Mt. Sinai (Exodus 19:1-5; 24:3-8). God agreed to something and the people of Israel agreed to something.
  2. The law God gave them was a national law, given only to Israel, to govern them as a nation (Exodus 20:1-2; 31:12-17; 34:27-28; Deuteronomy 5:1-6). It is very clear that the law God gave them, was given to the children of Israel and no other nation or people. Even the Sabbath and the Ten Commandments were part of the covenant God made with this nation.
  3. Not only was it a law given to a particular people, but it was also given for a specified, limited time (Galatians 3:16,19,23-25).
- B. The Passing Of The Old Covenant.** About midway between the beginning of the Old and the beginning of the New Covenant, God declared He would make a "new covenant" (Jeremiah 31:31-34). It would be "new", "different", "of the spirit", under which "all would know Him", and "sins would be remembered no more".
1. Jesus came to fulfill the first covenant (Matthew 5:17-18). At

His death, He declared it to be accomplished (John 19:28-30).

2. When Jesus died, the new covenant went into force (Hebrews 9:15-17). The old covenant has become obsolete. It served its purpose in bringing us to Christ.
3. Jesus became mediator of a better covenant (Hebrews 8:6-13). This one is a covenant of the heart, in which every person must enter of his own free will and choice. In it can finally be found the forgiveness of sins. That was something that the imperfect first covenant could not do!
4. Now, an attempt to be justified by following any part of the old covenant can cause us to "fall from grace" (Galatians 5:4).
  - a. Trying to live under both covenants makes us spiritual adulterers (Romans 7:1-4).
  - b. Trying to return to the imperfect first covenant will subject us to a "ministry of death" and "ministry of condemnation" (2 Corinthians 3:6-17).

### III. THE NEW COVENANT — THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST

- A. **The New Covenant.** The New Covenant is the Covenant of promise. It is the "law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:1-2) and the "everlasting covenant" dedicated with the blood of Christ (Hebrews 13:20).
  1. This covenant now includes all nations (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16). It is a covenant which is individual in its scope.... Every person who enters it, personally enters into this covenant with God.
  2. It is in the New, not the Old, that the sinner today finds his way to God, the terms of pardon, and the conditions of fellowship with God on earth and eternal life in heaven.

**CONCLUSION:** The blood of Christ has opened to us a new and living way (Hebrews 7:18-19; 10:19-23). Dear listener, have you entered into that covenant with God?

THE NEW COVENANT AND THE GREAT COMMISSION

**INTRO:** The "good news" of the gospel is that salvation is now available for all men and women. Through that gospel men are actually saved (Romans 1:16). It is the "glad tidings" that Jesus has been raised from the dead to sit at the right hand of God. But without someone to tell of this "good news" it remains a mystery to the masses of people (Romans 10:14-18).

Jesus commissioned men to go out and preach the "good news" of the kingdom. It is still being preached today. There were two commissions to preach given by Jesus, one during His personal ministry, and the other after His resurrection. Each contains its special theme of "good news". To the Jews it was the "good news" that the kingdom was at hand. To the Gentiles and Jew after His resurrection, it was good news that Christ had died for sins, been raised, and was now ruling over the kingdom.

**I. THE FIRST COMMISSION AND ITS GOSPEL**

**A. The Limited Commission.** This limited commission was given to the disciples before Jesus' death. He sent them to the house of Israel, with a message that the kingdom was approaching and was near to them already. Thus, He called on them to repent in preparation for its appearance.

1. John The Baptist (Matthew 3:1-2). He came preaching that the kingdom was "at hand". He was a forerunner of the Christ, and paved the way for His coming.
2. Jesus (Matthew 4:17,23). After John was delivered up He began preaching. His message was also about the approaching nearness of the kingdom.
3. The Twelve (Matthew 10:5-7). Later in His ministry, Jesus selected the twelve whom He sent to the Jews only with the same message — the approaching nearness of the kingdom.
4. The Seventy (Luke 10:9). After this He selected and sent forth seventy others with the same message, likewise to Jews only.

Again, the purpose of this commission was to prepare God's people, the Jews under the Old Covenant, to receive the Christ whom God was sending.

**II. THE GREAT COMMISSION AND ITS GOSPEL**

**A. The Great Commission.** The promise to Abraham had included all nations (Genesis 12:3). The first, or limited commission, included only Israel after the flesh. They would be given the opportunity of entering the kingdom first (Acts 3:25-26). But for the most part, Israel after the flesh would reject Him and the Gentiles would be offered the same salvation (cf. Matthew 8:5-12).

1. **Matthew 28:18-20.** After His resurrection, Jesus said all authority had been given to Him. God has delegated the rule of His kingdom and the kingdoms of the world to Jesus Christ right now!! (Ephesians 1:19-23) He has the right to command and require whatever He wills. Listen what He wanted His disciples to do...

Teach all nations (cf. Hebrews 8:8-12). Then, they were to be baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This baptism was by their approval and in accordance with their will, sanctioned by each member of the Godhead.

Then they are to be taught to observe all that Christ has commanded (John 14:15).

2. **Mark 16:15-16.** This is the same commission as in Matthew, spoken at the same time. They were to go into all the world... why?... because there is not a soul in the world who does not need to be saved!! This gospel ("good news") was that salvation was now available through Jesus' sacrifice.

Believing that message they were to be baptized in order to be saved.

3. **Luke 24:44-49.** Jesus said that He fulfilled the promise and hope of the Law and the Prophets. His suffering, death, and resurrection for our sins is the message of the gospel.

Repentance and remission of sins was to be preached beginning in Jerusalem, as was prophesied by God (Isaiah 2:2-3). But the apostles could not begin to implement the preaching of this commission until they were empowered with power from the Holy Spirit, from on high (Acts 1:6-8).

4. **The Commission Was Fulfilled.** Only ten days later, on the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit fell on the twelve apostles and they began preaching the message of belief in Jesus, repentance, and baptism for the remission of sins.

Jews from all nations were there in Jerusalem where it had prophesied that it would begin and there it did!

From that point forward, the commission has been carried out to this present day... The reason that we are coming to you over the airwaves this morning is to do our part in fulfilling the great commission.

**CONCLUSION:** Dear listener, what about you? You have heard the message of Jesus' Great Commission proclaimed this morning. Will you submit to it? Some people say "I want to be saved by faith like the thief on the cross". If you had been a Jew living under the authority of Jesus' limited commission, you could have been.... but after the day of Pentecost, Jesus' Great Commission applies to you and me. Will you accept it and be saved?

BAPTISM

**INTRO:** When the Bible talks about salvation, it does not talk about one thing to the exclusion of everything else. There is not one single thing which is the basis of our salvation, but a combination of many things working together.

The Bible teaches that man is justified through God's grace "being justified freely by His grace..." (Romans 3:24). It also tells us that our faith is an integral part of salvation "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand..." (Romans 5:1-2).

Jesus' blood is one of the key ingredients of our salvation "Much more then, having now been justified by His blood..." (Romans 5:9). It is the blood of Christ that cleanses us from sin (1 John 1:7). Faith, repentance, confession, and baptism are conditions of salvation, not saviours!!

Salvation is of God, therefore God alone has the right to stipulate the terms or conditions on which He pardons. Loyalty to God requires that we believe every declaration of the Bible on this matter on the sole ground that it is the word of God.

This morning, let us approach the Bible subject of baptism as if we never knew nothing about it, and never even heard of it. Then let us draw our conclusions from what God has said, not what we have always believed or been taught.

**I. WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS ABOUT BAPTISM**

**A. What Does The Bible Have To Say About Baptism?** Please open your Bible and read along.... Don't bet your soul that I am telling you the truth about what it means! You read along and see if it is not simple enough to understand!

1. **Matthew 28:18-20.** There is teaching that precedes this baptism and teaching that follows. A person must be taught first... then baptized. Those who baptize infants do just the opposite... they baptize first and then are taught.

The three persons of the Godhead are involved in this baptism, sanctioning and giving their authority to it.

2. **Mark 16:15-16.** Faith precedes baptism and salvation follows it. All of creation is to be taught and baptism is the pivotal point which connects their faith with their salvation.
3. **Acts 2:38,41.** Repentance precedes baptism and the remission of sins and gift of the Holy Spirit follow. That is not in contradiction with the passage just read. Faith and repentance are simply too different, but connected steps which come before baptism and the remission of sins.
4. **Romans 6:3-7.** Notice it is a burial in water.... nothing is said about sprinkling and pouring. Baptism is a model of the death,



burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, which we mimic when we die to sin, are buried in water, and then raised out of the water to walk in newness of life.

5. **1 Corinthians 12:13.** We are all joined to one body when we are baptized. That is the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:12-27; Ephesians 1:22-23). In the body of Christ, we all partake of the spiritual life supplied by the Holy Spirit.
6. **Galatians 3:26-27.** Salvation is found only "in Christ" and that is what baptism puts us into!!
7. **Ephesians 4:5.** There is only "one baptism". As narrow-minded as you might think I am, that is all I can say, because that is what the Bible says! Which of the baptisms being practiced in the religious world is the "one baptism"? That is what we are trying to find out!
8. **Colossians 2:12.** It is a burial and resurrection. Again, sprinkling is ruled out because of the very nature of the action. When we are baptized it is because our faith is in God, not in the water.
9. **1 Peter 3:21.** Baptism saves. Could it be any plainer than that?

**CONCLUSION:** Dear listener, any questions we have about baptism can be answered in those passages, along with a few others we did not have time to consider. The important question that you must answer this morning is: "Have you been baptized as a penitent believer in order to receive the remission of your sins?"

It is an important question because the welfare of your soul is at stake. "And now why do you wait, arise and be baptized calling on the name of the Lord" (Acts 22:16). If we can assist you, please call on us!!

If you would like to have a free cassette tape of this message or any of the others you hear on this broadcast, please write to: Harrodsburg Church of Christ, 232 S. College St., Harrodsburg, KY 40330..... or call Dial-A-Bible-Moment at 734-2118 and leave your name and mailing address along with your request.

Thanks for listening and until next week, may God bless you and prosper and may you be more faithful to Him this week than you were last!!

WORSHIP

**INTRO:** Someone has said "Worship is the conscious point of contact between the creature and the Creator, a recognition of divine kinship". Worship is the expression of God's creation, whether man or anything else He has created, which shows reverence to and does obeisance to God.

Worship is the expression of an adoring heart to God.

Worship is the direct acknowledgment to God of His nature, attributes, ways and claims, either by an expression from the mouth of praise and thanksgiving or by deeds done to so acknowledge Him.

Just any kind of expression is not sufficient for God. The Bible talks about true worship and false worship... and we must be sure to make the distinction.

**I. FALSE WORSHIP**

**A. Vain Worship (Matthew 15:8-9).** Worship is rendered, vain, worthless, and empty if it does not originate in the heart and if it consists of the commandments of men rather than what God has commanded.

**B. Will-Worship (Colossians 2:20-23).** This self-imposed religion or worship is not something that God has outlined, but something that we have decided will make us a better person and more pleasing to God... when actually it has no such ability!

Many of us would rather substitute what we think would be good for what God said He wanted. Remember, you cannot improve on God's prescribed worship.

**C. Worship In Ignorance (Acts 17:23).** Worship in ignorance is worship without understanding of the subject of that worship (God) or the will of the one who is worshipped. Sadly, there will be many today who will worship God in ignorance! They know they should go to church, or go because they are compelled to, yet know nothing about God and His will! What good is that to a holy, righteous, and majestic God?

Obviously, an attempt to worship God, by itself is not always sufficient. Actually, it is futile if true worship is not offered to Him!

**II. TRUE WORSHIP**

**A. Object Of True Worship (Matthew 4:10).** God is the true object of worship... not angels, not saints, not Mary the mother of Jesus (Revelation 22:8-9; Acts 10:24-26). Our worship should be expressed to God the Father, and God the Son, because Jesus possesses the same nature of God (Matthew 28:9).

1. God Should Be Worshipped Because Of His Nature (Acts 17:22-31).

2. Failure To Recognize The Nature Of God Turns Men To Idolatry (Romans 1:20-25).

**B. Character Of Worship (John 4:23-24).** Worship does not consist of the mere performance and observance of rituals handed down through tradition.

1. Worship Is To Be "In Spirit". Since God is a Spirit and man is recreated (reborn) with a new spirit like the nature of God, it is only fitting that worship should be performed on a higher, spiritual plane.

Spiritual worship must spring from a spiritual relationship with God (1 Peter 2:5,9-10).

2. Worship Is To Be "In Truth". The worship that was offered under the Old Testament — animal sacrifices, temple worship, instrumental music, burning of incense, etc. — were all shadows of that which was to come (Hebrews 8:4-5; 10:1). These were the shadows.

When Christ came, He brought the substance, the reality... He brought that which was "truth" as opposed to that which was "shadow" (Colossians 2:17; John 1:17).

**C. Authority Of Worship (Matthew 28:18-20).** Whatever worship we offer God must be done according to Jesus' authority and be sanctioned by Him. All authority belongs to Christ, therefore all worship and teaching must be done according to His teaching.

The various acts of worship under the New Covenant through which praise and spiritual devotion may be offered to God are: the Lord's Supper, singing, prayer, giving and preaching, reading, and teaching His word.

**D. Disposition Of Worshipper.** There is a certain kind of worshipper God is looking for to come into His presence and offer acceptable worship.

1. He must have been cleansed by the blood of Christ that he may offer a clean and acceptable worship unto God (Hebrews 10:19-22). Those who have been washed with pure water (baptized into Christ) are cleansed and prepared to enter His presence for worship.
2. He must come before God with reverence and awe (Hebrews 12:28-29).
3. He must come with gladness, thanksgiving and rejoicing in his heart (Hebrews 13:15-16).

**CONCLUSION:** Worship is the best way to show your love and adoration for God.

Why not join us this morning at the Harrodsburg Church of Christ to worship our Creator? Doesn't He deserve it?

Lesson From "Let's Go Fishing For Men", Homer Hailey, pp.173-175

THE LORD'S SUPPER

**INTRO:** On the night before Jesus was crucified, taking some of the provisions made for the Passover feast He was celebrating with His disciples, Jesus took two of the emblems — the unleavened bread and fruit of the vine— and instituted a special feast to commemorate His death.

The Lord's Supper was designed to be an action to unify believers and unite them together in celebration of Jesus' death, burial and resurrection. To our shame, it is a big source of division among religious people.

**I. THE INSTITUTION OF THE LORD'S SUPPER**

**A. The Institution Of The Lord's Supper.** Only four passages of Scripture tell us about the origin of this memorial feast (Matthew 26:17-29; Mark 14:12-25; Luke 22:7-30; 1 Corinthians 11:17-34).

On the night that Judas betrayed Him, Jesus took bread and fruit of the vine available from their observance of the Passover, and with it established a new memorial to His death (read Matthew 26:17-29).

1. **It's Position.** It would be shared with Christ "in the kingdom" (Matthew 26:29; Luke 22:29-30). When the kingdom began to be proclaimed from Pentecost forward, the Lord's Supper was a part of the Christian's worship.

2. **Who Shall Eat Of The Lord's Supper?** Should we have "open communion" or "closed communion"?

The Bible tells us to "examine ourselves" (1 Corinthians 11:28). God never told the rest of us to determine who should and shouldn't... but does warn men that to partake in an unworthy manner is to bring judgment on oneself (1 Corinthians 11:27-30).

Since the Lord's Supper is "in the kingdom" (Luke 22:19) and only those who are "born again" are in the kingdom (John 3:5) then we see that it is intended for Christians alone!! Likewise, Paul describes the eating and drinking of the Lord's Supper as a "communion" of the body and blood of Christ (1 Corinthians 10:16-17). Since only Christians have contacted His blood through baptism (Romans 6:3-7), then only Christians should partake!

**B. The Significance Of The Lord's Supper.**

1. **Communion** (1 Corinthians 10:16-17). It is a sharing with the Lord and participation with Him in His death. It is not just the way we commune with Him each week, but stands as a monument to the daily communion we have with Him!

2. **A Memorial** (Luke 22:19). It is a reminder to us of the climax of Jesus' mission on earth. He came to earth to die on the cross, and as busy and occupied as we are, we tend to forget even the most important things like that if not for some reminder. Jesus gave us a reminder of His sacrificial life and death... Every time we partake, we remember every phase of Christ's life and work.

3. A Testimony Of Faith (1 Corinthians 11:26). Eating and drinking the Lord's Supper is a declaration of our faith. While proclaiming the fact of His death, we are also proclaiming our hope of His return "till He comes".

Neglecting to meet with the Lord's children to eat the Lord's Supper manifests a lack of faith, and the cause of Christ is hindered by one who does not "proclaim the Lord's death till He comes" (1 Corinthians 11:26).

- C. **The Frequency Of Its Observance.** When and how often should we partake of the Lord's Supper? It would be nice if there was a passage which specifically told us those particulars... but there is not! That is not, however, reason to say that we don't know or that we can do what we want.

1. The First Day Of The Week. After Christ's death, the first day of the week (Sunday) stands out as a day of significant events.

- a. Jesus was raised from the dead (Luke 24:1,13,21,46).
- b. The establishment of the church on day of Pentecost (Act 2).
- c. The day that Christians met to worship God (Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 16:1-2). They were not to forsake this coming together (Hebrews 10:25).

2. The Lord's Supper Was Taken On The First Day Of The Week (Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 11:17-34). Their purpose for coming together (in 1 Corinthians) was to partake of the Lord's Supper, not a common meal. The day of this coming together to break bread is specified as "the first day of the week" (Acts 20:7).

- a. Should it be taken weekly, monthly, quarterly, semi-annually, annually, or at special occasions? They met on the first day of the week... how often has God given us a Sunday to celebrate? Every week! Who has given us other intervals of observance? Man.

When the Jews "Remembered the Sabbath to keep it holy" how often did they do that? They knew God meant every Sabbath, as He means for us to partake every first day of the week.

**CONCLUSION:** The Lord's Supper is a special act of worship that Christians are to observe weekly. My friend, are you consistently worshipping God in His way? Are you qualified to worship Him properly by being one of His children? Won't you considering beginning today?

SINGING

**INTRO:** There are so many things that divide believers in practice, especially in the worship that is offered to God. Sometimes we get so used to worshipping in a certain way that we are shocked to find that someone doesn't agree with us and offended that they would call into question a practice we have engaged in for a long time.

Another of the aspects of worship which is outlined for us in the New Testament is the activity of singing. Singing is a wonderful way of expressing our praise and thanksgiving to God (Hebrews 13:15). But the question must arise in most churches... Do we have authority to add instruments of music to accompany our singing, or to be played in worship to God apart from singing?

The only way we can know what God wants is for Him to tell us (1 Corinthians 2:9-13). Since that is true, we would expect God to tell us if He wanted us to sing His praises and if He wanted us to play with instrumental accompaniments.

This morning, let us open our Bibles and look at all passages dealing with music in worship to God found in the New Testament and see what God wants us to do.

**I. MUSIC IN WORSHIP**

**A. Singing.** There is no doubt that singing is required by God in worship to Him. Let's look at every passage that deals with singing.

1. Matthew 26:30. After instituting the Lord's Supper, Jesus and His disciples sang a song, before going to the Garden of Gethsemane where Jesus would be betrayed. What strength that must have given Him to sing a hymn of praise to God! (cf. Mark 14:26)
2. Acts 16:25. Paul and Silas were singing hymns while in prison. Who could be happy at a time like that? These ministers of God were and singing was the way they expressed it.
3. Romans 15:9. Singing is a way designed to teach others about God and bear witness of Him. When assembled together in a group, we can accomplish this together (cf. 15:6).
4. 1 Corinthians 14:15. In singing, the emphasis is not so much on the music as it is on the heart and motivation of the singing, and the understanding of what is being sung and taught. Otherwise, what good is it if no one is edified (cf. 14:16-17).
5. Ephesians 5:18-20. Singing is a way of speaking to one another, making melody in our hearts to God, and giving thanks to God. It can accomplish all those things. Can a musical instrument do any of those three things?
6. Colossians 3:16. Singing benefits one another and God. We teach one another, and we fill our hearts with goodness to God.

7. Hebrews 2:12. Naturally, singing is an individual's way of praising God daily, but it is a congregational activity too! No one should be ashamed to sing when the congregation sings... Actually, we should be ashamed not to sing when others are singing His praise.

He is not ashamed to be called our brother (cf. 2:11)... why would we be ashamed to sing of His name to others?

8. Hebrews 13:15. Singing is our offering to God. In it we express our praise of Him and thanksgiving for what He has done. Singing is such an appropriate way to accomplish that because the mouth is the instrument that expresses what is in the heart (cf. Matthew 12:34-35).
9. James 5:13. Singing is the way of expressing joy in our hearts, not playing or anything else!

**B. Instrumental Music.** The only mention of instruments of music in the New Testament is found in Revelation, where they are depicted to be in Heaven, not on earth.

1. Revelation 5:8; 14:2. Many people say that if God depicts instruments in heaven, and they were played under the Old Testament Law, how could they be wrong?
  - a. We are not subject to the Law of Moses... It has been done away with (Colossians 2:14). Actually, to try to justify any practice by the Law of Moses puts us in serious danger (Galatians 5:4).
  - b. Realize that the Book of Revelation is a highly figurative a book in which are found many symbols which are not meant to be taken literally (Revelation 1:1).

Revelation also mentions incense, altars, animal sacrifices, temple worship, and many other things not authorized under the New Testament. Let's be careful not to grasp at straws.

**CONCLUSION:** God can be praised better in His own prescribed way than any other way we might devise (Matthew 7:21-23). God has authorized and commanded us to sing words of praise, thanksgiving, and admonition. To add to God's prescribed plan for worship is to put our souls in a dangerous position (2 John 9-11).

My friend, are you faithfully worshipping God in His own prescribed way?

GIVING

**INTRO:** How much have you got? If you were to pool together all your available cash and investments, if you were to cash in your savings bonds and insurance policies, then appraise all the rest of your possessions, how much would you say you have? \$10,000.... \$100,000.... \$1,000,000 ??

If you were to liquidate all your assets right now and add it up, you would have to say that you own nothing!! That's right! Nothing!! See, everything you have is God's. You are just holding it for Him until someone else gets it (Psalm 24:1).

So when it comes to the matter of giving back to God, none of us have any reason to be stingy or selfish with God's possessions.

We are merely stewards of God's wealth. A steward is a trustee. His work is to faithfully discharge his master's money for the intended use His master has for it (1 Corinthians 4:2).

**I. GOD'S OWNERSHIP IS COMPLETE AND INDISPUTABLE**

- A. Everything Belongs To Him.** Heaven and earth are His and all the fulness therein (Psalm 89:11). All are His because He created them (Genesis 1:1).

The land that He gave to the children of Israel through His promise was His (Leviticus 25:23). Every beast is His (Psalm 59:10-12). Silver and gold belong to Him (Haggai 2:8)... after all, who created them in the first place? By right of creation all souls are His (Ezekiel 18:4).

- B. Consequently All Life Is A Stewardship.** God owns our very souls and everything we possess. Therefore, giving back to Him is the discharge of an inescapable stewardship.

It is not a mere "donation" we make at the door just because we felt we should. It is a responsibility of our trusteeship.

**II. PRINCIPLES OF NEW TESTAMENT GIVING SUMMARIZED**

- A. It Is A Grace (2 Corinthians 8:1-5,7).** It was an expression of their goodness back to God. Note the character of their giving in this passage — it was in their affliction, yet there was joy and liberality in the midst of their poverty. They gave beyond their power.

The Bible does not deal in minimums... nor does the New Testament resurrect the Old Testament law of the tithe. The New Testament deals in maximums.

- B. It Is A Test Of The Sincerity Of One's Love (2 Corinthians 8:8-9).** If you really want to test a man's love for something, see how much he is willing to spend for it!! How much is he really giving up? He may be giving a lot of money dollar-wise, but he does it because it doesn't hurt him, he has a lot of money to give.

The real test is... what does it really cost him?



- C. **It Is To Be Done Regularly (1 Corinthians 16:1-2).** When a Christian is meeting together with other New Testament Christians he is to regularly give to the Lord.
- D. **It Is To Be Done Individually (1 Corinthians 16:1-2).** "Let each one of you"... no Christian is excused or exempted. God holds us accountable for what we individually do and we cannot let others do our giving for us and support the work of the Lord by themselves.
- E. **It Is To Be Done Systematically (1 Corinthians 16:2).** "Lay something aside, storing up..." Each Christian is to so plan his giving as he does any of the rest of his expenses for the week or month. Faithfulness to God is not in seeing what you have left at the end of the week and then giving God part of that, but putting God into your budget just like anything else.
- F. **It Is To Be Done Proportionately (1 Corinthians 16:2).** "As he may prosper..." We don't compare our giving with others... either those who give more than we do or those who give less! We are to give to the Lord as we can afford to.
- G. **It Is To Be Done Cheerfully (2 Corinthians 9:7; 8:12).** It is the heart that matters most to God... He doesn't need our money, but He does need our heart!

**CONCLUSION:** You may have noticed that on our radio program that has been airing for years now, we have never asked for donations, contributions, or any money from our listeners.

This program is an evangelistic work of the Harrodsburg Church of Christ and God has never given us any authority to solicit funds for our work from anyone who is not part of our own membership and fellowship.

If this effort over the radio upbuilds you and is a blessing to you, we would encourage you to come and visit with us in our assemblies or contact us for further Bible study. That is our goal, and with God's help we will continue to do that. We will never ask for your money, but we will continue to ask for your time and interest in pursuing with us the things of God.

If you would like a free cassette tape of this or any of the other lessons on this broadcast, or if you would like further information about personalized Bible studies in your home or through the mail please contact us as soon as possible at: Harrodsburg Church of Christ 232 S. College St. Harrodsburg, KY 40330.

PRAYER

**INTRO:** There is a universal tendency among men to appeal to a power higher than themselves -- whether good or evil. Yet, man recognizes his need for interaction with a being greater than himself. He may be ignorant of who this being is and what all He can do, but man still seeks a relationship with this being (or these beings).

The apostle Paul recognized this tendency in all men while in Athens, and he stood up on Mars Hill to tell them about the God who made them all (Acts 17:22-31).

Prayer is man's attempt to reach the ears and gain the attention of the God he worships. Prayer seems like such a small effort but it has tremendous results (James 5:16).

**I. WHAT IS PRAYER?**

- A. Prayer Is Man Talking To God.** It is the heart's desire expressed to God (Romans 10:1). It can be no more than a cry out to the Lord while in need (Matthew 14:30; Luke 18:13), or it can be a time-consuming exercise (Luke 6:12).
- B. Prayer Involves Different Things.** It involves supplication (which is an earnest request for someone or something)... it involves petition (which is the appealing to God to grant something)... it involves intercession (which is approaching God on behalf of someone else)... and it involves thanksgiving (1 Timothy 2:1-2).
- C. Prayer Should Not Be A Memorized Speech.** It should be spontaneous, from the heart. That does not mean that it is wrong to say that same thing more than once or twice, but it is an outgrowth of our daily intimacy and fellowship with God, and will deal with those things we daily encounter and need (Matthew 6:7-13).

**II. WHOSE PRAYER DOES GOD HEAR?**

- A. The Basis Of Prayer Is A Right Relationship With God.** Prayer is possible because of the relationship a person has with God. A child of God can address Him as "Our Father..." (Matthew 6:9), and God cares for His children who make requests of Him (Matthew 7:7-12).

I would like to encourage everyone to pray all the time... but we must be painfully aware that God does not hear the prayers of everyone who tries to approach Him. There are some conditions that must be met by the person who prays to God... by each of us.

1. God hears the prayers of the righteous (1 Peter 3:12; James 5:16). Naturally, these are not the prayers of those who are sinless (if one was sinless he would not have to pray). Nevertheless we must live righteous lives to be heard by God.
2. God hears the prayers of the obedient (1 John 3:22).

3. God hears the prayers of those who "lift up holy hands"... hands that are not tainted with sin (1 Timothy 2:8).

### III. HOW PRAYER PERTAINS TO THE CHRISTIAN

- A. **Prayer Should Be A Constant Exercise.** There is never a time when a Christian does not need to be praying (Luke 18:1; 1 Thessalonians 5:17).
- B. **Prayer Should Be Made About All Things.** Not just "for" all things!! Not just when we want and need something. Prayer is not just a shopping list that we repeat to God so He can fill it. Prayer is a living and vibrant conversation with God about the things that affect us and our fellowman (Philippians 4:6-7).
- C. **Prayer Should Be Made About Others.** Prayers in which we only make requests for ourselves are painfully selfish. We should pray for:
  - a. Rulers of this land and others (1 Timothy 2:1-2)
  - b. Preachers of the gospel (Colossians 4:2-4)
  - c. All saints in need (Ephesians 6:18-19)
  - d. Our enemies (Matthew 5:44-45)

**CONCLUSION:** Prayer does not always work the way we want it to. It is not like ordering a burger and fries from the drive-in window... we don't just go to God and say here is what we want then wait for Him to give it to us.

Sometimes prayers seem to go unanswered. When that happens a Christian should not become discouraged. The prayer may have been contrary to faith or to God's will. It may have been in violation of God's natural or spiritual laws, or God may have something better planned for us.

Sometimes He answers "Yes"... sometimes he answers "No"... and sometimes it's just "Wait".

My friend, above all you need to make sure your life is consistent with God's will so that when you pray, God will hear and answer (1 Peter 3:10-12).

THE SABBATH AND THE LORD'S DAY

**INTRO:** Saturday.... No, Sunday.... You're wrong, it's Saturday.... Forget it, Sunday is the day.... What do you know?.... What do you know?...

That's how it sounds sometimes when discussing the day that God intends for us to set aside to worship Him. Weekends have been recognized in this country for a long time as days to be off work, and were so designated because Saturday and Sunday are the two special days of worship for those who serve God in this country.

So how do we separate the day God intends for us to set aside from the other? Let's very simply see what the Bible has to say about the Sabbath and the First Day of the Week.

**I. THE BIBLE AND THE SABBATH**

**A. What Is The Sabbath?** The sabbath has reference to the seventh day of the week which the Hebrew people observed in keeping with God's commands. The Bible tells us at the end of creation that God rested on the seventh day (Genesis 2:1-3). From then on it was His day!! We don't read of anyone keeping it until centuries later, and for a particular reason.

1. The covenant which included the Sabbath observance was made with the nation of Israel only (Deuteronomy 5:3-4, 12-15).
2. Israel was commanded to keep the Sabbath to remind them of their deliverance from bondage in Egypt (Deuteronomy 5:15). It was a day of remembrance for a special purpose.
3. The Sabbath was not known from the beginning. It was not given, or made known, until the giving of the Law on Mt. Sinai (Nehemiah 9:13-14; Ezekiel 20:10-12).
4. The Sabbath was therefore, a sign between God and the children of Israel, not all nations (Exodus 31:12-17). Thus, the Sabbath observance would last as long as the covenant lasted with Israel.

**B. The End Of The Sabbath.** The Old Covenant made with the nation of Israel when they came out of the land of Egypt and entered into with God at Mt. Sinai, was a covenant that was destined to be replaced after the Christ came (Jeremiah 31:31-34).

The law was nailed to the cross with the death of Christ, along with the Sabbath day and its observances (Colossians 2:14-17). After His death, the Sabbath was not even binding on the Jews anymore, much less those Gentiles of us who were never under that covenant!!

Christians are expressly said to be delivered from the law containing the Ten Commandments (Romans 7:4, 6-7). And the consequence of trying to be justified by keeping that law is to be severed from Christ fallen from grace (Galatians 5:1, 4).

## II. THE BIBLE AND THE FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK

- A. **The First Day Of The Week.** Following the death of Christ, the first day of the week began to take on a greater significance and become the day focused on by the early church. It did not become the "Christian Sabbath" because the two days were for different purposes.
1. Jesus Christ arose on the first day of the week (Mark 16:1-9). He met with His apostles for the first time on that day and many Sundays following that initial time (John 20:1,19,26).
  2. The Day of Pentecost marked the establishment of the church as all the Old Testament prophecies pointing to its establishment came to a head on that day.  
Pentecost always occurred on a Sunday (Leviticus 23:15-16).
  3. The first gospel sermon was preached on the first day of the week and following the baptism of the 3000 we find that the church was in existence (Acts 2:41,47).
  4. The church assembled on the first day of the week to offer their worship to God (Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 16:1-2). They were told not to forsake the assembling of themselves together for worship.

In the New Testament we have a new covenant, a new institution (the church), a new set of ordinances and commandments, a new feast (the Lord's Supper), and a new day (the first day of the week).

**CONCLUSION:** It seems clear, yet in the face of all these New Testament facts, people still argue today that the Sabbath is the day of worship for Christians.

The seventh day Sabbath was to Jews only, and is done away in Christ. The first day is the Lord's Day, and is given to Christians. Let us rejoice and be glad in it (Psalm 118:22-24).

THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

**INTRO:** We might think of the basis of Christianity as being divided into three different parts. These would be doctrine... worship... and the moral life. Christianity affects our lives in those three areas. It affects what we believe, how we approach God, and how we live.

A profession of faith in Jesus Christ, necessitates a certain type of lifestyle to follow (Ephesians 4:1). Proper doctrine and worship mean nothing if the Christian life does not follow!! Everyone who becomes a Christian must grow in the likeness of Christ and be transformed into the image of God's Son (Romans 8:29).

**I. THE CHRISTIAN LIFE**

- A. Is A Life Of Faith And Trust (2 Corinthians 5:7).** He hurdles out on a "leap of faith" when he becomes a Christian. He will not always see where God is leading Him, but he will always know that God is leading him!

His trust being in God, he will not fall away and turn back to the world from whence he came (Hebrews 10:37-39). When our faith is tested, it is found to be genuine, and results in the salvation of our souls (1 Peter 1:9).

- B. Is A Life Of Blessing And Privilege (1 John 3:1-2).** It is an honor to be a child of God... a place of distinction and privilege!! There are a multitude of blessings to be enjoyed...

1. The privilege of being an heir with Christ (Romans 8:14-17)
2. The privilege of addressing our needs and prayers to God (Philippians 4:6-7)
3. The assurance of God's continual care and presence which enables us to face life with a sure, calm confidence (Hebrews 13:5-6)

- C. Is A Life Of Holiness And Right Conduct (Ephesians 5:1-2).** It is a life whose examples are no less than God the Father and Jesus the Son. A high and perfect standard indeed, but a necessary one to follow nonetheless!! We must be holy because God is holy (1 Peter 1:15). We must be pure because God is pure (1 John 3:3). We must walk in love because God is love (1 John 4:7-8).

We honor God when we live like God — not perfect, but following His lead! We reproach God when we do not!!

Our lives are to be pure and holy in flesh and spirit. We accomplish that by separating ourselves to live like God (2 Corinthians 7:1).

- D. Such An Ideal Is Attained By Crucifying The Flesh And Following After The Spirit.** It is such a radical change of life that no one who undergoes this spiritual rebirth is the same anymore (John 3:3-5; 2 Corinthians 5:17).

1. He puts to death the deeds of the body, the old practices, and

puts on a new character, with completely new and different practices (Colossians 3:5-17)

2. Christ comes into our hearts, dwelling there by faith (Ephesians 3:14-19).

**E. Emphasis Placed On Change Of Heart.** In the Christian life, the emphasis is always placed on a change of heart and character....and change that affects the very core and caliber of our lives.

Jesus pointed the emphasis to the heart — the seat of human conduct. He goes back past the deed to the motive, to the origin of the act.

1. "Kill..... angry" (Matthew 5:21-26)
2. "Adultery..... lust" (Matthew 5:27-30)
3. "Swear falsely..... swear not at all" (Matthew 5:33-37)
4. "Eye for an eye..... turn other cheek" (Matthew 5:38-42)
5. "Love neighbor hate enemy..... love enemy" (Matthew 5:43-48)

**CONCLUSION:** Such a disposition is not developed in a day or a month or a year. It is a growth, the result of continual watering, fertilizing, pruning, and developing.

Dear listener, the Christian life is lived by heavenly principles, and for another world. But at the same time it is practical... actually, the only practical life in this world. Won't you live by it??

THE DANGER OF APOSTASY

**INTRO:** After becoming a Christian, it is important to continue living the life God has outlined in the Bible. There are some people who preach its importance, but deny its necessity. Today someone is sure to preach that and it is very possible you will hear it either on the radio, television or in the church where you will be attending.

Many people, who say their reliance is on God's grace, will claim today that once a person is saved and becomes a child of God there is no way he can be lost... he is secure and cannot fall from God's grace. That doctrine is utterly false (Galatians 5:4).

We must all rely on God's grace for our salvation... but His grace is not extended to those who do not meet certain conditions of right living. That in no way lessens the importance of God's grace, even though it does make our obedience more important than many have thought! We must be careful of perversions of God's grace (Jude 4).

**I. THE GRACE OF GOD**

**A. What Is God's Grace?** God's grace is His favor and goodwill that is bestowed on us even though we are totally undeserving of it. If we are to keep God's law perfectly and do everything He wants us to do, we still do not deserve it, nor can we earn it.

God's grace was bestowed on us when we were without hope and now is the basis of our hope (Ephesians 2:1-10).

**II. CHILDREN OF GOD CAN STILL SIN AND BE LOST**

**A. Examples Of "Falling From Grace".** The Bible is full of examples and illustrations of God's children falling from His grace.

1. The Vine And The Branches (John 15:1-10). There can be no branch apart from the vine. Likewise, there can be no Christian who can live apart from Christ. The branches of this vine were in Christ, but some of them were cast out and destroyed because they did not bear fruit.

A child of God can be cast out and burned... he can be lost!!

2. The Book Of Life (Philippians 4:3). Children of God have their names written in the "book of life" (Luke 10:20; Hebrews 12:23). But even so, those who sin are "blotted out" of the book (Exodus 32:32-33).

Then, those whose names are not found in the "book of life", either because they were never there, or because they were blotted out, are cast into the lake of fire (Revelation 20:15).

3. Christ Crucified Afresh (Hebrews 6:4-8). Christ died once for the sins of all men. When we become Christians, Christ is formed within us (Galatians 4:19). Only the Christian could "crucify Him again". Who else could he be talking about in this passage?



4. Sanctified Ones Sin Willfully (Hebrews 10:26-31). These have no more hope, like they once had, only a fearful knowledge and expectation of judgment. Notice carefully that the ones of whom he writes in this passages are those who have been sanctified by the blood of Christ!  
These backsliders facing judgment are those who were at one time faithful and facing an eternal reward... but they fell away!!
5. Those Leaving Their First Love (Revelation 2:4-7). The church at Ephesus had left the first love of their lives — Jesus Christ. They were on the brink of being removed from God's presence and cast away. Can a "child of God fall from grace"? These people were told by the Lord Himself that they were about to!!
6. Departing From The Faith (1 Timothy 4:1). More than just a warning that this was a possibility, they were told that it was a certainty that some would fall away from the faith. There are some in the church who would make shipwreck of their faith, overthrowing the faith of others in the process (1 Timothy 1:18-20; 2 Timothy 2:17-18).

**CONCLUSION:** My friend, the Bible is very clear. Even the saved are in danger of being lost. We must daily "make our calling and election sure" (2 Peter 1:10) at the same time we "take heed lest we fall" (1 Corinthians 10:12; Hebrews 12:15).

If we find ourselves at one time in Christ and then fall away... then that is worse than if we had never known the way of the Lord (2 Peter 2:20-22).

THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST

**INTRO:** The return of Christ will be the great day of all days. For the righteous it will be a day of great joy and rejoicing... for the wicked a great day of sorrow and cursing (2 Thessalonians 1:6-10).

In the coming of our Lord and all that which follows will be the consummation of the Christian system and the purpose of God. When Jesus comes back it will not be to usher in some new age on the world, but to bring to a close and a fulfillment God's eternal plan for mankind.

There is a great amount of speculation about the second coming. Much is taken from the Old Testament prophets whose prophecies did not extend past the first coming of Christ and the new kingdom and church age which began then.... and also from the Book of Revelation which clearly tells us that the events it depicts are those which were shortly to come to pass after the time they were written 1900 years ago (Revelation 1:1-3; 22:6,10).

We will leave the speculation to those who don't have anything better to do than argue over passages they are taking out of their context and misinterpreting anyway, and will see in the clear, unequivocal language of the Bible what it says about the return of Christ.

**I. THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST**

- A. It Is Necessary To Consummate God's Plan For Saving Man (Hebrews 9:27-28; Philippians 3:20-21).** He is coming back to issue salvation and eternal life with God.
- B. It Is Certain (Acts 1:9-11).** Promised to Jesus' disciples by the word of angels, it is further guaranteed by Jesus' resurrection from the dead.
- C. The Time Is Completely Unknown To Man (1 Thessalonians 5:2).** Any claim by any man that he knows what year the Lord is coming in or even what generation is clearly contrary to what the Bible says about it. We have no idea. Truly this generation is evil, but what generation that ever lived was not??
- D. The Manner Of His Return Is Specified (Acts 1:9-11; 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18).** His coming will be visible and audible. No one will miss it... every eye will see it and every ear will hear it.

**II. WHAT WILL BE ACCOMPLISHED AT HIS COMING?**

- A. The Dead Will Be Raised (John 5:28-29).** All the dead!! All will stand before God, both righteous and evil!! Bodies will be raised and changed and the dead will have their bodies and souls reunited (1 Thessalonians 4:14-17). Those who are still living will be changed and will join the dead to be judged (1 Corinthians 15:50-54).
- B. All Men Will Be Judged (Revelation 20:11-15; Matthew 25:31-46).**

- C. **The Saints Will Be Glorified (Colossians 3:4; 1 John 3:2).** We will become like Jesus and share in His glory (Philippians 3:20-21).
- D. **The Wicked Will Be Punished (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9).** Notice that this will occur at the same time as the glorification of the saints. The Bible does not speak of a "rapture" of the righteous out of the world for the unrighteous to remain and face a tribulation and 1000 year reign on earth.

By putting together some unrelated passages, men have concocted a theory that has been accepted by most religious people today. This passage says that both the righteous and unrighteous will face the Lord "in that day".
- E. **The Passing Of The Present Order And Ushering In Of New Heavens And A New Earth (2 Peter 3:4-13).** This will not be a revitalized planet earth. Peter says the earth will be destroyed.

This will be a spiritual place Jesus has prepared for a spiritual people... one that He says He is in the process of preparing right now (John 14:1-3)! He is coming back when He has finished preparing it, not when He is ready to prepare it!!

**CONCLUSION:** My friend, there is a great day coming. In that day we will all be judged by the lives we have led here on this earth. We will all be there (2 Corinthians 5:10; Romans 14:10-12).

Dear listener, when you stand before the judgment bar of God, what words will you hear (Matthew 25:34,41)? Prepare to meet your God!!