

all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself.”²⁸ And he said to him, “You have answered right; do this, and you will live.”

29 But he, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?”³⁰ Jesus replied, “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among robbers, who stripped him and beat him, and departed, leaving him half dead.³¹ Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him he passed by on the other side.³² So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side.³³ But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was; and when he saw him, he had compassion,³⁴ and went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; then he set him on his own beast and brought him to an inn, and took care of him.³⁵ And the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, ‘Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back.’³⁶ Which of these three, do you think, proved neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?”³⁷ He said, “The one who showed mercy on him.” And Jesus said to him, “Go and do likewise.”

10:25-28 Love the Lord: A lawyer had been sitting among the crowds listening to Jesus teach. Lawyer (Gr. *nomikos*) was a term applied to an elite class of Jewish men trained in the Scriptural law and in the oral traditions (which had the force of law). His duty was to settle questions and disputes arising about matters of the Law in everyday Jewish life and to perpetuate the office of lawyer by teaching all young Jewish men who would come to him to learn. The term *lawyer* is synonymous with *scribe*. They are often found in association with the Pharisees but are distinguished from them in that Pharisees were a religious party while the lawyers-scribes held an office. Undoubtedly the majority of the lawyers-scribes belonged to the party of the Pharisees (cf. Mt. 5:20; 9:3; 12:38; 15:1; 23:2, 13; Mk. 2:16; 3:22; 9:14; 12:38-39; Lk. 5:21, 30; 6:7; 7:30; 10:25; 11:45; 15:2; 19:39; Jn. 8:3, etc.). Lawyers and scribes were revered and feared by the people; called *rabbi* (meaning, master); demanded an honor surpassing that due to parents. Proudly they claimed the positions of first rank, and dressed in long robes like the nobility. Along with the Pharisees, they were thought to be, and thought themselves to be, the most pious of all mankind. Because Jesus refused to be bound by scribal traditions, they fiercely opposed Him.

The foregoing characterization of lawyers and scribes makes this confrontation rather amazing. Luke says the lawyer's question, “Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?” was asked in order to put Jesus “to the test.” Some commentators think the lawyer had some wicked

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

motive for the "test." Perhaps he hoped to trap Jesus in some statement that would appear to be anti-rabbinical. Whatever the motive, Jesus put the onus back on the lawyer by asking, "What is written in the law? How do you read?" The answer of the lawyer is very impressive in view of his rabbinical background. One would expect a lawyer to have answered with a long list of rabbinical traditions one should "do" to inherit eternal life. But he said, "You shall love the Lord your God . . . and your neighbor as yourself." Jesus told him he had spoken correctly.

It would take an uncommonly spiritually-minded Jewish rabbi to make a statement¹ such as this lawyer made. The popular theology of the Jews (going all the way back to the days of the prophets; cf. Isa. 1:11ff.; Jer. 7:21-26; Micah 6:6-8) was that the sacrificial ritual was the heart and core of their covenant relationship to God. But it wasn't! God made covenant with their father, Abraham, long before the Mosaic sacrifices, based on Abraham's loving God with all his being. Eternal life is in a Person—not a religion. Of course, man must have some systematic way of expressing his devotion to his Loving Father so God ordains certain rituals and deeds acceptable to Him for such expression. Man was created in the image of His Creator; man *must* love. What, or whom, he loves determines his character (cf. Hosea 9:10). It is not just the "doing" of religious rituals or deeds of piety, but the motive for doing that makes what is done godly or not, (cf. Mt. 6:1-24). How does one love God? By loving his neighbor! There is no possibility of loving God without loving one's neighbor, (I Jn. 4:20-21).

Another lawyer asked Jesus practically the same question in the last week of His ministry (Mt. 22:34-40). Jesus gave the same answer, and added, "On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." In other words, the essence of the law of God and the teaching of the prophets was to reveal God's nature (faithfulness, justice, mercy, love, purity, etc.) so that men would trust Him, love Him and obey Him. Since the law of God reveals Him as loving all men, the essential core of man's relationship to God is that he love his fellow man just as God loves him. When God's law to Moses required the Jew to be separate from the heathen, it was not meant to kill the love of man for man. It was intended to keep the Jew separate from the heathen wickedness which was spiritually destructive. The commandment to love the Lord is from the Hebrew *shema* ("hear, obey") in Deuteronomy 6:4-6. The commandment to love one's neighbor is found in Leviticus 19:18. There are many more commandments in the Old Testament urging the Jew to be kind and merciful to his fellow man, even to "aliens and sojourners," (cf. Lev. 25:35-38; 16:29; 25:6; Num. 15:15-16; 35:15; especially, Lev. 19:33-34 and Ex. 22:21). Jesus makes it very plain in other teachings that if one loves God and His Son, he will keep Christ's commandments (Jn. 14:15; 14:21; 14:23-24; 15:10; 15:12, etc.).

10:29-37 Minister to Man: Theologically and theoretically, the lawyer knew the essence of God's will for man. He was honest-hearted enough to see that the ritual observance of sacrifice and ceremony was not the core of man's relationship to God. He had seen from God's revelation that surrender of the total man, heart-soul-strength-mind, to God and love of one's neighbor was the key to eternal life. But when it came to putting what he knew to practice, he was apparently not ready to give complete surrender. He wanted to reserve the right to be selective as to whom he should love among mankind. Knowing that he had loved some men, he sought to justify his own selectivity by asking Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" Perhaps he expected Jesus (considered to be a Rabbi, since He had disciples) would define "neighbor" in the classical rabbinical exclusiveness as being, "one of my fellow scribes." Jewish society in Jesus' day was regimented within a strict caste system. There was first of all the religious fanatics (Pharisees, scribes, lawyers); then there were the pragmatic, vacillating politicians (Sadducees, Herodians); then there were the *am-ha-aretz* ("the people of the land,"), most of whom were poor and oppressed. Scribes were hated! Rabbi Akiba said to his disciples, "Before I became a scribe myself, I thought, 'Ah, if only I had one in my grasp, I would bite him like an ass.'" One of his disciples replied, "Master, would it not have been enough to bite him like a dog?" Akiba replied, "No, like an ass, for an ass bites better: he crushes the very bones." Pharisees and scribes considered all *am-ha-aretz* as ignorant of the law and therefore "accursed" (cf. Jn. 7:49). One Pharisee was shocked that the rabbi Jesus would allow a "sinner-woman" to touch Him (Lk. 7:39). If a Jewish scribe had difficulty considering a lower-class Jew his "neighbor" to love as himself, what would he think of neighborliness to a Gentile? So this Jewish scribe or lawyer was hoping Jesus would follow the traditional definition of "neighbor." He could thus justify himself for he had probably acted quite neighborly to his fellow lawyers.

When Jesus told His story of the Samaritan who had helped the robbed and beaten Jew on the road to Jericho, this lawyer and many others standing near must have gasped in utter shock! There was a violent hatred between most Jews and Samaritans in that age. "Samaritan" was one of the vilest epithets a Jew could use against any man (cf. Jn. 8:48). The animosity between Judeans and the people of the north of Jerusalem probably began with the division of the Solomonic empire when the ten northern tribes withdrew and formed the nation of Israel (about 935 B.C.). The two remaining tribes formed the southern kingdom, Judah. Israel formed its own religion, government, priesthood and army. Upon Israel's captivity by the Assyrians in 722 B.C., most of the able-bodied Israelites were deported to Mesopotamia and heathen

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

peoples were immigrated into that territory. The heathen immigrants intermarried with the Hebrews who had been left behind and this formed a "half-breed" Jewish population known as Samaritans. Judah was taken captive in 606-586 B.C. and its people deported to Babylon. Seventy years later, 536 B.C., fifty thousand Judeans were allowed to return to their homeland by Cyrus, king of Persia. The Judeans reoccupied their farms and villages and this dispossessed many "Samaritans" who had moved into the southern part of Palestine when the Judeans had been carried off to Babylon. That added fuel to the fires of animosity between these two peoples. The Samaritans wanted to help the Judeans rebuild their Temple and their cities (cf. Ezra 4:1ff.), but were told bluntly and unceremoniously their help was not wanted! From that point on, the hatred intensified. Rabbinic tradition soon declared the Samaritans "excommunicated" from the Hebrew covenant (*Talmud, Tanahim* 17:4). About 333 B.C., Manasseh, grandson of the Judean high priest, but also son-in-law of Sanballat the governor of Samaria, persuaded Cyrus, king of Persia, to allow him to build a temple to Jehovah on Mt. Gerizim that would be a rival to the temple in Jerusalem. He made himself the high priest, convinced some priests from Jerusalem to join him there, and allowed them to marry heathen women, (cf. Josephus, *Antiquities*, 11:8). John Hyrcanus, Hasmonean king of Judea, destroyed the Samaritan temple on Gerizim along with the city of Samaria. Herod the Great rebuilt Samaria and called it Sebaste (Greek for "Augustus") in honor of the Roman emperor. Herod also built the Samaritans another temple in the city of Sebaste, but the Samaritans refused to use it, preferring to continue their worship at the ruins on top of Mt. Gerizim (cf. Jn. 4:20-21). Conflict and invective continued between Jew and Samaritan for centuries. Around A.D. 6-9, according to annual custom, the gates of the temple in Jerusalem were opened at midnight, whereupon some Samaritans who had secreted themselves nearby, polluted the Jewish temple by scattering human bones in its porches. Samaritans were thereafter excluded from the services (Josephus, *Antiquities* 18:2:2). In 52 A.D., Samaritans attacked some Jewish pilgrims travelling south to one of their annual feasts. The Jews counterattacked and the struggle became so fierce the Roman legate of Syria had to send in troops. These troops crucified a number of Jews as punishment for the riot. The Samaritans were cursed by the Jewish people. One Talmudic proverb says, "A piece of bread given by a Samaritan is more unclean than swine's flesh." Remember, Samaritans refused lodging for Jesus and His disciples as they were on their way to Tabernacles (cf. Lk. 9:51-56).

But apparently not all Samaritans were like this. Jesus here relates that one Samaritan knew better than Jewish priests and Levites what

mercy and neighborliness was. Another time (Lk. 17:12ff.) a Samaritan was the only one of ten who knew how to express gratitude for being healed of leprosy. A Samaritan woman changed her life as a result of Jesus' preaching and evangelized a whole city (Jn. 4). Multitudes of Samaritans became Christians at the preaching of Philip (cf. Acts 8:4-8).

Jesus began His parable, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among robbers." The road from Jerusalem to Jericho was called *Adummim* (Josh. 15:7; 18:17) which means, "The Pass of Blood." It was a notoriously thief-infested, steep, long road, crowded along its sides with caves and hiding places. Josephus records that Herod had dismissed 40,000 workmen from the Temple shortly before Jesus told this parable and a large part of them became vicious highway robbers. The Jewish traveler of the Lord's parable was set upon by such thieves and robbed, stripped, beaten and left half-dead. A priest and a Levite came upon this man as they traveled the road, but they passed by on the other side. The Greek word *antiparelthen* is very expressive. It is a triple compounded word: *anti*, against; *para*, alongside; *erchomai*, come, go. These two Jewish "holy-men" came upon the victim, one of their own people, but quickly crossed over to the other side of the road. We really don't know why they crossed over to the other side of the road. Perhaps fear of ceremonial pollution from touching a dead body (as far as they could see he was dead); perhaps they were afraid to get involved lest the robbers might still be around. Whatever, Jesus doesn't give their reasons, because no reason they could give would be justifiable. But a Samaritan came along—and incredibly, unexpectedly, inexplicably stopped and helped the victim. Jesus said the Samaritan had compassion on the victim. The Greek word is *esplagchnisthe* and describes a "gut-feeling" type of compassion; one that describes literally hurting because someone else hurts. *Splagchnon* is a word often translated "inward parts, bowels or tender mercies" in the KJV. The Samaritan bound the man's wounds, put medicine on them, took him to an inn, cared for him, and paid the bill in full.

Now the point of this parable is not who is my neighbor, but—be sure you are always a neighbor when someone needs one! Neighborliness has nothing to do with geographical boundaries, but it has everything to do with need, anywhere one finds it. It was not the victim but the Samaritan who was the neighbor!

The Samaritan was a true neighbor. He could see need above other less important matters. He could have thought of just as many excuses that he shouldn't help the victim as the priest and Levite, but his conscience would not let him justify himself as had the others. There is only one justifiable way to love God and that is through helping people in need (I Jn. 4:20-21). We may do many other things and say we love

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

God, but if we do not help those in need our profession is hypocritical. Mercifulness is the Christian way of life—"Blessed are the merciful. . . ." (Mt. 5:7). The Samaritan got personal. We like to organize our goodness through benevolent organizations. If we hire others to do benevolence we don't have to get our hands dirty, smell unpleasant odors, lose sleep and get involved. We want to institutionalize goodness so we can spend our own time searching for our own happiness. And we never find happiness that way because it is found in doing good personally (Acts 20:35; Jn. 13:16). The Samaritan didn't turn the man over to anyone else until he was sure he had personally done everything he could for the man. He didn't give the victim money and tell him to go find an inn and a doctor. The Samaritan got down on his knees in the dirt—exposed himself to danger—got his hands dirty, and helped. The Samaritan was flexible. The priest and Levite probably rushed on past because they were on very important missions with tight schedules and just didn't have time to stop. The Samaritan didn't do his goodness on a schedule—he did it when the need arose, no matter what his schedule was. The Samaritan was brave. There is always an element of danger in every effort to help someone; danger to one's reputation, to one's safety; to one's possessions. Helping others puts one in a position of vulnerability to be rejected, ridiculed and misunderstood. One must be brave to be good.

Finally, the Samaritan was realistic. He did not try to do more than he could. We are not commanded to be a miracle-worker or a slave to everyone we help. Not every cry for help will be a permanent assignment. The Samaritan did not take the victim home with him and adopt him into the family. He did what he could and departed. Some have to take over the victim's life and manage it or dominate everyone they help. There are subtle pitfalls in too much helpfulness. Some want to help in order to put those they help forever in debt to them in order to hear the constant "thank yous" which build ego and identify and earn merit. The Samaritan did *all* he could, the *best* he could, and let it go at that. It is not even recorded that the victim thanked the Samaritan!

When asked, "which of these three, do you think, proved neighbor to the man," the lawyer apparently gagged on the word "Samaritan" and so he said, "The one doing the mercy to him . . ." The Lord's reply, as recorded by Luke in Greek is, *poreuou kai su poiei homoios*. The word "Go" is in the imperative mood. Jesus is not suggesting this, He is commanding it! Literally translated, Jesus said, "Go! and you keep on doing likewise."

SECTION 3

Prescribing Knowledge (10:38-42)

38 Now as they went on their way, he entered a village; and a woman named Martha received him into her house. ³⁹And she had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to his teaching. ⁴⁰But Martha was distracted with much serving; and she went to him and said, "Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Tell her then to help me." ⁴¹But the Lord answered her, "Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things; ⁴²one thing is needful. Mary has chosen the good portion, which shall not be taken away from her."

10:38-40 Listening Prudently: Sometime during this later Judean ministry of three months (between Tabernacles and Dedication), Jesus visited in the home of Martha and Mary, special friends of His. We know from John's Gospel (ch. 11-12) that their home was in the village of Bethany, about two and one-half miles southeast of Jerusalem, just over the crest of the Mount of Olives. Martha *received* (Gr. *hupedexato*, a word denoting warm hospitality, see Mt. 10:40-41) Jesus into her house. Jesus probably had a standing invitation to visit them anytime He was in that vicinity. During Jesus' last week in Jerusalem, He went in and out of the big city almost every night. He probably stayed in this home at night. Martha had a sister named Mary, and a brother named Lazarus (Jn. 12:1ff.). Martha seems to have been the oldest of the family. Most commentators assume the house belonged to Martha since she seems always to be "taking charge." Some suppose she may have been a widow; some think her husband might have been Simon the leper (cf. Mk. 14:3 with Jn. 12:2ff.). Every opportunity Jesus had, He taught. Upon entering the home of His friends in Bethany, He sat down and began to teach (probably concerning the kingdom of God). Mary sat "beside Him at His feet" in the customary place of a pupil. The Greek says Mary "also" sat listening to Jesus teach. Perhaps some of His disciples or other friends of Martha and Mary were present. The "also" may indicate Martha too had at first listened to Jesus teach but quit and busied herself with serving.

While Mary was not helping, Martha became distracted with "much" serving. The Greek word translated distracted is *periespato* which means, "to agitate, to wheel about, to twist and convulse." Martha was running around in circles, agitated and distracted. So Martha exploded and interrupted the Lord (the Greek word *epistasa* means, "to come suddenly upon, to press upon, to assault," cf. Acts 6:12; 17:5), saying, "Lord, doesn't it matter to you that my sister has left me all alone to do

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

all the serving?" Then Martha directed the Lord to order Mary to help her. Martha's direction in Greek is *sunantilabetai*, literally, "take hold over against," meaning, "Tell Mary to carry her end of the load around here and help me."

10:41-42 Learning Priorities: Jesus reacted tenderly to the scolding from Martha. The double use of her name, "Martha, Martha . . ." indicates His patience with her. Jesus said, ". . . you are anxious (Gr. *merimnas*, split-minded) and troubled about many things; one thing is needful." The most ancient and best manuscripts (Sinaiticus, Vaticanus and Ephraemi) have the answer of Jesus, ". . . you are anxious and troubled about many things; there is need of just a few things, or one." Either way, what Jesus is emphasizing is that just a simple meal was all that Martha needed to be concerned about. Jesus did not rebuke Martha for her hospitality; He did not say her service was wrong. The "one thing" is not even something spiritual, but "one" or two simple dishes as compared to the "many" dishes Martha was fretting about. Jesus was chiding Martha for involving herself in so many unnecessary things. All she need do, as far as He was concerned, was make a simple meal and then come join Mary in the best part of the whole visit—listening to His teaching. He took this occasion to remind Martha that spiritual things are the only abiding things. Martha was not wrong in serving the meal, she simply made that the first priority. Mary chose that which should really be first priority—opportunity to learn from Jesus. That should always come *before* food or drink or any other thing. If the choice must be made between a meal or an opportunity to learn from Jesus, the latter must have first priority, because that will never be diminished or lost.

Luke alone records this intimate scene. There is much to be learned from it. It contrasts beautifully with the parable of the Good Samaritan which emphasized service to humanity. This incident shows that earthly things are not ultimate. Mary knew the secret that love cannot finally express itself in physical things. Love must ultimately cling to the things of the spirit—that which abides eternally in the next world. What Martha must learn was that in discipleship to Jesus you must not learn to give, but also to receive from Him, especially learn from Him. Martha was trying to express love totally in physical service. It caused a reaction; a sad reaction. She got so totally engrossed in the doing and so agitated at the apparent indifference of those being served she rushed in and scolded both Mary and Jesus.

Jesus recognized the need for hospitality, but He corrected Martha for her fretfulness and fussiness. Hospitality that gets in the way of making spiritual things first in priority is superfluous. If there is an opportunity to learn from Jesus, the only hospitality that is needed is just

enough to make the first thing possible. Jesus wants Martha to understand that the principal thing is what He has to say to mankind. His words are spirit and life; His word is the bread of life (cf. Jn. 6:63). His food is to do the will of the Father (Jn. 4:34). Man lives, not by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God (Mt. 4:4). It was not Martha's kindness Jesus rebuked, it was her order of priorities, her anxiety and her burst of jealousy. The kingdom of God is not food and drink, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit (Rom. 14:17). The primary mission of the church—the preaching of the word of God—must never be second to ministering to the body (Acts 6:2). It is a false benevolence that feeds a man's stomach and starves his soul! The rebirth of the spirit, the sustenance of the soul is of first priority. All other things will perish. The physical order of all creation will soon die. All we can gain physically we must leave. But the spirit of man lives forever—either in the presence of God or banished from Him. What is needful is to listen to Jesus!

STUDY STIMULATORS:

1. What does it indicate to you about the progress of Jesus' ministry to learn that He had seventy other disciples He could send out to evangelize besides the twelve apostles?
2. What do you think of Jesus as a "condemner" of great masses of people?
3. Why is indifference the most evil form of unbelief?
4. Why did the casting out of demons by the seventy disciples cause Jesus to speak of the fall of Satan?
5. Is there still available for believers today the power to tread upon serpents? Why?
6. Why did Jesus tell the seventy to put a check on their enthusiasm? Is the same admonition needed in Christendom today?
7. Why is the idea of God revealing Himself to man so fundamental? Why is the issue of God's revelation a continuing issue for Christians?
8. What do you think was behind the lawyer's question to Jesus about eternal life?
9. Do you really believe that the two commandments the lawyer quoted will give eternal life? Why?
10. Does Jesus' teaching in the parable of the Good Samaritan apply in our lives? How far should we go to help someone? Should we help any stranger who appears to need help?
11. Is it possible for a Christian to be overly hospitable? Are you ever too busy with hospitality to learn Jesus' teachings?

THE CONDEMNATION, CHALLENGE AND COMPASSION OF THE KING

(Matthew 11:20-30)

By Paul T. Butler — OBC Chapel, 10-24-78

INTRODUCTION

I. POINT IN TIME OF JESUS' MINISTRY

- A. Some time after the Second Passover (2nd year of ministry)
 - 1. He has returned to Galilee
 - 2. He has healed many
 - 3. Named the 12 apostles
 - 4. Delivered the sermon on the mount
 - 5. Raised widow's son from the dead
- B. Question from John Baptist probably precipitated His focusing on the refusal of these cities to recognize Him as the Messiah.
 - 1. Jesus is now in Capernaum
 - 2. Chorazin was about 2 miles north of Capernaum (which was on the coast of Galilee [Sea]). It is mentioned only here in Jesus' condemnation (and in Luke 10—another time of condemnation). It was probably an important city being at the northern most end of the land of Palestine of the 1st century. Trade routes and military garrisons were probably there. It ceased to be inhabited by the time of Eusebius (250 A.D.). It lasted only about 200 years after Jesus' condemnation of it. Only a few carved stones remain today.
 - 3. Bethsaida (Julius); east of the Jordan, near the river's entry into the Sea of Galilee. The tetrarch Philip raised it to the rank of "city" and called it Julius in honor of the daughter of Augustus Caesar, Julia. (If there is only one Bethsaida, instead of two, this is the one.) Some think there was another Bethsaida—a suburb, as it were, of Capernaum. Whatever the case, neither can be found except for a few ruins of a road. Probably a place of much activity in the fishing business (the name means: "house of fishing").
 - 4. Capernaum: It was a customs station; the residence of a high officer of the king (Mt. 9:9; Jn. 4:46); occupied by a detachment of Roman soldiers, whose commander built the Jews a synagogue at his own expense. By the time of Josephus (40 or 50 years after Jesus) Capernaum was of such small significance, J. called it a village.

Capernaum seems to have exalted itself and this became the cause of its rejection of Jesus.

CONDEMNATION, CHALLENGE AND COMPASSION OF KING

DISCUSSION

I. CONDEMNATION (11:20-24)

A. Jesus walked the streets of these cities, esp. Capernaum, and so did His disciples.

1. He had His ministerial headquarters there
2. He had healed a nobleman's son (by remote control from Cana)
3. He had healed a man let down through a roof and forgave his sins
4. He had given the disciples a miraculous catch of fish and called the four fishermen
5. He healed many of all kinds of ills
6. Cast out a demon from a man on the sabbath in a synagogue
7. Healed Peter's mother-in-law
8. The whole city came to the door that evening for healing and He healed many again.
9. Healed the centurion's servant.

Later, He:

10. Stilled the tempest near the city of Capernaum
11. Raised Jairus' daughter
12. Healed woman with flow of blood
13. Healed two blind men and a dumb demoniac

Some of Jesus' greatest sermons were delivered in this area:

1. Sermon on the Mount could have had some of their citizens attending
2. Sermon on the Bread of Life
3. Sermon on Human Traditions (Mt. 15)
4. Sermon on True Greatness; Stumbling-blocks, Mistreatment and Forgiveness

B. Would Jesus condemn?

1. *Oneidizein* means to *blame, charge, accuse, rebuke, justifiably*.
2. Jesus condemned more often than some want to acknowledge. Most want to think of Jesus as always positive—always encouraging—always forgiving, even indulging those who do not agree with Him.
3. Jesus condemned: Mt. 7:21-23; (here in Mt. 11); Mt. 23:1ff.; Mt. 12:22-42; Jn. 3:36; 8:42-47; 9:35-41; 12:31, etc.
4. It was predicted by the Old Testament prophets that the Messiah would come to condemn and judge (Isa. 11:1-9, esp. v. 4; Mal. 3:1f.; Dan. 2, 7, 11; Micah 5; Zech. 9:9f.).
5. Practically every parable Jesus told has a condemnation at the end.
6. By the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the letters of the apostles contain much condemnation.

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

7. Paul even told Timothy, to "reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering."

THIS KIND OF JESUS WOULD NOT BE RECOGNIZED IN THE CITIES AND FARMS OF AMERICA TODAY!

AND THIS IS EXACTLY WHY HE WAS NOT RECOGNIZED IN THE CITIES AND VILLAGES OF THAT DAY!

WHO WANTS A MESSIAH THAT DEMANDS RIGHTEOUSNESS AND CONDEMNS YOU IF YOU DON'T PRODUCE IT!

A CHRIST WHO DEMANDS NOTHING, CONDEMNS NOTHING AND SAVES NO ONE.

C. Revelation teaches it and reason demands it.

1. God cannot be reduced to a vacillating, flaccid, spineless compromiser.
2. If your God doesn't condemn unbelief and unrighteousness, He cannot praise and reward faith and holiness. If God does not hate and judge evil, He cannot love and preserve truth and goodness.

THAT GOES FOR HIS SON, JESUS, FOR HIS PROPOSITIONAL WORD, THE BIBLE, AND FOR THE MESSENGERS AND PREACHERS OF HIS WORD!

3. This is what the Hebrew people could not and would not accept—this absolute faithfulness of Jehovah to act according to His nature.

THEY WANTED GOD TO CONDEMN AND JUDGE THEIR ENEMIES . . . BUT TO INDULGE THEM IN THEIR PAGANISM.

4. Where do you stand in your concept of Jesus? Have you accepted Him as an indulgent, compromising Savior?

Is this the cause for the lack of commitment and holy living in the church today? Why have so many Christians compromised their confession by their public lives today—because they have reduced Jesus to a non-condemning, never-judging Savior.

5. J. B. Phillips, in, *Your God Is Too Small*, says some people's concept of the "meek and mild" Jesus makes their God too small.

"Of the epithets that could be applied to Christ this seems one of the least appropriate . . . it conjures up to our minds a picture of someone who wouldn't say 'boo' to the proverbial goose; someone who would let sleeping dogs lie and avoid trouble wherever possible . . ."

"Christ might well be called meek . . . but mild, never!"

"We hear, or read, of someone who was a real saint: he never saw any harm in anyone and never spoke a word against

CONDEMNATION, CHALLENGE AND COMPASSION OF KING

anyone all his life. If this really is Christian saintliness then Jesus Christ was not saint. It is true that He taught men not to sit in judgment upon one another, but He never suggested that they should turn a blind eye to evil or pretend that other people were faultless."

People who have such a "totally sentimental" concept of Jesus meek and mild find their actions, and even their thoughts, inhibited by a false consideration of what is loving.

They can neither use their critical faculties nor speak the plain truth nor meet their fellow man naturally for fear they sin against the meek and mild god. The love they attempt to exhibit toward others is all too often a pathetic travesty of the real thing.

For, like other sentimentalists, the meek and mild god is in reality cruel.

I like the way Abraham Heschel says it in his book, *The Prophets*, pp. 64-66: "Indifference to evil is more insidious than evil itself . . . all prophecy is one great exclamation: God is not indifferent to evil! . . . There is no divine anger for anger's sake. Its meaning is . . . to bring about repentance . . . so that beyond justice and anger lies the mystery of compassion."

D. The condemnation is very simply directed toward misappropriation of opportunities and privileges, the most evil form of unbelief.

1. Jesus never condemned anyone for failing to use an opportunity they never had.
2. But He certainly had His severest judgment upon those who had opportunities and privileges and deliberately chose not to use them for the kingdom.
3. Jesus wrote 7 letters to 7 specific churches. Most of them were condemned for failing privileges and opportunities.

HE DIDN'T CONDEMN THEM BECAUSE THEY WERE NOT POWERFUL, RICH, LARGE, FAMOUS.

HE CONDEMNED THEM BECAUSE THEY DID NOT LIVE ACCORDING TO THE TRUTH THEY KNEW!

4. If Jesus walked in San Francisco, and New York, and Dallas today, would He condemn them?

If He walked in Joplin, or your home town today, would He condemn it?

If He walked in the halls of Dennis, Boatman, or your dorm would He condemn it?

ARE YOU LIVING ACCORDING TO THE OPPORTUNITIES AND PRIVILEGES YOU HAVE? WOULD OTHERS, LIVING IN YOUR PRIVILEGES, HAVE REPENTED LONG AGO?

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

5. The one time Jesus is said to have been angry (Mk. 3:5) it was because men failed to see the Sabbath as an opportunity to use for mercy and good works. God made the Sabbath as an opportunity . . . they preserved it. God has made this place (OBC) as an opportunity for you . . . what are you doing? Really studying to learn or just to get credits and a degree? THAT IS A PERVERSION OF OPPORTUNITY JUST AS SURELY AS THE PHARISEES!

Daniel Webster, scholar, statesman, Bible-believer was once asked, "What is the most sobering, searching thought that ever entered your mind?" Without a moment's hesitation, the great orator and educator said, "My personal accountability to God!"

II. CHALLENGE (or CONVERSION . . . but conversion is really a correction of our allegiance and thought processes)

A. To Realism (11:25-27)

1. Men must be left free to make their own choices. Jesus allowed these cities to choose, even against His divine wisdom and supernatural power.
2. He did not force them to accept Him; He did not psyche them into acting against reason and will.
(Jesus and the Rich Young Ruler: Jesus would not even so much as appear before Herod when summoned; and when He was taken by force, answered Herod not a word!)
3. The realistic picture of the Bible is that many are called out but few are chosen; the majority of men will not be saved!
4. Even the Son of God apparently failed where He did His most extensive works.
5. But the success of His ministry is measured by the Father's standards—not by man's.

JESUS IS ANYTHING BUT BEATEN AND DEFEATED. He does not cry out in ego-deflation; His image does not suffer; He does not quit the ministry, because of Chorazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum!

JESUS WAS REALISTIC . . . YOU MUST BE TOO! JESUS TAUGHT OTHERS TO COUNT THE COST OF DISCIPLESHIP . . . YOU MUST TOO! DON'T PROMISE EASE AND INDULGENCE WHERE CHRIST HAS DEMANDED HARDSHIP AND REALISM!

IF YOU ARE LIVING IN A WORLD OF MAKE-BELIEVE, FANTASY, "PSYCHE" ABOUT LIFE AND CHRISTIANITY . . . YOU'D BETTER CORRECT!

B. To Rejoice

1. The Lord had failed to win over those cities wherein most of His labor had been expended, and yet He gives thanks!

CONDEMNATION, CHALLENGE AND COMPASSION OF KING

2. It is not the expression of stoicism or resignation
3. The word in 11:25 is *exomologoumai* primarily means, "I acknowledge" and its secondary meaning is "to praise."
Jesus is really saying, "I make acknowledgement with praise."
4. Jesus is acknowledging and praising the Father that the refusal of these cities to accept His discipleship gives evidence, God's plan for saving the teachable was working.

SOME OF US, WHEN GREAT MASSES DO NOT RESPOND TO THE TRUTH, GET DISCOURAGED, BEGIN TO DOUBT THE POWER OF THE WORD, START TO COMPROMISE BY USING UNETHICAL, SHALLOW AND PAGAN METHODS AND MESSAGES TO COMPENSATE.

5. Harold Fowler, *Matthew, Vol. II*, pg. 556, says, "The things which caused the Lord Jesus to rejoice and give thanks, should give us reason to reflect upon what pleases us. His strange thanksgiving challenges us to inquire into our easy satisfaction with those irrelevant, superficial symbols of success.

IF YOU DO YOUR BEST, IF YOU ARE FAITHFUL TO PREACH THE WHOLE COUNSEL OF GOD IN YOUR MINISTRY, AND THE VISIBLE RESULTS ARE LIKE THOSE OF JESUS, REJOICE, GOD IS STILL YOUR FATHER AS HE WAS HIS.

TEMPORARY SET BACKS, HOWEVER HEARTBREAKING CANNOT DEFEAT GOD!

Rejoice that God's plan of salvation leaves man autonomous and does not turn man into an unthinking, unfeeling, unwilling robot or thing.

Rejoice that God is interested in quality as well as quantity . . . not just quantity without regard to quality.

WHAT DO YOU REJOICE ABOUT? WHEN DO YOU REJOICE? ONLY WHEN THINGS WORK THE WAY MEN HAVE CATEGORIZED AND STANDARDIZED? YOU'D BETTER CORRECT THAT!

C. To Recreation

1. Jesus' response to the rejection of the cities is a challenge to childlikeness.
2. It is the Father's gracious will that only those who are "babes" will accept His Son and His salvation.
3. Jesus will make it unequivocally a condition of kingdom citizenship later (Matt. 18). ". . . unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven."
4. Harold Fowler's characterization of "babe"
 - a. honest enough to admit he does not know everything
 - b. openness and willingness to learn from anyone
 - c. able to distinguish truth from error, the precious from the worthless

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

- d. those who evaluate by the evidence and do not distort the evidence to suit their own preconceptions and rationalizations.
 - e. acknowledge that their lives are unmanageable without a Father's guidance.
5. *Reveal* is the crucial issue in recreation or regeneration. What men are willing to have *told* to them by God is the issue; as opposed to what men think they already know and refuse to let anyone tell them.

If men believe they already know all there is to know that is significant about life here and hereafter, then revelation to them is impossible.

Regeneration or recreation is not determined by how you feel—it is determined by whether you believe and obey God's revelation or not! Feeling may be a consequence of regeneration, but it does not prove regeneration. Surrender of the mind and will to the *revelation* of God produces regeneration.

The people in the area of these three cities wanted Jesus to heal them and make their bodies feel good—to feed them and make their stomachs feel good—to entertain them with miracles and charge up their emotions; but they did not want to surrender to His teachings in their everyday living, or accept His vicarious death for their sins.

HAVE YOU REALLY ACCEPTED THE REVELATION THAT JESUS DIED FOR YOUR SINS . . . OR ARE YOU TRYING TO WORK YOUR WAY INTO HEAVEN?!

HAVE YOU ACCEPTED THE REVELATION OF GOD FOR YOUR RELATIONSHIPS TO YOUR FELLOW MAN . . . TOWARD HUMAN INSTITUTIONS . . . FOR YOUR MARRIAGE?

WHAT ARE YOU DOING ABOUT THE REVEALED WILL OF GOD ABOUT YOUR LIFE AS A DISCIPLE (LEARNER), A MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL, A MISSIONARY . . . ? I mean what it says in the Bible!

You don't have to wait for a call . . . you are called by the gospel.

You don't have to wait for a vision of the lost . . . that vision is in the Bible.

You don't have to wait for a challenge or a commission . . . they are in the Bible.

ARE YOU LETTING GOD TELL YOU . . . OR DO YOU THINK YOU KNOW EVERYTHING THERE IS TO KNOW ABOUT WHAT YOU OUGHT TO DO WITH YOUR LIFE AND HOW IT SHOULD BE RUN?

If you are waiting for another revelation . . . if you think somehow Christ should come back from above or below or wherever He is and say something else . . . THEN YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT ROMANS 10 says.

CONDEMNATION, CHALLENGE AND COMPASSION OF KING

THE WORD OF FAITH . . . THE REVELATION OF GOD . . . ALL THERE IS UNTO SALVATION . . . IS NEAR YOU . . . IN YOUR VERY PRESENCE . . . IN THE APOSTOLIC MESSAGE! JUST AS SURELY AS JESUS WALKED IN THE PRESENCE OF THOSE CITIES, HIS SPIRIT IS HERE, ALL AROUND YOU, IN YOU, THROUGH HIS WORD.

III. COMPASSION (11:28-30)

A. First, look at who offers rest.

1. Have you noticed all through this text the audaciousness of this itinerant Hebrew rabbi? He claims the authority to pronounce judgment on whole cities! He claims the exclusive right and power to reveal God to whomever He chooses and however He chooses!
2. Now, He claims the power to give to anyone who wants, rest for troubled, burdened and weary psyches.
 - a. He will give what Solomon and millions like him could not find in pleasure, wisdom, possessions, great works, entertainment (see Eccl. 2:23 . . . his mind did not *rest*).
 - b. He claims to do what psychiatry, philosophy, governments of all kinds, science, and religion has not been able to do. MONEY, POWER, INDULGENCE, MYSTICISM, STOICISM, ASCETICISM HAVE ALL BEEN TRIED AND FOUND WANTING . . . TRIED OVER AND OVER AND OVER, IN ALL CIRCUMSTANCES AND ALL TIMES . . . STILL WANTING.

And this Hebrew teacher offers it! What audacity—to claim to provide the most sought after and unattained goal known to the human race!

EITHER HE IS GOD, OR THE WORLD'S MOST PREPOSTEROUS CHARLATAN.

B. What is it He offers?

1. Rest! *Vines, Expos. Dict.* says, "Christ's rest is not a rest from work, but in work . . . not the rest of inactivity but of the harmonious working of all the faculties and affections . . . because each has found in God the ideal sphere for its satisfaction and development."
2. It is the rest the Old Testament prophets predicted would be found in the Messiah and His kingdom.
3. It is the rest the writer of Hebrews says the Hebrew Christians were then entering into (Heb. 3-4). (And they weren't exactly sitting back relaxing in their rocking chairs!)
4. It is a rest of yoked discipleship that refreshes the soul . . . actually it is a new birth! a regeneration!

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

5. THERE IS NO REAL REST WITHOUT THE WORK OF CHRIST . . . CHRIST CANNOT GIVE YOU HIS DIVINE COMPASSION UNLESS YOU TAKE HIS YOKE UPON YOU.

IF YOU THINK YOUR RELATIONSHIP TO CHRIST MEANS EASY LIVING . . . SELF-INDULGENCE, CESSATION OF STRUGGLE, OR HAVING EVERYTHING DONE FOR YOU . . . YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT REST IS!

THERE IS NO REAL COMPASSION WITHOUT WORK. YOU CANNOT BE COMPASSIONATE TOWARD SOMEONE BY TAKING AWAY ALL THEIR LABOR. YOU MAY HELP, ENCOURAGE, BUT TO TAKE AWAY WORK TAKES AWAY DIGNITY, PURPOSE, SATISFACTION, FULFILLMENT, IDENTITY!

THIS IS WHERE THE SOCIALISTIC, BIG-BROTHER, GOVERNMENT FAILS! WELFARE, TRUE WELFARE INVOLVES WORK!

EVEN THE HOLY SPIRIT IS A STRENGTHENER . . . NOT A SUPERNATURAL GENIE TO WORK YOU A MIRACLE EVERY TIME YOU COME UP AGAINST A STRUGGLE, OR AN UNPLEASANT TASK IN YOUR DISCIPLESHIP!

THE ONLY WAY YOU ARE GOING TO FIND REST IS IN DOING THE WORK OF GOD . . . YOU MIGHT AS WELL MARK THAT DOWN IN YOUR LITTLE BLACK BOOK AND BOW YOUR BACK AND GET WITH IT!

WE TALK ABOUT SOCIAL UNREST, POLITICAL UNREST, RESTLESS PEOPLE. . . IT ISN'T THAT THEY AREN'T TRYING TO FIND REST AND PEACE . . . BUT THEY ARE NOT DOING THE WORK OF GOD!

THEY ARE NOT YOKED TO CHRIST . . . JESUS CHRIST WAS THE MOST RESTED, PEACEFUL BEING EVER TO WALK THIS EARTH . . . AND HE WAS THE MOST PERFECTLY YOKED TO GOD PERSON WHO EVER WALKED HERE TOO!

HIS REST IS HIS YOKE, AND HIS YOKE IS *CHRESTOS*, (TRANSLATED GENTLE) MEANS PRIMARILY, FIT FOR USE, GOOD, PURPOSEFUL. . . .

O.K., SO YOU HAVE BEEN HERE, HOW LONG IS IT NOW? A MONTH, A YEAR, TWO YEARS, THREE . . . AND YOU STILL HAVEN'T FOUND REST AND PEACE FOR YOUR SOUL!

HAVE YOU FOUND THE YOKE OF CHRIST'S PURPOSE FOR YOUR LIFE? DO YOU HAVE HIS AIMS AND GOALS FOR LIVING? HAVE YOU MADE A FIRM DECISION TO SURRENDER TO BEING YOKED TO HIS PURPOSE?

WHAT IS HIS PURPOSE? "GO AND MAKE DISCIPLES OF ALL THE NATIONS. . . ."

THAT IS WHY HE DIED! THAT IS WHY HE ROSE AGAIN! THAT IS WHY HE INSTITUTED THE CHURCH! THAT IS WHY HE REVEALED THE NEW TESTAMENT AND CAUSED IT TO BE RECORDED AND PRESERVED! THAT IS WHY HE MADE THE MESSAGE AVAILABLE TO YOU SO YOU MIGHT BECOME A DISCIPLE!

THAT IS WHY HE HAS SUSTAINED OZARK BIBLE COLLEGE FOR 36 YEARS . . . THAT IS WHY WE ARE HERE AT THIS VERY MOMENT . . . THERE IS NO OTHER REASON FOR US TO BE HERE!

CONDEMNATION, CHALLENGE AND COMPASSION OF KING

CONCLUSION

I. THE CONDEMNATION OF THE KING IS SURE AND CERTAIN UPON ALL WHO WILFULLY REJECT AND SPURN OPPORTUNITIES.

"This is the judgment, that the light has come into the world and men loved darkness rather than light. . . ."

- A. "Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole of man. . . ."
- B. The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom.
- C. Yes, perfect love casts out fear. . . . THE FEAR OF PUNISHMENT, BUT NOT THE FEAR OF GOD!
- D. Even the New Testament has much to insist about the fear of God.
 - 1. ". . . rather fear Him who can destroy both soul and body in Hell. . . ."
 - 2. Christian slaves were to serve their masters in the fear of the Lord (Col. 3:22).
 - 3. Paul wrote, "knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade men" (II Cor. 5:11).
 - 4. He also wrote, "work out your salvation with fear and trembling. . . ." (Phil. 2:12).
 - 5. Even the perfect Son, was "heard for His godly fear" (Heb. 5:7).
 - 6. Part of the "eternal gospel" is to "fear God and give Him glory" (Rev. 14:7).

IN COMPARING OUR OPPORTUNITIES AND PRIVILEGES WITH THOSE OF THESE GALILEAN CITIES . . . WE HAD BETTER HAVE SOME GODLY FEAR. THE MEN AND WOMEN OF MOSCOW OR PEKING . . . OR THE VILLAGES OF RHODESIA AND INDIA MAY STAND IN THE JUDGMENT AND CONDEMN US!

The world has had too much of the indulgent grandfather in the sky God and the willy-nilly, weak kneed Jesus preached. Even the church has forgotten Jesus' threat to make war against her if she does not repent (Rev. 2:16).

II. THE KING'S CHALLENGE IS INFINITELY HIGH, DEEP, WIDE!

- A. His challenge is rebirth
 - 1. See things and people as God sees them realistically.
 - 2. Rejoice in the way God has chosen to make Himself known to man . . . rejoice that the kingdom of God and the revelation of God cannot be usurped and manipulated by the sophisticated, self-made, independent-of-God wisemen.
 - 3. Surrender to a child-like relationship with Christ . . . let His revealed Word be your only rule of faith and practice.

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

- B. His challenge is that you allow His Word in you to conform you to the image of His Son.

HIS CHALLENGE IS THAT OF BUILDING CHARACTER . . . HOLY, TRUE, HONEST, INDUSTRIOUS, SERVING, LOVING CHARACTER.

THE CHALLENGE IS NOT TO DISCOVER A CURE FOR CANCER, SIT IN THE OVAL OFFICE, HIT 850 HOME RUNS IN A YEAR, OR BECOME GREATER THAN ELVIS. . . .

NO, THE CHALLENGE IS MUCH GREATER, MUCH HIGHER . . . AND IT IS YOURS AND MINE. . . . IT IS TO BE A PARTICIPANT IN THE REDEMPTIVE WORK OF ALMIGHTY GOD WHICH HE DETERMINED BEFORE THE DAWN OF TIME AND WILL CONTINUE THROUGHOUT ETERNITY!

III. THE COMPASSION OF THE KING IS PERFECT!

- A. He offers what all men and women seek. He promises what most never find . . . REST, REAL REST!

- B. HE PROMISES PURPOSE, FUFILLMENT, SATISFACTION, WHOLENESS.

THEN WHY ARE SO MANY CHRISTIANS SO RESTLESS, FRUSTRATED, FRAGMENTED?

BECAUSE THEY HAVEN'T PUT THEIR NECK TO THE YOKE OF CHRIST. . . . THEY HAVE BEEN LOOKING FOR A HEAVENLY BOSOM, AS PHILLIPS SAYS, INSTEAD OF A HEAVENLY YOKE!

Phillips says, "His (Christ's) understanding and sympathy were always at the disposal of those who needed Him, yet the general impression of his personality in the Gospels is of One who was leading men on to fuller understanding and maturity. So far from encouraging them to escape life He came to bring, in His own words, 'life more abundant,' and in the end He left His followers to carry out a task that might have daunted the stoutest heart. Original Christianity had certainly no taint of escapism."

The little orphaned, son-of-a-slave, George Washington Carver was teaching at Iowa State University when he got a letter from Booker T. Washington, president of a struggling Negro college.

"I cannot offer you money, position, or fame, . . . the first two you have. The last, from the place you now occupy, you will no doubt achieve. These things I now ask you to give up. I offer you in their place work—hard, hard work—the task of bringing a people from degradation, poverty, and waste to full manhood."

Of course, Mr. Carver took Booker T's offer, and the rest is history.

During the years Mr. Carver worked so long and hard and made so many great scientific discoveries he was offered what would now be millions of dollars in salaries to work for Thomas Edison, Henry Ford and many, many others. But Carver, chose to live in the South, living in relative poverty, wearing the same suit for forty years, forgetting to cash salary

CONDEMNATION, CHALLENGE AND COMPASSION OF KING

checks, forgetting everything but his complete dedication to helping his people.

Many people argued with him that he could help his people if he had all that money Edison and Ford offered him. He always answered, "If I had all that money I might forget about my people."

And on his tombstone were carved fitting words: "He could have added fortune to fame, but caring for neither, he found happiness and honor in being helpful to the world."

What are you doing with your opportunities. Jesus invites: Take my yoke upon you and learn of me . . . and you will find rest (purpose) for your soul.

Chapter Eleven

(11:1-54)

THE SON OF MAN DEALING WITH HOSTILITY

IDEAS TO INVESTIGATE:

1. Is there something people need to be taught before they can pray (11:1)?
2. Will God answer our prayers if we keep on knocking like the friend at midnight (11:5-13)?
3. Who is the "strong man" whom Jesus overcame (11:21-23)?
4. How did Jonah become a "sign" to the men of Nineveh (11:30)?
5. Wasn't it impolite as well as unhygienic for Jesus to eat without washing His hands (11:38)?
6. Wasn't it impolite for Jesus to call Pharisees, "fools," as He sat and ate at the table of a Pharisee (11:40ff.)?
7. How could that one generation be guilty of all the bloodshed from Abel to Zechariah (11:50)?

SECTION 1

Puerility (11:1-13)

11 He was praying in a certain place, and when he ceased, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples." ²And he said to them, "When you pray, say: 'Father, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. ³Give us each day our daily bread; ⁴and forgive every one who is indebted to us; and lead us not into temptation.'"

⁵ And he said to them, "Which of you who has a friend will go to him at midnight and say to him, 'Friend, lend me three loaves; ⁶for a friend of mine has arrived on a journey, and I have nothing to set before him'; ⁷and he will answer from within, 'Do not bother me; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot get up and give you anything'? ⁸I tell you, though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him whatever he needs. ⁹And I tell you, Ask, and it will be given you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. ¹⁰For every one who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. ¹¹What

father among you, if his son asks for a fish, will instead of a fish give him a serpent; ¹²or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion?

¹³If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"

11:1-4 Request for Form: On the surface, the request of these disciples does not appear puerile and childish. However, they apparently asked out of some sense of jealousy or feeling of having been cheated. It was a usual practice among the more famous rabbis to give prayer-formulas to their pupils. We have no record of John the Baptist's teaching on prayer. This statement indicates John's teaching was distinctive enough that these disciples of Jesus wanted their Master to teach them some form of prayer so they might be recognized as His disciples.

Saying prayer was a very significant part of Jewish life. It was highly formalized among the rabbis of the first century A.D. Jesus dealt with this tendency to formalize and ritualize prayer (Mt. 6:5-14) "heaping up vain words and repetitious phrases." It seems that in general there were three times daily when the Jews of the first century made formal prayers (cf. Acts 10:9). It was customary then that the Jew must wear his *tallith* (prayer-shawl) and his *tephillin* (phylactery). The Jew always turned toward Jerusalem to pray; if he were in Jerusalem and in the Temple, he turned toward the Holy of Holies to pray. Generally speaking he did not kneel but bowed his head as low as possible while lifting up his hands toward heaven, (cf. Lk. 18:9-14). There were a number of other formalities observed during certain prayers such as beating one's breast, tearing one's clothes or casting dust or ashes into the air or upon one's head. The gospel records indicate Jesus' prayers to be uniquely non-traditional and unritualistic. This is probably what seemed so shocking to these disciples. They were not really hostile toward Jesus, just spiritually immature. They still thought of the essence of prayer as something that had to be formally taught by a rabbi, rather than something originating from faith and best expressed without public ritual.

Prayer is essentially an attitude. Jesus deals with attitudes, not form, in His answer.

- a. *Father, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come.* The attitude sought here is adoration, worship, surrender to His Lordship and placing His kingdom as first priority in one's life.
- b. *Give us each day our daily bread;* What Jesus wants is an attitude of complete, daily trust for physical sustenance and an attitude of thankfulness which recognizes one's blessings as gifts from God.

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

- c. *and forgive us our sins, for we ourselves forgive everyone who is indebted to us*; We must live in God's presence every day with an attitude of repentance, acknowledging that we sin and seeking God's forgiveness on the basis of our faith in the blood of Jesus. Our faith in His blood leads us to let His life be lived out in us so that we forgive like He forgave.
- d. *and lead us not into temptation*. This is the expression of one's desire to have God's help in resisting sin. With that attitude, we will daily long for His guidance (which may be found in His word) through life's temptations and trials.

God is interested in what we pray about, because the content of our prayers manifests the attitude of our hearts. But there may be times when we do not even know how to pray or what to pray for as we should (cf. Rom. 8:26-27). It may be there will be times when all we can do is "groan" in our hearts. If our attitude is right, our motives pure and our faith strong, God's Spirit will make intercession on our behalf with words which we are unable to find. What a loving Father—able to anticipate and even articulate prayers for us which we cannot, with our limitations, make.

11:5-13 Reply Concerning Faith: This is *not* a lesson that persistence will change God's mind. It is a lesson that faith in the goodness of God will drive us to "knock on His door" at any time we need His help to do His will. This is a story about a man who had unexpected company very late at night. His cupboard was bare. In those days and in that culture any act of inhospitableness was a serious social offense. A host was expected to always offer something to eat just before bedtime. This nervous host ran next door to a neighbor's house and banged on his door to borrow bread. The irritated, sleepy-eyed neighbor at first yelled, "Go away and quit bothering me." But the unprepared host, continuing to call out to his sleepy neighbor, finally received what he needed. It might have seemed to the importuning host that his grouchy, sleepy-headed neighbor was never going to answer his knock—but he finally did. It may seem to us that God is never going to answer prayer—but He will. How eagerly a good God awaits our slightest knock so He may supply our greatest needs out of His vast storehouse! If fallible and weak human fathers are concerned enough to give the best they are able to their sons, have faith that your heavenly Father will give "good and perfect" gifts to His children. Before you give up on God and lose your faith in Him, remind yourself of what mothers and fathers go through to give the best they have for their boys and girls.

Persistence in prayer is not to change God's mind. He has always wanted to give man everything good and withhold from man everything bad. Faith, expressed through persistence, puts man in the right

attitude to receive what God has to give with thanksgiving and to put what God gives to its intended use. Faith causes man to use God's answers according to God's will. Persistence, or faith, in prayer is imperative for:

- a. It shows who God is. If our answer does not come immediately, this does not prove God's indifference or His impotence. It proves His power! He is our Father—not a slave or genie to be manipulated at our convenience. God's delays are our education in humility and dependence. The lesson that God always knows best and we do not takes us a long time to learn.
- b. God desires that we really know what we are praying about. God may want persistence in prayer to give us time to see that some things we are praying for are wrong. Hindsight may reveal to us that we should be grateful God did not give us some things we prayed for.
- c. Praying with endurance is God's way of crystallizing our commitments. God wants us to "ask, seek and knock" with dedication. He wants us to be single-minded and passionate-hearted to seek His will and His blessings. A flippant, half-hearted relationship is unacceptable to God. God does not wish to hear that which we do not care whether He hears or not.

The true focus of prayer is not our will, but God and His will. The true aim of prayer is not to make God change His will, but to lead us to change our will. In this position we let God work in us, for us and through us. He cannot do that until we are fully yielded to Him. Consider the following analysis of prayer:

1. God wants to bless all men. This is what we should pray for!
2. God answering prayer involves at least three agencies:
 - a. His propositionally revealed (written) word.
 - b. His providential actions upon things and creatures.
 - c. Through the free actions of free men, created with free wills and freedom to act as they choose. God often blesses mankind through this agency (even though the actions of men are sometimes evil—God can use that evil to bless others).
3. HOW God blesses in His Word, we know, or can know if we read it and appropriate it through faith and obedience.
4. HOW God blesses through the actions of free men depends upon the actions of free men and how we interpret the record of God's use of such actions in the past.
5. HOW God blesses through His own actions, providentially, upon things and creatures—WE DO NOT KNOW. How He does this is according to His sovereign will.

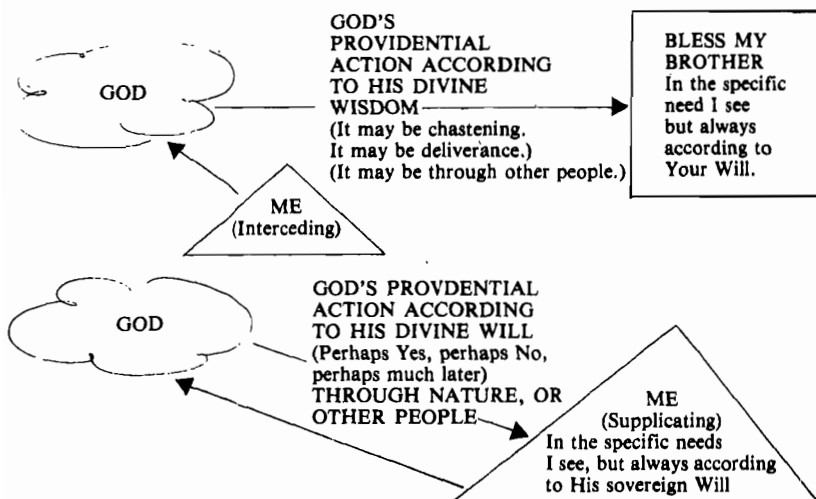
THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

If, in His divine wisdom, blessing comes through death or healing we cannot know. Our only recourse is to pray that He *will* bless and then leave it with Him—not doubting that He will bless. But He certainly acts when we pray. After all, He is a Father who knows, loves, wills, and does. We must always be surrendered to His sovereignty.

His ways are sometimes difficult for us to understand, or to accept. Often, His ways hurt, temporarily. One thing we must trust in—He will act when we call. We do not know how He will always act, but we do know He will act in our best interests, for our salvation and growth.

This is what Jesus is teaching His disciples. R.C. Trench said, "Prayer is not overcoming God's reluctance, but laying hold of His highest willingness." Prayer is no cure-all. It is not an escape. Sickness will still visit the members of a praying family. Hardship (even untimely death) will not pass their door. Temptation and trial will still beat a path to their house. Paul prayed three times for his "thorn" to be removed; each time God answered, "No!" (II Cor. 12:1-10)

Prayer and praying must be for strength (even if that strength and endurance must be acquired through more trial) so we may be adequate in overcoming temptation. Christ prayed—and was tempted—and suffered. Pray not that we be exempted from trial. God is able to do for us and through us more than we can imagine or think (Eph. 3:20). Our faith is in God, not in prayer.



There have been many attempts to circumvent the very plain statement of Jesus in verse 13. Some had said Luke is using the figure of speech known as metonymy in reporting what Jesus said there. A metonymy is when the name of someone or something is used for the action of the person or thing. In Matthew 7:11 Jesus said the Father gives "good things" to those who ask Him. Since it is the Holy Spirit through whom God gives "good things" what Luke is doing here, so the argument goes, is using the name, Holy Spirit, as a metonymy for "good things." Others insist Jesus is using "predictive present" in this promise that the Holy Spirit will be given to those who ask from God. Their argument is that John wrote, ". . . for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified," (Jn. 7:39), therefore, Jesus' promise in Luke 11:13 had to wait for its fulfillment until after the day of Pentecost in Acts 2:1ff. However, there seems to be good reason to believe God's Holy Spirit dwelt in obedient saints in the Old Testament (cf. Isa. 63:11, our comments there, *Isaiah, Vol. III*, College Press, pg. 450-453). David did pray that God not take His Holy Spirit from him (Psa. 51:11; 143:10). It is necessary that the Spirit of God be in anyone who is to be resurrected from the dead (Rom. 8:9-17). Surely God will raise Abraham, Isaac and Jacob from the dead.

We prefer to take the words of Jesus here recorded in Luke 11:13 at face value, in context. To everyone who has the attitude of believing prayer, as described by Jesus, God will give His Holy Spirit. Christ or God dwells in us through faith and obedience (Jn. 14:21-23; 15:1-11; Acts 5:32; Eph. 3:17; I Jn. 2:24; 3:24, etc.). We believe it is proper to conclude that God's Spirit dwelt in any saint who, by faith and obedience to God's covenant terms, asked God's Spirit to dwell in him, in whatever dispensation of God's grace one lived. God's promise has always been appropriated by faith and obedience to the covenant terms of one's particular dispensation.

SECTION 2

Perverseness (11:14-28)

14 Now he was casting out a demon that was dumb; when the demon had gone out, the dumb man spoke, and the people marveled. ¹⁵But some of them said, "He casts out demons by Beelzebul, the prince of demons"; ¹⁶while others, to test him, sought from him a sign from heaven. ¹⁷But he, knowing their thoughts, said to them, "Every kingdom divided against itself is laid waste, and a divided household falls. ¹⁸And if Satan also is divided against himself, how

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

will his kingdom stand? For you say that I cast out demons by Beelzebub. ¹⁹And if I cast out demons by Beelzebub, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore they shall be your judges. ²⁰But if it is by the finger of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. ²¹When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own palace, his goods are in peace; ²²but when one stronger than he assails him and overcomes him, he takes away his armor in which he trusted, and divides his spoil. ²³He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me scatters.

24 "When the unclean spirit has gone out of a man, he passes through waterless places seeking rest; and finding none he says, 'I will return to my house from which I came.' ²⁵And when he comes he finds it swept and put in order. ²⁶Then he goes and brings seven other spirits more evil than himself, and they enter and dwell there; and the last state of that man becomes worse than the first."

27 As he said this, a woman in the crowd, raised her voice and said to him, "Blessed is the womb that bore you, and the breasts that you sucked!" ²⁸But he said, "Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it!"

11:14-23 Wisdom: The last specific place we may locate Jesus is in the home of Martha and Mary at Bethany, near Jerusalem. Then He is said to be praying "in a certain place" which may have been Gethsemane on the Mt. of Olives (Judas knew to look for Him there at a place where He would be praying). Now we are told that "he was casting out a demon that was dumb." Perhaps this took place in Jerusalem, but more likely in one of the small villages of Judea. He would not wish to stir up the animosity of the rulers as He had at the Feast of Tabernacles earlier (see Jn. 7:1—10:21), so He probably stayed clear of the city of Jerusalem. So far as we know He visited Jerusalem only once between Tabernacles and His Triumphal Entry and that visit was at the Feast of Dedication (Jn. 10:22ff.) around December 25th, also known as Hanukkah.

About a year earlier than this Jesus faced the very same accusation of casting out demons by the power of Satan. That was in Galilee and it is recorded in Matthew 12:22-45 and Mark 3:22-30. There, Jesus was at His "home" (Capernaum) when He healed a different "blind and dumb demoniac." There it was specifically stated that the Pharisees attacked Him. There, in Galilee, He warned them about the sin against the Holy Spirit; here, in Judea, He does not give that warning. They are separate events. It is not unusual for Jesus to be accused twice of being in league with Satan. Actually, His enemies accused Him of this many times (cf. Jn. 7:20; 8:48; 9:24; 10:19). It is a demonstration of His divine wisdom that He dealt with each such accusation logically, reasonably and lovingly.

The demon possessing this man was "dumb" (Gr. *kophos*, from a root word which means, "to cut"). Neither the demon or the man was ignorant. *Dumb* in this sense means unable to speak. It was a common practice in those days to take prisoners of war or slaves and "cut" one of the muscles or the flesh of the mouth which kept the tongue from functioning. When that was done the victim could not talk—thus he was "dumb." The Greek word *kophos* is sometimes translated "blunted, dulled." Whatever the man's physical condition, it was the demon who was blunting the man's ability to speak; his power to talk had been cut off by the demon. When Jesus threw (Gr. *ekbalon*) the demon out of the man, most of the people marvelled. Honest-minded people who witnessed Jesus' miracles never failed to be impressed that His power was from God. But some, in spite of the very evident manifestation of deity, motivated by evil, perverted the good deeds of Jesus by attributing His supernatural power to the devil. It is significant that Jesus' enemies did not deny the fact that a miracle had occurred (see also Acts 8:15-17). They could not deny what had happened before their very eyes. But they could slanderously concoct an explanation out of prejudiced hatred for Him to try to undermine the goodness and the importance of His deed.

We will not comment on the origin or nature of demons here. The student should refer to comments on Luke 4:31-44 and 8:26-39 for notes on demons. Their hypothesis that Christ's miracles might be lying signs and wonders was not altogether impossible (see Mt. 24:24; II Thess. 2:9; Rev. 13:13). The devil and his helpers would be able to do *false* miracles. But there would be evidence of their unmistakable falseness—not the least of which would be the false teaching accompanying the false miracles. This could not be said of Jesus' teaching—it always conformed exactly to the Old Testament.

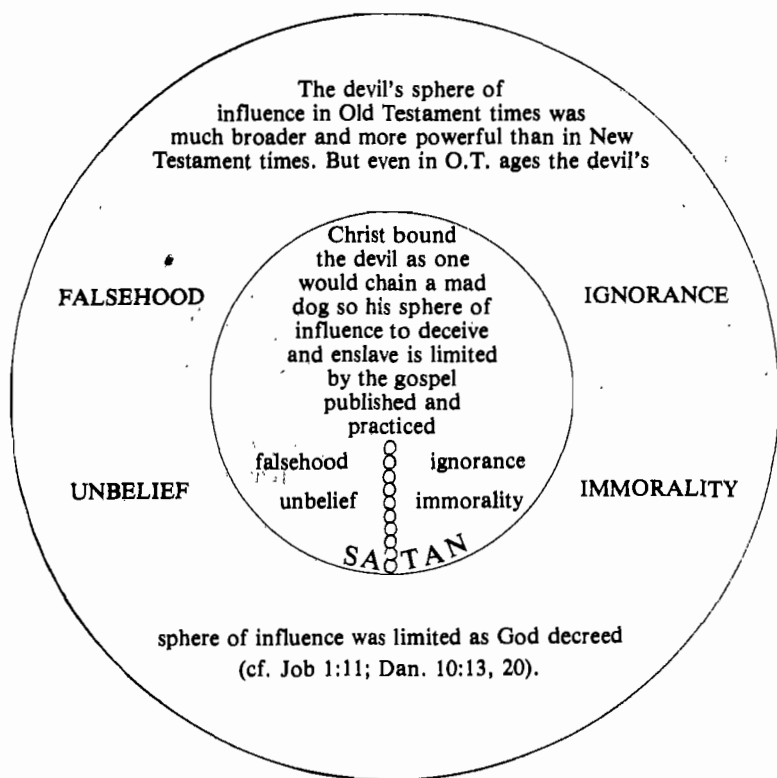
Jesus was the Master Logician. His rebuttal is a classic demonstration of the power of logic to defeat falsehood. Most people would have responded to the allegations of these enemies with emotion and perhaps physical assault. Some might have walked away in silence. But Jesus could not let such a deliberate and damaging falsehood go unexposed. His first rebuttal is devastating. With one simple, logical statement, He destroys their evil accusation. He simply says, "Every kingdom divided against itself is laid waste . . ." In other words, it is illogical and irrational to think that Satan would try to defeat himself. Satan would not join Jesus in trying to do good for men by casting demons out of men and sending them back to the abyss where they came from. That would be like "cutting off one's nose to spite one's face." It doesn't make sense! It is contrary to all accepted structures of right thinking. Satan would not work against himself.

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

Jesus' second rebuttal was what is called in logic, *ad hominem*, that is, His argument focused on their personal claims and practices in exorcism as an exposé of their faulty logic. He said, "If I cast out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your sons cast them out?" "Sons" in this phrase probably means the Jews who were exorcists. *Beelzebul* seems to be a Greek transliteration of the Hebrew word *Baalzevuv* which means, "lord of the flies," or "lord of filth." *Baalzevuv* was the name under which Baal was worshiped by the Philistines (II Kings 1:2-16). Apparently this was the name given in the first century to the "prince of demons," (cf. also Mt. 10:25; 12:25, 26; Mk. 3:22). Of course, Jewish exorcists claimed their powers were from God. Jesus' challenge is, if the Jewish exorcists claim to cast out demons at all they are judging themselves as also being in league with Satan. Since they cannot demonstrate that their powers of exorcism are from God any more surely than Jesus can demonstrate His, then their powers must also be from Satan! They judge themselves by judging Jesus. Since their claims (Jesus' and theirs) were demonstrably the same, then the source of power should be the same. It is pretty apparent that the Jewish exorcists were only "claiming" to cast out demons but really had no success at it. Only Jesus, so far as any credible record is available, had the power to really command demons and exercise divine authority over them (plus those select few disciples to whom He gave His power). Since the Jewish exorcists claimed casting out demons was by the power of God and since Jesus was the only One who really demonstrated the power to do it, they should have quickly acknowledged that the messianic kingdom of God had come upon them. Jesus has cast His enemies upon the horns of a dilemma. Either He casts out demons by God's power or Satan's; Jesus has shown that it is logically impossible for Satan to be fighting against himself; His enemies are left with only the first possibility—He is God's Messiah! He is doing the work of God and they are standing in rebellion against it by going against all reason and calling it the work of the devil.

The Lord's third rebuttal is the logical conclusion to a series of brilliantly logical arguments. "When a strong man (Satan), fully armed, guards his own palace, his goods are in peace; but when one stronger than he (Jesus) assails him and overcomes him, he takes away his armor in which he trusted, and divides his spoil (casts out demons)." To overcome Satan one must be stronger than he is. By conquering temptation, casting out demons, winning sinners to the will of God, Jesus proved He was *Master* of Satan—not Satan's servant. In the Galilean confrontation, Jesus indicated that He had, in some sense, at His first coming, "bound" Satan (cf. Mt. 12:29). We believe the rest of the N.T. indicates that to some degree and in some manner, Jesus "bound" the devil by His earthly death and resurrection.

At His first coming into the world, the Son of God "entered the strong man's house (the devil's pretended kingdom), plundered his goods and bound him" (Mt. 12:29). Notice how Jesus' "binding" of Satan is described in the following: (a) destroyed the devil's works (I Jn. 3:8); (b) triumphed over the devil's evil (Col. 2:15); (c) destroyed the devil's power (Heb. 2:14-15); (d) cast the pretended ruler of this world out and judged him (Jn. 12:31; 16:11); (e) makes the devil flee (Jas. 4:7); (f) saw the devil fallen from heaven (Lk. 10:18); (g) and He binds the devil for 1000 years (Rev. 20:6). We believe these are all one and the same. The thousand-years binding of Satan in Revelation 20:6 is the *limitation of the devil's sphere of influence* accomplished by Christ's atonement and continues until Christ's second coming. See chart below:



THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

CHRIST "GATHERS" OR MAKES WHOLE

Christ brings to the human heart
faith, truth, contentment, love
forgiveness.

(Greek *synagon*, gathering)

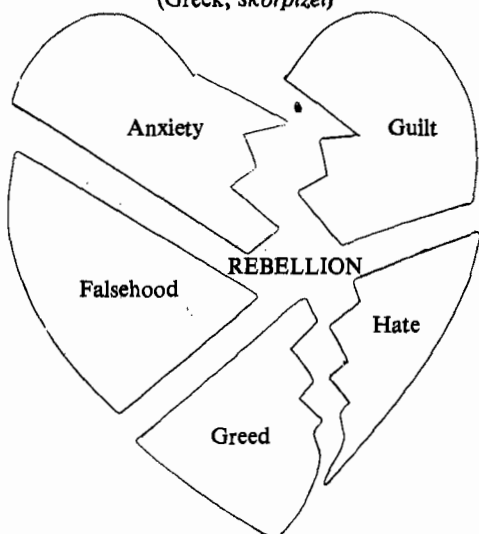
OBEEDIENCE

Christ's logic was unassailable. The truth He spoke was irrefutable. His enemies might deny His deity as a matter of prejudice and deliberate wilfulness, but they could not disprove it. Jesus turned the tables on them. He showed that it was really His enemies who were on the side of Satan.

Jesus precludes any possibility of neutrality between Him and Satan. All men are on one side or the other. All humanity may be classed as either being gathered or made whole by Christ, or being scattered and fractured by the devil.

SATAN "SCATTERS" OR FRACTURES (Greek, *skorpizein*)

In God's word human beings are either saved or lost; wise or foolish; sheep or goats; marked by God or marked by the beast; sons of light or sons of darkness; on the side of God or on the side of the devil—**THERE IS NO NEUTRALITY!**



11:24-26 Warnings: To warn those who had just exhibited a twisted and perverse mentality by accusing Him of being in league with Satan, Jesus told a short parable about unclean spirits. Practice of exorcism and superstition were deeply rooted in the Judaism of Jesus' day. They believed demons were ordinarily invisible, but if one put sifted ashes on

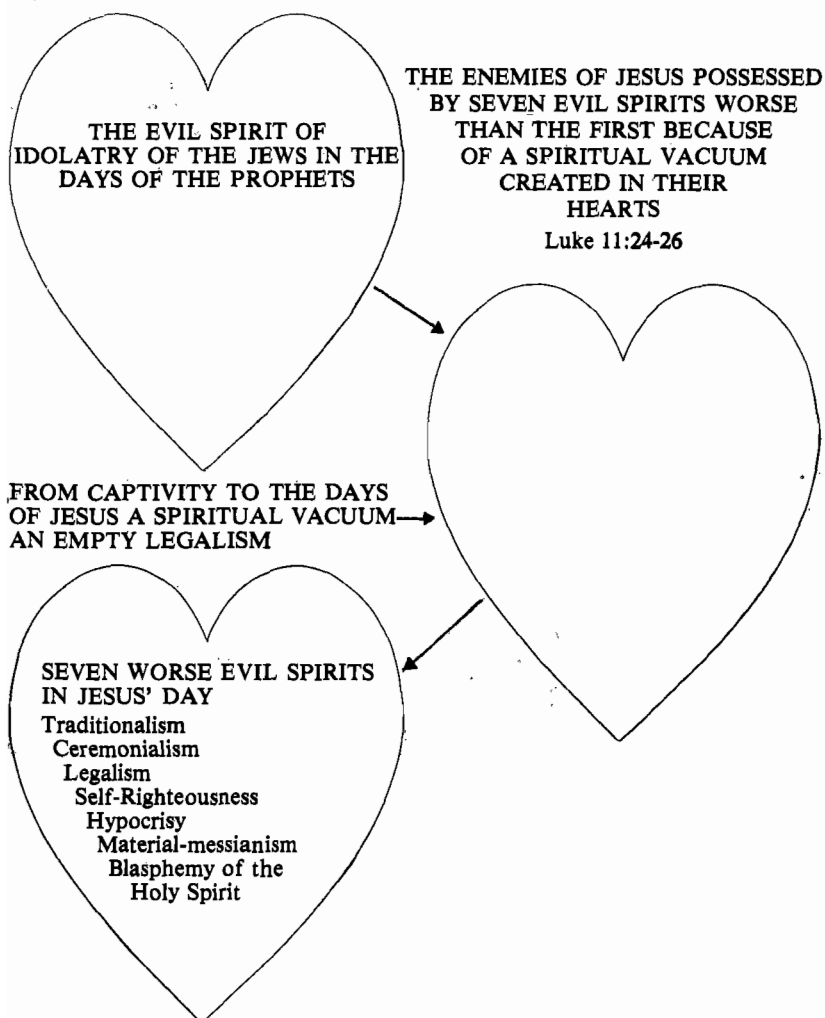
the threshold of the house, their footprints might be seen in the morning, prints like those of a chicken. Demons were to be found everywhere, but especially in deserted and empty houses, marshes, the shade of certain trees, and in toilets. One rabbi, in order to protect himself against them, always took a lamb with him everytime he went to the bathroom. Jews believed evil spirits attacked animals as well as human beings; and among the humans those whom they most frequently attacked were chronic invalids, engaged girls and the best man, or groomsman at a wedding. It was exceedingly unwise for a man to sleep all alone in a house: he would be the victim of Lilith, the she-devil, and anything at all might happen to him. Jews believed that God had provided guardian angels to protect all who were careful to keep the traditions of the rabbis. But they also believed that men had to help protect themselves from evil spirits. This they did by prayers: "The person who recites the *Shema Israel* in getting into bed has as it were a double-edged sword against the demons of the night." The careful Jew would also put on his phylactery as soon as he thought there was danger of an evil spirit's presence.

Jesus did not believe human superstitions. But what He said about evil spirits returning seven times worse than the first was a distinct historical possibility. Mary Magdalene had seven demons at once in her (Mk. 16:9; Lk. 8:2) and Jesus cast them out; the man who lived in the tombs was possessed of "legions" of demons (Lk. 8:30). But there is an even more important focus for Jesus' parable in this context. These enemies of His had just manifested an attitude or spirit of especial maliciousness in attributing the godly work of Jesus to the devil. In calling what was undeniably from God a work of the devil, these people were exhibiting a spirit seven times more Satanic than the spirit of idolatry which had characterized their ancestors of the days of the O.T. prophets. God took their ancestors and drove them into captivity to "clean" their house of idolatry. The drastic measure produced the desired result; the Jewish "house" was never again possessed with idolatry—it was thoroughly cleansed. But upon the return of the Jews to their land in 536 B.C. it did not take long for a spiritual vacuum to be created in their "house." Many of the returned Jews became enamored of the sensual and indulgent life of the Greek culture of that era. A small party of extremely religious and patriotic Jews formed a party called *Hasidim* as a resistance movement against the Hellenization of their ancestral culture. Instead of turning to the Old Testament scriptures, this party gradually built for itself a multitude of traditions, customs, ceremonies and rituals, hoping thereby to protect the Law itself against the encroachments of unbelief. God's word does not need man's protection. What the *hasidim* did with their traditions was build around themselves a false facade of self-righteousness through their legalism and hypocrisy.

By the time Jesus the Messiah had come, the heart of Judaism swept clean of idolatry had allowed the spiritual vacuum there to be inhabited

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

by "seven evil spirits worse than the first" plus the old evil spirit that had been "wandering through waterless places." Judaism of Jesus' day had become a rotten carcass over which the vultures (Roman empire) were poised (Mt. 24:28). It was a "house" left forsaken and desolate; a despicable abomination unto the Lord, (Mt. 23:38). Upon them was laid all the righteous blood shed on earth from Abel to Zechariah (Mt. 23:34-36). See the chart below:



11:27-28 Witnessing: There is a rather perverse attitude throughout the history of man that puts more emphasis on physical proximity to holy people and places than on spiritual kinship. We find this attitude cropping up constantly in regard to the physical presence of Jesus (cf. Lk. 4:22-23; Mt. 12:46-50; Mk. 3:31-35; Lk. 8:19-21; Lk. 9:33, etc.). The Jews of the days of the Prophets tended to associate their relationship to God according to the enshrinement of "holy" places, things and persons (cf. Jer. 15:1; Ezek. 14:20; Jer. 7:4; Mt. 23:29-30, etc.). Apparently that same attitude had captivated some woman in the crowds here in Judea. This woman was, sincerely perhaps, impressed with greatness that must accrue to the physical mother of this wise, compassionate and miracle-working Galilean, Jesus. The woman reasoned that since Jesus was unquestionably in right relationship to Jehovah, then His mother must be also.

Now in the realm of sinful mankind that might be a valid line of reasoning (although not always). When there is a godly son, there is usually a godly mother whose righteousness has been instrumental in producing it in her son. The mother, however, was only the instrument; the godliness is produced from the seed-word of God. In fact, some sons are godly in spite of ungodly parents. The godliness of a son does not necessarily guarantee the blessedness of the parents. Righteousness before God ultimately depends on personal choices and attitudes.

Mary, mother of Jesus, was honored by God to give human birth to the Savior of the world (Lk. 1:28-35; 1:42-55). Mary was an excellent example of obedience to the will of God (Lk. 1:38; Jn. 2:4-5). But it was really her spiritual relationship to God that made her special—not her physical relationship to Jesus. That is the point of Jesus in His reply to this woman: "Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it!" The Greek word for "keep it" here is *phulassontes*. It is a present participle meaning continuing to keep it. It is not the usual word for "keep it" in the sense of obey; it is a word associated with "imprison, guard, hold onto." Jesus is saying what David said in Psa. 119:11, the word of God must be laid up in, or imprisoned in, man's heart.

Spiritual ties to Jesus are the ultimate and only lasting ties. Genetic descent is irrelevant to the kingdom of God. God has no special blessings to bestow on anyone because of their physical lineage. Water (baptism into spiritual covenant relationship with Christ) is thicker than blood (physical family relationship). Jesus is not denying the necessity or usefulness of family relationships but He is saying that even the most fundamental of all human relationships become secondary to spiritual brotherhood. No human nation or race of people has any claims on Jesus unless they come to Him individually by way of God's will revealed in the Bible (cf. Rom. 8:29; Heb. 2:11-18; Gal. 3:23—4:7; 6:10; 6:15-16;

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

Jas. 1:22ff.; Eph. 2:19, etc.). We do not please God because of any proximity to holy shrines, national origins, or traditional family religions, but whether we have the unadulterated word of God locked into our hearts and lives.

SECTION 3

Phenomenalism (11:29-36)

29 When the crowds were increasing, he began to say, "This generation is an evil generation; it seeks a sign, but no sign shall be given to it except the sign of Jonah. ³⁰For as Jonah became a sign to the men of Nineveh, so will the Son of man be to this generation. ³¹The queen of the South will arise at the judgment with the men of this generation and condemn them; for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and behold, something greater than Solomon is here. ³²The men of Nineveh will arise at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and behold, something greater than Jonah is here.

33 "No one after lighting a lamp puts it in a cellar or under a bushel, but on a stand, that those who enter may see the light. ³⁴Your eye is the lamp of your body; when your eye is sound, your whole body is full of light; but when it is not sound, your body is full of darkness. ³⁵Therefore be careful lest the light in you be darkness. ³⁶If then your whole body is full of light, having no part dark, it will be wholly bright, as when a lamp with its rays gives you light."

11:29-32 Disbelief: We have to go back to 11:16 for the reason behind the request for a "sign from heaven." Their motive as stated there was to "test" Jesus. They were unsatisfied with His messianic claims because He was not backing them with the "signs" they had already decided were messianic. They may have been attempting to trap Jesus into some further display of compassion or teaching which would be in opposition to the traditions of the rabbis. Rabbinical tradition characterized the advent of the Jewish Messiah as a time of great warfare upon the Gentiles and great material prosperity for the Jews. The Apocalypse of Baruch says that the time of the Messiah would usher in an inexhaustible supply of manna to feed the Jews until the end of time. The Psalms of Solomon say the Messiah will "purge Jerusalem of the heathen . . . break the pride of sinners like so many pots . . . and gather the holy nation and lead it with justice, in peace and equality." Jesus was not showing signs of being a Messiah-Avenger or Messiah-Provider (except for the feeding

of the 5000), so the request for "a sign from heaven" was born out of hostility for Jesus' failure to meet their materialistic expectations. Jesus had given numerous signs of His deity already, but they were not concerned with deity. Jesus tried to persuade them that He was the exact fulfillment of their own Prophets as to the Messiah, but they were not interested in God's word. Their demand for "a sign from heaven" in the face of all the other signs which Jesus had already given was graphic proof that they were attempting to dictate to God the basis upon which they would accept Jesus as their Messiah. This is why Jesus called them "an evil and adulterous generation." God gives plenty of evidence to substantiate His word. When man demands more than God has decreed is necessary, it is a sin that "provokes" the wrath of God (cf. Ex. 17:7; Num. 14:11; Deut. 18:18-22; Mt. 16:3; I Cor 10:9; Heb. 3:10). It is rebellion against God to ask for more signs than God has declared sufficient. Jesus did many more signs than those recorded in the gospel records (Jn. 20:30-31), but enough are recorded that any man who wants to believe may have sufficient evidence to substantiate Christ's claims. The clamor for miraculous gifts was what Paul tried to correct in the Corinthian church. Christ had given the Corinthian church sufficient miraculous gifts and the people were sinning in clamoring for more.

The "sign of Jonah" was Jonah's miraculous preservation from death in the belly of the great fish. This was the *evidence* by which Jonah's message was authenticated and the basis upon which Nineveh believed and repented. Jonah became a "sign" to the men of Nineveh that (a) the God of Israel is the God of all men; (b) Jehovah's will must be obeyed; (c) Jehovah wants all men to be saved; (d) Jehovah will deliver all who will repent. The one great "sign" Jesus will give to that generation (and to the whole world) is His miraculous resurrection from death itself. Jesus will not be merely preserved from death; He will be brought back to life again after dying.

Some, by dogmatically wresting the scriptures, have divided believers over the question whether Jesus was literally three days and three nights in the tomb before His resurrection or not (cf. Mt. 12:40). We do not believe it is necessary to insist that Jesus was literally three days and three nights in the tomb for the following reasons: (a) if Jesus was to be in the tomb 72 full hours He should have predicted His resurrection on the fourth day, but He never did; (b) it is good Hebrew idiom to say "day" when only a *part* of a day is meant (cf. Gen. 42:17-18; Esther 4:15-17; 5:1; I Kings 12:5, 12, etc.); (c) *prophetic signs* are to be interpreted in the light of their actual fulfillment when at all possible; (d) His enemies understood Him to mean less than 72 hours (cf. Mt. 27:62-64); (e) Luke names the days involved in His interment—"Preparation" (Friday), "Sabbath" (Saturday), "First day" (Sunday) (cf. Lk. 23:54-24:1). Jesus' prophecy

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

that He would be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth was fulfilled since He was there part of Friday, all day Saturday, and part of Sunday. That was the way His disciples would understand it then and that is the way we are to understand it now.

The "queen of the South" was undoubtedly the Queen of Sheba from the southern-most tip of the Arabian peninsula. She visited Palestine in the days of Solomon (cf. I Kings 10:1ff.; II Chron. 9:1ff.) because she had heard of the wisdom of Solomon but did not believe it. When she put him to the test she became convinced and paid homage to his wisdom. Whether she became a believer in Jehovah or not we do not know, but her homage to Solomon was tacit admission that the king's wisdom came from his God. Jesus points out that One greater than Solomon is in the midst of these people—namely, the Messiah, and they do not acknowledge His wisdom. Therefore, the queen of the South will arise in the judgment and condemn the evil generation of Jesus.

The men of Ninevah will also arise at the judgment with that generation and condemn it. They repented at the preaching of Jonah while One greater than Jonah preached to that generation. The moral axiom Jesus posits is this: According to the light against which you have sinned, you will be judged! What is even more significant, that generation will soon have the ultimate, final and most powerful "sign" God is ever going to give the world to produce repentance—Jesus' resurrection from the dead. That "sign" will be God's perfect call to repent, (Acts 17:30-31) and if they do not heed that there is only perfect wrath to be received. What Jesus said to that generation applies even more emphatically to each succeeding generation. We have, in addition to His teachings, His deeds and His resurrection, all the centuries of history in which millions of people have validated Christ's claims by the power of His Spirit living in them. This is why unbelief is evil!

11:33-36 Darkness: There are two different "lamps" in this text. The first "lamp" is Jesus' deity (confirmed by His miracles and later by His resurrection). Jesus who casts out demons is the Light of the World. Yet that generation wanted to accuse Him of doing works of darkness (being in league with Satan). Jesus had just proved logically that He was fighting and defeating darkness. When His resurrection occurred it would prove empirically that He was light. He brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. Jesus pleads with them to search their own souls, recognized their own immoral thinking, because no one lights a lamp in order to put it under a bushel. They keep asking for a "sign" (light) from Him; He is giving the most brilliant light (signs) possible—He is certainly not spreading darkness. The darkness is in them.

The second "lamp" is man's moral perceptiveness—men's capacity to know and distinguish truth from falsehood, light from darkness. The

writer of Proverbs said, "The spirit of man is the lamp of the Lord, searching all his innermost parts" (Prov. 20:27). Just like the physical eye lets in light to guide the body, so the spirit and mind of man lets in truth to guide the inner man, (cf. also I Cor. 2:11). The Greek word *haplous* is translated "sound" in 11:34. In some versions it is translated "single" or "clear" in the NASV. The fundamental meaning of *haplous* seems to be "sincerity, simplicity, clarity." The "sound" eye is one that focuses totally and sharply on a single object—it does not give double vision nor does it divide its focus. This is true of the spirit of man—the mind of man. The inner man will be what he focuses his mind on. And if his focus is double or divided, he will be a divided man. If the "eye" of the soul focuses on falsehood and darkness then the whole inner man will be dark. Those clamoring for signs from Jesus had their hearts and minds focused on a materialistic kingdom. When Jesus declared that was not the essence of God's kingdom, they would not let the light of His truth illuminate their inner being because their "eye" had let in the darkness.

The reality of the Christian experience does not consist in outward, spectacular fleshly things which the worldly-minded evaluate as real. Signs and things which excite the emotions and satisfy the carnal cravings of pride and ambition have nothing to do with the kingdom of God. His kingdom is not of this world; it consists of things that have to do with inner being—faith, love, truth, righteousness. But alas, even our own generation still seeks after "signs."

SECTION 4

Pharisaism (11:37-54)

37 While he was speaking, a Pharisee asked him to dine with him; so he went in and sat at table. 38 The Pharisee was astonished to see that he did not first wash before dinner. 39 And the Lord said to him, "Now you Pharisees cleanse the outside of the cup and of the dish, but inside you are full of extortion and wickedness. 40 You fools! Did not he who made the outside make the inside also? 41 But give for alms those things which are within; and behold, everything is clean for you."

42 "But woe to you Pharisees! for you tithe mint and rue and every herb, and neglect justice and the love of God; these you ought to have done, without neglecting the others. 43 Woe to you Pharisees! for you love the best seat in the synagogues and salutations in the market places. 44 Woe to you; for you are not seen, and men walk over them without knowing it."

45 One of the lawyers answered him, "Teacher, in saying this

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

you reproach us also." ⁴⁶And he said, "Woe to you lawyers also! for you load men with burdens hard to bear, and you yourselves do not touch the burdens with one of your fingers. ⁴⁷Woe to you! for you build the tombs of the prophets whom your fathers killed. ⁴⁸So you are witnesses and consent to the deeds of your fathers; for they killed them, and you build their tombs. ⁴⁹Therefore also the Wisdom of God said, 'I will send them prophets and apostles, some of whom they will kill and persecute,' ⁵⁰that the blood of all the prophets, shed from the foundation of the world, may be required of this generation, ⁵¹from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah, who perished between the altar and the sanctuary. Yes, I tell you, it shall be required of this generation. ⁵²Woe to you lawyers! for you have taken away the key of knowledge; you did not enter yourselves, and you hindered those who were entering."

⁵³ As he went away from there, the scribes and the Pharisees began to press him hard, and to provoke him to speak of many things, ⁵⁴lying in wait for him, to catch at something he might say.

11:37-44 Hypocrisy: Jesus was invited to "dine" with a Pharisee while He was confronting His enemies. The extraordinary wisdom Jesus displayed in completely defeating the accusations against Him intrigued this Pharisee, so he wanted to see and listen to the Sage of Galilee first-hand. This Pharisee was totally unprepared for what he heard from the lips of Jesus. The Greek word *aristese* means "break your fast" or "break-fast" (see Jn. 21:12, 15) and originally referred to the first meal of the day. But it came to mean in the days of Jesus a sort of "brunch" or the meal eaten after morning prayers in the synagogue, at mid-morning. Jesus entered the Pharisee's house and went immediately to the couch and *reclined* (Gr. *anepesen*), without performing the traditional "washing" of the hands before the meal. The Hebrew language has three words most often used in the O.T. for ceremonial washing: *kavas*, *rachatz*, and *taval*. *Taval* means, "to dip or immerse." The Greek word used in Luke 11:38 is *ebaptisthe* which means, "to dip or immerse." Modern Hebrew has focused on the word *taval* to categorize all ceremonial ablutions (see Judaica Encyclopedia, Vol. 2, 82-86).

There were all kinds of purifications practiced in the Gospels: There were washings for lepers (Lk. 17:12; Lev. 13:45ff.); washings after birth (Lk. 2:22) and before wedding feasts (Jn. 2:6). A Jew argued with John the Baptist's disciples about purification (Jn. 3:25-30); Peter was always careful to observe laws of purification (Acts 10:14); Pharisees were meticulous about purification (Mt. 23:25; Lk. 7:39; Jn. 18:28); regulations about ablutions were a characteristic part of Judaism (Heb. 9:9-10).

God made scores of laws demanding ceremonial washing in the O.T. (cf. Lev. 5:2ff.; 7:19-21; 11:23-25; 15:11; 17:15ff.; 18:1ff.; 19:31; 21:4ff.; 22:1-9; Num. 5:3; 6:9; 9:6ff.; 19:13-22; Deut. 21:22ff.; 14:3-21; 23:10-14). All these had to do with ritual uncleanness. In many instances there was nothing physically or hygienically unclean involved. Everything created by God is good when properly used. God gave the commands to teach man that perfect spiritual cleanness by works of the Law was impossible, because man was unable to even keep the ceremonial aspect of the Law perfectly.

But Jesus did not violate Mosaic Law when He failed to "baptize" His hands before eating. Nowhere in the Law of Moses are Jews commanded to wash their hands before eating. The washing of hands is mentioned only once in the Torah (Lev. 15:11) and that has nothing to do with meals. Washing of hands is rabbinical tradition pure and simple. According to the rabbis, washing of hands to be cleansed of impurity before meals was instituted by King Solomon; some think the tradition was instituted by the disciples of Hillel and Shammai. The washing of hands is either by immersion up to the wrist or by pouring about one-half a pint of water over both hands from a receptacle with a wide mouth, the lip of which must be undamaged. The water should be poured over the whole hand up to the wrist, but is acceptable as long as the fingers are washed up to the second joint. The hands must be clean and without anything adhering to them; rings must be removed so that the water can reach the entire surface area. The water should not be hot or discolored and it is customary to perform the act by pouring water over each hand three times. Superstition and racial prejudices were both in the background of this tradition. The Talmud refers at length to the tradition supposing that demons sat on unwashed hands just waiting to get into the person's body through the mouth. The Talmud also mentions that Rabbi Akibba, although personally opposed to the tradition, nevertheless used the limited water allowed him in prison for this ablution rather than for drinking and so died of thirst.

The word *Pharisee* comes from the Hebrew word *pharashim* which means "separated ones." It was a Jewish sect which was originally known as the *Chasidim*, a Hebrew word meaning, "pious ones." The *Chasidim* was formed from a group of "old fashioned" Jews who dedicated themselves to resist the paganization of their culture during the Seleucid (Greco-Syrian) domination of Palestine (350-175 B.C.). They denounced everything of Gentile practice, insisted on the absolute supremacy of the Torah, and often resisted to the death any attempt to Greekize their land and people. The tendency of the Hasmoneans (Jewish royal and priestly family descending from the Maccabeans) to compromise with certain aspects of paganism brought about an intense sectarian division

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

in Judaism that lasted down into the days of Jesus in the sects of the Pharisees and Sadducees (see chart on Religious-Political Frame of First Century Judaism, pg. 88).

The Pharisees were the most prominent and influential sect of Jesus' day. Josephus says there were about 6000 Pharisees in the first century A.D. They were contemptuous of all who did not follow their traditions and violently opposed to anyone who would threaten their religious traditions whether Gentile or Jew. The fundamental feature of the sect was extreme legalism. They believed in Divine providence, the free will of man, resurrection of the dead and judgment. They lived moderately (although many of them were rich), placed great store in history and ethnic culture of the Jewish race. They eagerly anticipated the Golden Age of the Messiah (as they interpreted it). Rabbinical tradition was something about which the Pharisees were deadly serious. Rabbinical interpretations of the Torah were designed to "protect the Law." To keep the unlearned and common people from ignorantly disobeying the Law, the rabbis (with all their expertise) deemed it necessary to write out in minute detail every possible human action that might violate a commandment of the Torah. Soon after Malachi, the last prophet of God (400 B.C.), there arose in rabbinic Judaism the concept called, *Bath Kol*. These two Hebrew words mean, literally, "Daughter of the Voice." The rabbinical meaning of the words is, "The Divine Voice." According to this concept God "whispered" all the rabbinic traditions (interpretations) to Moses at the same time He gave Moses the Torah. Moses wrote the Torah down, but passed on the interpretations orally. These oral traditions were passed on from generation to generation through the rabbis until around 132-200 A.D. when they were produced in written form in the Mishnah, the Haggadah, the Halakah, and the Talmud (300-400 A.D.).

It is not difficult to understand now why the Pharisee was "astonished" (Gr. *Ethaumazen*, shocked) to see that Jesus did not first "wash" before He ate. The Pharisee considered Jesus' action a violation of "The Divine Voice." It is interesting that this Pharisee, living in Judea the hotbed of Pharisaic legalism, would invite Jesus to dine with him considering the attitudes of the Pharisees toward Jesus:

- a. They considered Jesus' claim to forgive sins blasphemy (Mt. 9:3ff.; Mk. 6:2ff.; Lk. 5:21)
- b. They rankled at His social associations with publicans and sinners (Mt. 9:11; Mk. 2:16; Lk. 5:30; 15:1)
- c. They accused His disciples of non-observance of required feasts (Lk. 5:33).
- d. They tried to prove Jesus was in league with Satan (Mt. 9:34; 11:19; 12:24ff.; Mk. 3:22; Lk. 11:14).

- e. They attacked Him for violating Sabbath traditions (Mt. 12:2, 10; Mk. 2:23; 3:2; Lk. 6:5-7; 13:14ff.; Jn. 5:10-18; 9:13).
- f. They compromised their convictions to join with the Herodians to kill Jesus (Mk. 3:6).
- g. They also joined with the hated Sadducees to trap Him (Mt. 15:1; 22:1ff.), and kill Him (Mt. 27:62; Jn. 18:3).
- h. They accused Him of planning to destroy the Temple (Jn. 2:19; Mt. 26:59-61; 27:39-40).
- i. They accused Him of being a deceiver (Jn. 7:12; Mt. 27:62ff.).
- j. They ridiculed Him (Jn. 7:48) and tried to slander Him by calling Him a Samaritan (Jn. 8:48) and demon possessed.
- k. They charged Him with sedition against the Roman empire (Lk. 23:1-2).
- l. They mocked Him in His death on the cross (Mt. 27:41ff.).

Evidently the Pharisee said something to Jesus about violation of rabbinic tradition for Jesus replied with a lengthy and scathing rebuke of Pharisaic hypocrisy. What He said here, Jesus repeated about a year later in greater detail in the midst of His last week on earth (Mt. 23:1ff.).

The Lord's first admonition to the Pharisees is that they clean up the inner man. They were very orthodox on the outside. They kept all the ceremonies and rituals. They attended all the feasts and fasts without fail. They appeared to be very pious. But inwardly they were full of extortion and wickedness. They even made religious traditions by which they could circumvent moral and financial responsibility to their aged parents (Mt. 15:3-6) and all the while appear to be very pious by declaring their money "Corban" (devoted to God). But God looks on the heart and not on the outward appearance. No man can fool God—He looks at motives. Alms-giving is an abomination before God if it is done with a resentful or unwilling heart. The Sermon on the Mount (Mt. 6:1-18) plainly teaches that *why* we do any religious deed is more important than the deed itself! Doing one's piety before men, to be seen of them, indicates an unclean heart, no matter how right the deed may be. If the Pharisees would clean up their hearts and give those to the world, they would be giving the kind of "alms" God wants the world to have. More than coins given out of self-righteous, and resentful hypocrisy, the world needs love, purity, truth and kindness. While love can only be expressed by giving, and giving material things to the poor can come from a pure heart (Jas. 1:27; 2:14-17; 1 Jn. 3:16-18), giving alms does not necessarily equal piety. It is only when the heart is right with God that everything then becomes "clean" (cf. Mt. 15:10-11; Mk. 7:14-23; 1 Tim. 4:1-5).

Jesus next points out the Pharisaic tendency to major in minors. The Pharisees meticulously counted every dill seed, setting aside every tenth

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

one, to insure legal correctness. The Talmud even suggests that the pious Jew ought to cut up every dill-plant stalk into ten parts and give one-tenth to the Temple. While they were unimpeachably precise in these outward regulations and spent most of their time trying to make others so, they were unconcerned about fairness, the rights of others and love of God. Jesus called these latter things "the weightier matters of the law" in Matthew 23:23. Jesus does not say they should quit tithing to the Lord as the Law of Moses required, but He insists that scrupulosity in setting aside every tenth dill seed is not the essence of God's law. The real purpose behind every Law, even of the tithe, is grace, mercifulness and redemption for the soul of man. A man may be very accurate in religious ritual and doctrine but if he has no sensitivity to justice for his fellow man nor love for God he has a perverted sense of values and his orthodoxy is probably motivated by a hope in self-righteousness. Financial support for the work of God's kingdom must have the right motives (cf. II Cor. 9:5-8).

Ego-tripping was another favorite endeavor of the Pharisees. They "loved" the best seat in the synagogues and salutations in the market places. The Greek word *protokathedrian* is a compound of *proto* ("first" or "chief") and *kathedra* ("throne" or "seat"); *kathedra* is the word from which the English word "cathedral" comes. *Kathedra* is sometimes used in classical Greek to mean "a teacher's seat," or "a judge's seat." Jesus denounced them later for loving to be called "rabbi" ("teacher" or "master") (cf. Mt. 23:7-8). This mania still persists in religious circles today where men not only love but insist on being called, "Doctor," "Pastor," "Reverend," "Father" or some other title. "Bigshotism" corrupts! The inordinate self-seeking egotism that feeds on competitiveness is Pharisaic! The urge to constantly class or compare ourselves with some of those who commend themselves and measure ourselves by one another (II Cor. 10:12) leads to a complacent and destructive superiority. Beware of the intoxication of erudition—never think you have learned all there is to know. Beware of flattering compliments (II Pet. 2:18; Jude 16)—never seriously believe you are as great as others say you are! "Bigshots" are like graves; full of corruption themselves and dangerous to others who associate with them because people are fooled by their outward appearances. Hanging around self-proclaimed "bigshots" will corrupt you like the uncleanness the Jews incurred by walking over a grave.

11:45-54 Hate: There is an old adage which says, if you throw a stone at a pack of dogs the one that is hit will yelp. One of the *lawyers* (Gr. *nomikois*; also called *grammateis* or "scribes") yelped! What Jesus had been saying about the hypocrisy of the Pharisees reproached the scribes or lawyers also. Lawyers and scribes were the "data processors" of the Jewish religion. They were closely associated with the Pharisees. Their

origins go even farther back in the history of Judaism than that of the Pharisees—back to pre-exilic days. They were the public recorders, governmental secretaries, legal experts, charged with passing on the rabbinical teachings in writing. They also taught and interpreted the traditions. All public education of the Jewish populace was in their control. They were charged with making civil judgments; they were members of the Sanhedrin, loved the title of “rabbi,” wore long robes, and sought public adoration. They were the most watchful and determined opponents of Jesus (cf. Mk. 2:16; Lk. 5:30; 15:2).

Jesus’ first denouncement of the lawyers was that they were totally insensitive to other men’s burdens. In fact, Jesus accused them of “loading men with burdens hard to bear” and then refusing to help at all in relieving the burdens. These burdens they placed on men were their unbiblical (and in some cases, antibiblical) traditions. Here are some of them:

- a. A Jew was forbidden by scribal tradition from eating eggs on the Sabbath because the hen had to work to lay the egg and that breaks the Sabbath tradition.
- b. It was forbidden to slaughter animals on the Sabbath *unless* it was a louse. (Conservative rabbis forbade even that while liberal ones allowed people to pull the legs off a louse on the Sabbath).
- c. If a wheat-offering portion had been stored in a granary, no other wheat could be stored there unless the Jew swept the granary with a certain number of broom strokes.
- d. It was questionable whether a Nazarite, with a vow to abstain from mashed food was permitted to eat an onion crushed accidentally.

Volume after volume of scribal traditions were forced upon the common people, until life was almost unbearably regimented and stifled. But Pharisees and scribes made sure they freed themselves of such burdens by adding traditions that only they were privy to:

- a. The tradition of Corban (already mentioned, 11:37-44).
- b. The tradition of “Fictitious Domicile” where a scribe, if he had “an important rabbinical journey” to make could pretend he had a domicile every 7/8ths of a mile and travel that far, pretend to take up lodging for a few moments and then travel on another 7/8ths of a mile.
- c. The tradition called “Prosbol” which was a document designed (much like Corban) to circumvent cancellation of debts.
- d. The tradition about swearing by the altar vs. swearing by the gift on the altar (cf. Mt. 23:16-22).

This is the way the lawyers of Jesus’ day kept themselves aloof from the

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

burdensome traditions they demanded of everyone else. Most societies, including our own, have an elite group of law-makers who burden the masses with an unbearable multitude of statutes while they find ways to keep themselves above the laws. Lawyers, judges, legislators and religious teachers should practice what they preach!

Next Jesus took occasion to expose the murderous hatefulness in the hearts of some of these lawyers. Outwardly the lawyers and scribes built fancy and ornate tombs for the old prophets (cf. Mt. 23:29-36), but inwardly they hated and wanted to murder The Prophet, Jesus. Outwardly they gave the impression they revered God's prophets, but in their open hatred of Jesus they showed a wicked heart that would have, like their forefathers, killed the prophets had they lived in that ancient generation. Outwardly they pretended to hold life sacred; inwardly they were the worst killers of all time for they killed the Son of God! The "Wisdom of God" (11:49) is apparently a Messianic title Jesus applies to Himself since in the passage in Matthew 23:34, the later, similar denouncement of the Pharisees, Jesus says, "Therefore I send you prophets..." "Wisdom" is personified in the book of Proverbs (8:1ff.) which may be a Messianic prophecy in itself.

Because these lawyers wanted to (and did) succeed in murdering the innocent Son of God, they will be held responsible for all the murdering of God's prophets and messengers in the Old Testament. The blood of Abel was the first to be shed because of the truth of God (Gen. 4:10); the blood of Zechariah (II Chron. 24:22) was the last. But the death of The Prophet, The Messiah, will be the ultimate murder, the crowning act of all such hatred against God's sovereignty. Daniel, the prophet, predicted that near the end of the 490 years ("70 weeks of years"), which would begin with the restoration of the Jewish commonwealth, the Jewish people would fill the cup of their rebellion to the brim and "cut off the Prince," (cf. Daniel 9:24-27; see comments in *Daniel*, by Butler, College Press, pgs. 344-353 and 363-366), (See also Matt. 23:32-36; I Thess. 2:15-16; Matt. 21:33-43; Jn. 15:22-27; Acts 2:22-23; 3:13-15; 7:51-53; 4:25-28). The killing of God's Son was the ultimate sin; it was what Daniel called, "finish the transgression" (Dan. 9:24). The murder of God's Son resulted in God's destruction of the Jewish commonwealth in 70 A.D. (cf. Lk. 19:41-44; Mt. 22:1-10; I Thess. 2:16; Dan. 9:26b-27).

Finally, Jesus accused the scribes and lawyers of taking away from men the key of knowledge. These lawyers pretended to be guardians and proclaimers of the knowledge of God, but in reality they were destroyers. Instead of teaching the people the will of God as God revealed it in the Old Testament, they cluttered and obscured and hid under a blanket of human traditions the real revelation of God. They opposed Christ and poisoned the minds of the people against Him in the very

face of His miracles and goodness and purity. They threatened harm to anyone who made any effort to follow Jesus and learn of God from Him. Christ was the Word of God incarnate. He is the key to all wisdom (cf. Col. 2:3, 17; Jn. 14:6). He attempted to cut through the veneer of scribal tradition and teach the people the true revelation of God. That is why the lawyers opposed Him so vehemently. *Deinos* is a Greek adverb meaning "terribly, fearfully, hatefully"; *enechein* means, "to hold in, to entangle, to entrap." These lawyers and Pharisees were consumed with their hatred and desire to entangle Jesus. They were going to try to *apostomatizein* ("provoke" or, literally, "draw out of Jesus' mouth") many things from Jesus and trap Him in some error. The phrase "that they might accuse him" in the KJV is not found in the best manuscripts (such as Sinaiticus, Vaticanus, Codex Regius Parisiensis, the Syriac Curetonian, the Boharic), but that is what is certainly inferred. They certainly were not lying in wait to learn some truth from Jesus they could put to practice in their lives. They kept badgering Him like vicious dogs barking at their prey hoping to catch Him off-guard so they could rush in for the kill.

Jesus met every hostile attack and subtle deception with truth and devastating logic. He did not do it to wound His attackers and destroy any hope of their salvation—He did it to arrest their self-destructing plunges into vicious falsehood and hatred. Some went wilfully on in their hatred, intensifying their efforts to kill Him; others undoubtedly were rescued. There were a few Pharisees and influential Jewish leaders who did become disciples (e.g. Nicodemus, Joseph of Arimathea, and others). The world is still filled with Pharisees and lawyers, pretending to love God but all the while studying His word only to try to destroy it.

STUDY STIMULATORS:

1. What do you think about formal prayers? Should people read prayers from manuscripts? Did Jesus advocate a certain form of prayer? Is it all right to repeat the "Lord's Prayer" in unison?
2. Can we get God to change His mind by praying long enough for the same thing? If not, why did Jesus talk about the friend at midnight who was heard for his persistence?
3. Is the Holy Spirit given when all one does is pray? When was the Holy Spirit given to men?
4. Do you think Christians should try to be logical in their presentation of the Gospel? Didn't the apostle Paul go into Jewish synagogues and "reason" with Jews from the scriptures about the Christ?
5. When was the devil bound?

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

6. Is the whole world of mankind actually divided into only two segments—saved and lost? Who are the saved? Who are the lost?
7. How did the Jews let seven demons worse than the first inhabit their “swept-clean” house? Is their plight a possibility for believers today?
8. Why did the woman think the mother of Jesus was so blessed? What do you think of Jesus’ answer?
9. When is it wrong to ask the Lord for signs? Is it ever right? Are religious people today wrong in clamoring for miraculous signs?
10. From the study of Jesus’ exposure of the Pharisees and lawyers, do you see any parallels of hypocrisy in the modern church?

BLESSING OF BEING SEALED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT

(Ephesians 1:13-14)

By Paul T. Butler — OBC Chapel, 10-23-73

INTRODUCTION

I. CONTEXTUALLY

- A. These two verses combine to form one of the great "spiritual blessings" God has blessed us with in Christ.
 - 1. Paul lays two huge sentences on the Ephesian church in chapter one.
 - 2. The first sentence 1:3-14 is a catalog of all the ways in which God has blessed Christians in Christ.
 - 3. The second sentence 1:15-23 is Paul's prayer that these Christians may know (understand and experience) those blessings.
- B. Paul did not place all this "breathhtaking" stress upon spiritual blessings without reason.
 - 1. Spiritual blessings are not contingent upon favorable physical circumstances and are available to all believers alike.
 - 2. Spiritual blessings thus have to do with the abiding realities, not the temporary trappings of the flesh.
 - 3. Spiritual blessings supply man's most desperate need—to be remade into the person God intended him to be—this will be the thrust of these two verses.

II. EXEGETICALLY

- A. Reading these two verses in the Greek text is an interesting experience.
 - 1. Literally it would read something like this:
"In Him also, you, the ones having heard the word, that one of the truth, the gospel of your salvation, in Him also, you, the ones having believed, were sealed (passive) with Spirit, the promised one, the holy one, who is the down-payment of our inheritance until the redemption which will give complete possession unto the praise of His glory."
 - 2. The Berkeley Version is also interesting here:
"In Him you also, after listening to the message of the truth, the Gospel of our salvation, have as believers in Him been stamp marked with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the pledge-deposit of our legacy for the releasing of our deed of purchase, and all to the praise of His glory."

III. ETYMOLOGICALLY

- A. Seal - literal sense: "A device bearing a design, a name or some other words so made that it can impart an impression in relief upon a soft substance like clay or wax. When the clay or wax hardens, it permanently bears the impression of the seal."

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

1. Archaeologists find them being used 4000 B.C.
2. Originally they took the form of a cylinder, gradually superseded by the scarab (beetle-shaped)
3. Some carried on cords around neck like necklace; some cone-shaped in boxes; most in form of finger-rings

B. Seal - uses:

1. As an authentication
2. As a mark of ratification of a covenant
3. As a means of protecting documents to seal against tampering
4. As a deputation of authority
5. As an official mark of ownership

IV. APPLICABILITY - Three areas of blessing for the Christian in having been sealed with the promised Holy Spirit.

- A. He Etches the Image of God and His Son Upon our Being
- B. He Gives Us the Earnest-Payment of Our Inheritance
- C. He Empowers Us As Emissaries of our Great God

DISCUSSION

I. ETCHES THE IMAGE OF GOD UPON OUR BEING

A. Authenticates our genuineness as belonging to Him

1. "The Spirit himself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are children of God. . . ." (Rom. 8:16).
2. Does not say that the Holy Spirit bears witness *to* our spirit but *with* our spirit—*summarturei*; the Holy Spirit bears witness—and our own spirit bears witness.
3. If my spirit says I am a child of God, and the testimony of the Holy Spirit shows that I am not a child of God, then I am not a child no matter what my spirit says. The two witnesses must agree. My spirit must agree with the testimony of the Holy Spirit.
4. This co-witness of the Spirit of God with our spirit, whereby we are assured that we are children of God, is a very important and blessed reality. BUT IT HAS BEEN SO OFTEN MISUNDERSTOOD AND MISINTERPRETED.
5. How does the Spirit bear witness with our spirit? A still small voice? A feeling? emotion? impulse? The Bible nowhere affirms such leadings! All people and religious denominations who claim such subjective witness of the Holy Spirit not only contradict one another—they contradict the Bible. The Bible claims to be the witness of the Spirit. The Spirit of God does not contradict Himself.

BLESSING OF BEING SEALED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT

6. Since there are no inspired men living today—and those who claim to be such contradict the word of God in what is His witness about who are the children of God—the only witness which we have of the Spirit to us is found in His written Word. *No one knows the Spirit's will on any subject unless he has learned it from the written Word.* Anything that claims to be the Holy Spirit's teaching must not contradict this!
 7. The Spirit of God lays down the terms by which we become a child of God, and when we believe and obey these terms then both the Holy Spirit and our own spirits testify that we are the sons of God.
 8. WHAT A BLESSING TO HAVE SUCH A SEAL PUT UPON OUR MINDS AND HEARTS. . . . WE DON'T HAVE TO DEPEND UPON FICKLE AND VACILLATING EMOTIONS AND FEELINGS . . . NOR UPON THE WHIMS AND OPINIONS OF MEN. OUR SALVATION IS AUTHENTICATED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT HIMSELF IN HIS UNCHANGING, ONCE-FOR-ALL WORD . . . NO GUESSING, NO ANXIETY.
 9. "These things have I written unto you, that ye may know that ye have eternal life, even unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God" (I Jn. 5:13). THIS IS THE EMPHATIC WORD OF JOHN'S WRITINGS. . . . "THAT YE MAY KNOW. . . ."
- B. Glorifies (The Holy Spirit transfers some of the glory of God to our nature.)
1. "But we all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord the Spirit" (II Cor. 3:18).
 2. Alexander Campbell said it this way in his *Christian System*, "The word of redemption is a system of works, or deeds, on the part of God, which constitutes the most splendid series of moral facts men or angel ever saw. . . . When these facts are understood or brought into immediate contact with the mind of man, as a moral seal, they delineate the image of God upon the human soul. All the means of grace are, therefore, only the means of impressing this seal upon the heart, of bringing these moral facts to make their full impression on the soul of man. The testimony of the Holy Spirit through the apostles and the faith of those who believe and obey this testimony are the channel through which these facts, or the hand of God, draws the image on the heart and character of man." He went on to say . . . "all the moral facts which can form moral character after the divine model, or which can effect a moral or religious change in man, are found in the testimony of God."

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

3. What is this image of God . . . this glory of God which is impressed or sealed upon our being? The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness and self-control.
4. I submit these as characteristics of God which we can enjoy as blessings if we will allow the Holy Spirit to impress them upon our natures: honesty; goodness; creativeness; humor; appreciativeness; enjoyment; giving-ness.
5. Carol King has a phrase in her song, *Way Over Yonder*, "And the sweet-tasting good life is so easily found . . . way over yonder, that's where I'm bound." Let's appropriate that here. THE SWEET-TASTING GOOD LIFE OF GOD IS SO EASILY FOUND. . . . IF WE JUST LET THE SPIRIT ETCH IT UPON OUR BEING BY KNOWING AND DOING WHERE THE SPIRIT LEADS IN THE SPIRIT'S WORD.
6. You see, this is the work of the Spirit. God the Father is the creative source of blessing; the Son is the revealer of the possibility of such blessedness and obtainer of it in the flesh; the Holy Spirit is the agent by which this blessing may be impressed or sealed upon the nature of man!

HOW MIND STAGGERING! GOD CREATES THE BLESSING, THE SON WINS IT FOR US, THE HOLY SPIRIT TRANSFERS AND SEALS IT UPON THOSE WHO WILL ACCEPT IT BY FAITH!

C. Secures and protects us against being defrauded by the thief of souls.

1. When we are sealed by the Holy Spirit we can live confidently that there is no power in this world or the other capable of robbing us of our souls, our life, our being.
2. "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me; and I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish, and no one shall snatch them out of my hand" (Jn. 10:27-28).
3. "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears my word and believes him who sent me, has eternal life; he does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life" (Jn. 5:24).
4. "Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hid with Christ in God" (Col. 3:2-3).
5. "Little children, you are of God, and have overcome them; for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world" (I Jn. 4:4).
6. "We know that any one born of God does not sin, but He who was born of God keeps him, and the evil one does not touch him" (I Jn. 5:18).

BLESSING OF BEING SEALED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT

7. The book of Revelation pictorializes a great host which no man can number sealed by God—protected from the dragon and the beasts not able to be overcome by the great spiritual battle that rages between God and His enemies.
8. WHAT A TREMENDOUS BLESSING TO KNOW THAT WE HAVE HAD THE SEAL OF GOD PUT UPON US. NO MATTER THE WORLD WANTS TO ERADICATE US. . . . NO MATTER THAT IT MAY APPEAR AS IF THE FORCES OF UNGODLINESS WILL WIN THE STRUGGLE . . . GOD KNOWS WHO HIS ARE, HE HAS THEM MARKED AND SEALED, AND THEY ARE SECURE!

II. HE GIVES US AN EARNEST OF OUR INHERITANCE

A. Holiness

1. What is the legacy left us by that Son of man who came to earth, born in a stable, who had not where to lay his head?
2. He brought us word from our Father that holiness is our legacy. The most needful, most enjoyable treasure God could will to us is holiness.
3. What is the deepest longing of the human soul? To be clean, to be good, to be pure, to be true, to be a beautiful-person.
4. This is what I want when I get to God. Bags full or banks full of gold and diamonds are not what my soul cries out for. Ivory palaces and mansions are not what I want for my eternal inheritance. I WANT, I NEED, I MUST HAVE HOLINESS!
5. "I know that nothing good dwells within me, that is, in my flesh. I can will what is right but I cannot do it. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do. . . . Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? . . . There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 7:18—8:1).
6. Now God has taken care of my problem. He has provided me a cleansing, a goodness, a purity, a freedom from guilt, a holiness by the death of His Son. And when He comes for us this is what our great inheritance shall be—we shall be like Him.
7. But when we are sealed by the Holy Spirit—when His spirit bears witness with our spirit that we are a child of God, we have a down payment on this holiness already. WE CAN NOW ENJOY GOODNESS, FREEDOM FROM GUILT, PURITY, HOLINESS—A TASTE OF WHAT THE FULL INHERITANCE WILL BE!

B. Rest

1. Another aspect of the legacy left to us is rest. Jesus came and said, "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest" (Mt. 11:28).

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

2. What makes work into labor? The frustration of seeing the fruits of one's work dissipated—the agony of knowing that one has spent himself laboring in something whose fruits are only temporary and ultimately useless. **THIS IS WHAT MAKES WORK INTO TIRING, FRUSTRATING, DEADENING LABOR!**
3. If the results of our work could find completion or perfection—if we could have confirmed to us that our work was eternally useful and abiding, that it wouldn't just disappear with time—we could find perfect rest. **REST IS NOT JUST THE ABSENCE OF WORK!**
4. God has laid up for us an inheritance of rest. "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord henceforth, says the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow them" (Rev. 14:13).
5. But those sealed by the Holy Spirit may now have a down-payment, a taste of that rest. Paul wrote the Hebrew Christians and said, "For we who are believing, are entering that rest . . ." (Heb. 4:3).
6. Jesus said, "Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of man will give to you; for on him has God the Father set his seal" (Jn. 6:27).
7. Paul wrote the Corinthians, "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain" (I Cor. 15:58).
8. Friend, if you're sealed by the Holy Spirit, you'll never get weary. Bone-tired and muscle-weak; yes—but soul-tired and spirit-weary, never!

C. Dominion

1. Man was made to have dominion. "Then God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth" (Gen. 1:26).
2. God has promised that one day His saints shall reign with His Christ forever and ever (Rev. 22:5, etc.).
3. But the blessing of being sealed by the Holy Spirit is that we may now enjoy a taste of that dominion.
4. The exciting second chapter of Hebrews asks, "What is man that thou art mindful of him?" and answers by showing that while man was created to have dominion, because of sin he does not now have it, but Christ came in flesh and blood and

BLESSING OF BEING SEALED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT

won back man's dominion for him. HE DEFEATED THE INVADER, SATAN!

5. Christ, if we believe and trust Him, has set us free from being dominated by circumstances, by earthly things, by ego, by fears, by falsehoods, by others, by even Satan. IN FACT, IN CHRIST, WE HAVE DOMINION OVER CIRCUMSTANCES, OVER THINGS, OVER EVERYTHING AND MAY ENJOY AND USE EVERYTHING TO GLORIFY GOD! Mind you, I did not say we can selfishly take anything we want and use it in a way to bring shame upon God.
6. Whatever circumstances God sees fit to give us here, whatever talents, whatever worldly things, whatever associations, WE ARE RULERS-OVER TO GLORIFY GOD AND REJOICE IN. . . .
7. "For all things are yours, whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future, all are yours; and you are Christ's; and Christ is God's" (I Cor. 3:21-22).
8. ". . . in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us" (Rom. 8:37).

ALL THINGS ARE YOURS—MORE THAN CONQUERORS! What blessedness—what happiness—what glory. Friend, if you've been sealed with the imprint of God's Holy Spirit, you have been certified and authorized to be a joint heir with His Son, and to have dominion with Him.

III. EMPOWERS US AS EMISSARIES OF OUR GREAT GOD

A. Certifies us as authentic representatives of Almighty God

1. When the Spirit of the Holy God is etched upon our hearts . . . when we are sealed with the Spirit of Christ . . . it is an announcement to the world that we are on business for the King.
2. "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another" (Jn. 13:34-35).
3. J. B. Phillips on II Cor. 3:3 "You are an open letter (epistle) about Christ which we ourselves have written, not with pen and ink but with the Spirit of the living God. Our message has been engraved not in stone, but in living men and women."
4. Many false prophets have gone out into the world (I Jn. 4:1-6). The world desperately needs some authenticating mark upon the true prophets. That mark is the seal of the Holy Spirit, one who preaches the true apostolic message and one who lives the true apostolic message.

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

5. "If you abide in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine" (Jn. 8:31). IF YOU ARE SEALED BY HIS SPIRIT THROUGH HIS WORD, THEN YOU ARE A CERTIFIED DISCIPLE OF HIS, AND THE WHOLE WORLD WILL KNOW. . . . YOU WILL BE HAPPY AND BLESSED AND SO WILL OTHERS!

B. Certifies the authority of our message

1. When the image of God is stamped upon us by the Holy Spirit, we will proclaim and live the truth and the power of His truth preached and lived will be vindicated in the world.
2. The work of the Holy Spirit is to convince the world of sin, righteousness and the judgment. The only agency by which the Spirit works in doing this is the written, preached and lived Word of God.
3. But in the midst of all the failures and inadequacies of men's philosophical, political and ethical systems, THOSE SEALED BY THE SPIRIT ARE CONDUCTORS OF THE GREATEST POWER IN THE UNIVERSE.
4. The power to convert men and change their eternal destinies is more awesome than the power to create this universe!
5. "His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, that through these you may escape from the corruption that is in the world because of passion, and become partakers of the divine nature" (II Pet. 1:3-4).
6. "For though we live in the world we are not carrying on a worldly war, for the weapons of our warfare are not worldly but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every proud obstacle to the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ. . . ." (II Cor. 10:3-5).

WHAT A BLESSING TO KNOW THAT WE ARE SEALED BY HIS SPIRIT TO BECOME CHANNELS THROUGH WHICH THE AWESOME POWER OF HIS WORD WORKS. . . . AND IT SHALL NEVER RETURN UNTO HIM VOID!

C. Certifies the power of His divine providence on our behalf

1. When the nature of God is etched upon our minds through the Holy Spirit's agent, the Word of God, we know God as our beneficent, loving, acting, Father who is ready to use all His creation on our behalf.
2. "We know that God works everything for good for those who love him, and are called according to his purpose" (Rom. 8:28).
3. "Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us . . ." (Eph. 3:20).

BLESSING OF BEING SEALED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT

4. "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory . . ." (II Cor. 4:17).
5. Even angels "are ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation" (Heb. 1:14).
6. The Old Testament gives us a vivid account of God's providential power being used for those with His mark upon them. Ezekiel chapter 9 pictures God's faithful ones being marked with His seal upon them. Then the book of Daniel shows God using kings, kingdoms, circumstances and creation to provide exactly and abundantly what those marked by Him must have to fulfill His purpose in their lives.
7. He is the same God today to those with His seal upon them. THE BOOK OF REVELATION IS HIS MESSAGE THAT HE IS EVEN NOW USING KINGS AND KINGDOMS, CIRCUMSTANCES AND CREATION TO SERVE HIS SEALED ONES! WHAT POWER AND WHAT POWERS ARE OURS!

CONCLUSION

I. SO THE BLESSING OF BEING SEALED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT

- A. Etches the Image of God Upon Our Being
- B. Gives Us the Earnest-Payment of Our Inheritance
- C. Empowers Us as Emissaries of our Great God

II. A WARNING

- A. You are either sealed by the Holy Spirit or marked with the mark of the beast.
 1. The great division of mankind in the book of Revelation is between only two kinds of humanity . . . those with the mark of God upon their foreheads, and those with the mark of the beast.
 2. Satan puts his mark upon all those not sealed by the Holy Spirit.
 3. Jesus told the Jews in John 8 who wanted to kill Him because He told them the truth, "You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires."
 4. The seal or mark of Satan is the "mark of the beast" in Revelation and is given to those who worship the beast, political and military power; those who worship the false prophet, false religion and doctrine; those who worship the harlot, worldiness, carnal-mindedness.

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

B. Satan can even counterfeit the seal of the Holy Spirit

1. The beast and the false prophet are able to work signs (false signs) that will deceive men and women if they do not know what the true sealing of the Holy Spirit is.
2. Satan is able to change himself into an angel of light to deceive the ignorant.
3. He will try to deceive us into thinking that the immature, temporary miracles of the Holy Spirit are the seal of God.
4. He will try to deceive us into thinking that Pharisaic attitudes toward works and self-righteousness are the seal of God.

III. BUT WHAT IS THE SEAL?

- A. How do we know we are sealed by the Holy Spirit?
- B. How do we know others are sealed by the Holy Spirit?
- C. As we said at the beginning, When the Holy Spirit bears witness *with* our spirits
- D. But *what* does the Holy Spirit witness?
- E. Very simply, He bears witness in His Word that those Believing, Repenting and Obeying God are sealed by God as His B.R.O.

IV. NOW WILL YOU JOIN ME IN THIS SONG AS A PRAYER TO GOD FOR HIS SEALING

"O to be like Thee! blessed Redeemer:
This is my constant longing and prayer;
Gladly I'll forfeit all of earth's treasures,
Jesus, Thy perfect likeness to wear.
O to be like Thee! O to be like Thee!
Blessed Redeemer, pure as Thou art;
Come in Thy sweetness, come in Thy fullness;
Stamp Thine own image deep on my heart.

Chapter Twelve

(12:1-59)

THE SON OF MAN ADMONISHING SPIRITUAL ALERTNESS

IDEAS TO INVESTIGATE:

1. Why did Jesus liken the hypocrisy of the Pharisees to "leaven" (12:1)?
2. How can anyone who speaks a word against the Son of man be forgiven (12:10)?
3. What is the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit (12:10)?
4. Is it wrong to lay up treasure for oneself (12:21)?
5. Does Jesus mean we should not care whether we have anything to eat or wear or a house to live in (12:22-34)?
6. If the Son of man is coming at an hour you do not expect, why are there so many modern-day prophets who say they know when He is coming (12:40)?
7. Are there to be degrees of reward and punishment (12:48)?

SECTION 1

Arguments for Alertness (12:1-12)

12 In the meantime, when so many thousands of the multitude had gathered together that they trod upon one another, he began to say to his disciples first, "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. ²Nothing is covered up that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known. ³Therefore whatever you have said in the dark shall be heard in the light, and what you have whispered in private rooms shall be proclaimed upon the housetops.

⁴ "I tell you, my friends, do not fear those who kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. ⁵But I will warn you whom to fear: fear him who, after he has killed, has power to cast into hell; yes, I tell you, fear him! ⁶Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? And not one of them is forgotten before God. ⁷Why, even the hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not; you are of more value than many sparrows.

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

8 "And I tell you, every one who acknowledges me before men, the Son of man also will acknowledge before the angels of God; ⁹but he who denies me before men will be denied before the angels of God. ¹⁰And every one who speaks a word against the Son of man will be forgiven; but he who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven. ¹¹And when they bring you before the synagogues and the rulers and the authorities, do not be anxious how or what you are to answer or what you are to say; ¹²for the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say."

12:1-3 Deceptions: Having faced down the hostile opposition of many enemies, Jesus takes occasion to warn His disciples that they must be alert since they will face the same attacks upon their spirituality. Having just denounced the hypocrisy of the Pharisees and lawyers, He warns His own disciples to beware of the "leaven" of the Pharisees. Months earlier He had warned of the same thing (cf. Mt. 16:4-12; Mk. 8:13-21). The Pharisaic way of life was especially deceptive. The seductive unbelief which appears outwardly to be religious, while hiding inner rebellion and wickedness is the "leaven" Jesus was talking about. Hypocritical self-deception is the most insidious form of evil. It works like leaven—unseen by the one upon whom it is working, but permeating the "whole lump" (cf. I Cor. 5:6-8). Even disciples of Jesus may be "leavened" with hypocrisy if they do not remain spiritually alert!

Jesus warns the day would come when everyone would see that His evaluation of the Pharisees was correct. The day did come when the hidden hypocrisy of the Pharisaic religion was exposed. The judgment upon their way as false was plainly confirmed in the death and resurrection of Jesus. Furthermore, it was the fanatical hypocrisy of the Pharisees which agitated the Jewish rebellion against Rome and resulted in the destruction of Pharisaic Judaism. The whole world saw that happen and knew their hypocrisy caused it. On the other hand, what the disciples of Jesus had to learn from Him in the "dark" ("whispered" secretly in privacy) would be common knowledge (proclaimed upon housetops) throughout the world. Two thousand years of history since Jesus made this warning have confirmed His predictions time and again. Hypocrisy like that of the Pharisees continues to be exposed over and over (I Cor. 1:20 . . . "where is the scribe?"). No man can long "play-act" at religion until he is found out. Truth cannot long be forced into hiding—it will always have to come out into the open and be acknowledged. Truth will always win out! So, let the disciple of Jesus be spiritually alert and always on the side of truth.

12:4-7 Dangers: The call to spiritual alertness is a serious matter. Jesus warns that the time will come when His disciples will be declaring the

truth "from the housetops" and they will be threatened with death. The truth of Christ's way forever exposes the hypocritical way of self-righteousness. This is precisely what happened to Christ's disciples in the first century (cf. Acts 4:5-22; 5:27-41, et al). Jesus warns His followers that even when they are threatened with their lives (as they shall surely be in every generation) they had better not *pretend* something they are not. No pressure is great enough that the Christian should cave in to fear and play the part of a hypocrite.

Enemies of the truth may kill human bodies, but they cannot kill the soul, the eternal person. So, be spiritually alert and remember that only God has the power to punish with eternal death. If the Christian is to fear, let him fear God! To fear God is spiritual watchfulness! The Greek word *geennan* is translated *hell* in the RSV, but it is really the name of a valley to the south of the city of Jerusalem (the Valley of Hinnom). It was in this valley the ancient Jews practiced the worship of Moloch (which involved human sacrifice). King Josiah expressed his abhorrence of idolatry by throwing corpses of dead idolaters into this valley. The valley also became a city "dump" (cf. II Kings 23:4ff) where pagan idols and other paraphernalia were burned along with the bodies of dead people. It became such a good illustration of "hell" in the minds of the Jews that rabbinical tradition used it to symbolize the place of eternal punishment. Hobbs says, "In Jesus' day this valley was the garbage dump of the city. Into it were thrown the dead bodies of animals and of executed criminals whose bodies were unclaimed. Maggots worked ceaselessly in the garbage. To consume it, fires burned day and night. At night wild dogs snarled and gnashed their teeth as they ate edible portions of the garbage." Eternal hell will be infinitely worse than the valley of Hinnom, for there the "smoke" of man's torment will go up forever and ever (Rev. 14:9-11).

The persecuted disciple of Jesus might be tempted to think that the God who created such a vast universe would hardly have time to notice should he die a martyr's death. Furthermore a weak faith might see the soon-coming holocaust of paganism upon Christianity as evidence that God was unaware or indifferent. What is the death of one single Christian to a God who must be extremely busy running this infinitely huge and complicated universe? Christians were a minority religious group, swallowed up in a vast, powerful Roman empire where the major concern was politics. Temptation for Christians to view the Roman empire ("the beast") as invincible was strong (Rev. 13:4). Some might anticipate obliteration of the church. But the Heavenly Father knows their danger; He is aware. Believers are to trust their souls to His care (I Pet. 2:25; 4:19). Jesus illustrates: While five sparrows are worth only two pennies in the eyes of man, God does not forget a one of them. In fact, God probably has each sparrow named, just as He does the stars (Psa. 147:4). Now if God

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

is so intimately related to each sparrow, how much more intimately will He guard the crown of His creation—man (cf. Mt. 6:26; 12:12)! God is interested and involved in every minute detail of man's existence. He has every hair of every human head numbered (cf. I Sam. 14:45; II Sam. 14:11; Lk. 21:18). The Greek word for numbered is *arithmeo* from which we get the English word, *arithmetic*. Jesus used an interesting Greek word for *value* here: the normal word for value is *time*, but Jesus used *diapherete* which literally means, "carry through." God does more than simply place a price-tag on man—He takes man up into His bosom to "carry" as a precious son, (cf. Isa. 46:3-4; 49:14-18; Hosea 11:3, 4, etc.). So, when danger comes, let the believer give reverence to God and not man.

12:8-12 Denials: Another argument Jesus has for spiritual alertness is the temptation to deny the historical fact of the incarnation of God in Jesus Christ. Everyone who acknowledges Jesus as the incarnate God before men, the Son of man will acknowledge in the presence of God. The Greek word translated *acknowledge* is *homologese* which literally means, "say the same as . . ." Everyone who *says the same as* God and Jesus say about Jesus, will have Jesus *say the same as* the Father and Son say about believers. To *say the same as* God says about Jesus is to say He is the Messiah, the Son of God, God in the flesh and Lord of all. To say that Jesus is not God in the flesh is to be anti-Christ (cf. I Jn. 2:22-25; 3:2-3). The Greek word for *deny* is *arnesamenos*, and means, "to contradict, disown, renounce." Whoever *contradicts* what Jesus has said about Himself, or what the Word of God says about Him, will be *disowned* by Jesus in the presence of God and His angels.

Why does Jesus interject what appears to be such an ambiguous statement (12:10) in the midst of this exhortation? Why would He warn against denying Him and then promise forgiveness to everyone who speaks a word against the Son of man? The earlier teaching of Jesus on this point must be studied here (cf. Mt. 12:22-32 and Mk. 3:22-30). Earlier Jesus said, ". . . every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven." Apparently Jesus means to warn that the time would soon come when God's redemptive plan would be so unquestionably validated and the deity of His Son so unequivocally confirmed, that to deliberately refuse Him would be to commit the unpardonable sin. While Jesus walked the earth in a human body the completed revelation of His deity had not been fully and undeniably demonstrated. That demonstration waited upon His resurrection. Before the resurrection, men might say a word against the Son of man and stumble at the idea of God dwelling in flesh. They might continue to have doubts about Jesus that would even lead many of them to crucify Him in their ignorance and unbelief (cf. Acts 3:17; Lk. 23:34; Acts 13:27; 17:30). This would be forgiven if, after the Holy Spirit came in His ministry of validating testimony, they should believe

and repent. But to sin against the Holy Spirit's complete, final, unquestionable testimony is the sin that cannot be forgiven.

To sin against God's Spirit is apparently a deliberate, willful, intentional perversion of truth. It is calling good evil and evil good (cf. Isa. 5:20). The Pharisees were apparently involving themselves in such calculated malice aforethought when they accused Jesus of casting out demons by the power of the devil. To say that something which is unquestionably good and righteous is evil is to blaspheme the Spirit of Truth. Perverse, reckless, malicious rejection of the truth makes the intellectual and moral nature of a person entirely incapable of dealing honestly with any truth (cf. Isa. 30:9-11; Jer. 6:16). Men may intentionally and deliberately reject truth and choose to believe a lie (cf. Micah 2:11; II Thess. 2:9-12; Rom. 1:22-28; Jn. 8:45; II Pet. 3:5, etc.). Men may choose to reject the blood atonement of Christ in favor of another hope, but the Bible says that makes it impossible for them to repent (Heb. 6:1-8; 10:19-31) because God accepts repentance *only* through faith in Christ. To seek justification before God through any religious system other than New Testament Christianity is to call evil what God has demonstrated is the only good. It takes an unforgivably wicked heart to ascribe evil to the One whose work and teaching stand only on the side of righteousness and merciful helpfulness to sinful, suffering humanity. To reject the perfect goodness and righteousness God has offered in Christ, now that it is finally demonstrated in the Cross and the Resurrection, is to sin against the ultimate best the Holy Spirit of God offers to the world. This is the "eternal" sin (Mk. 3:29) and the "sin unto death" (I Jn. 5:16). To have stumbled at the Incarnation while the Son was still in the flesh was forgivable, but to contradict and deny the complete and perfect testimony of the Holy Spirit is unforgivable. Wm. Barclay wrote, "If a man for long enough shuts his eyes and ears to God's way . . . and takes his own way . . . He comes to a stage when his own evil seems good . . . and God's good seems to him evil." Neither in this world (Jewish dispensation) nor in that to come (Christian dispensation) will that be forgiven (cf. Lk. 16:26; Heb. 3:13; Heb. 9:27; Gal. 6:7). Even Moses' law distinguished between unintentional sin and deliberate ("high-handed") sin (Num. 15:22-30; I Sam. 2:25; 3:14; Isa. 22:14). Paul told Timothy that in the Christian age some would turn away from listening to the truth and . . . never be able to come to a knowledge of the truth (II Tim. 3:7; 4:3-4). Fowler writes of the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit: "It becomes a deliberate insult to God for men to claim to be unable to distinguish His work from that vileness and rottenness produced by that vile, unclean spirit-being who is the antithesis of all that God stands for . . ." (*Matthew, Vol. II*, College Press, pg. 681). Examples of such blasphemy are contemporary. Bertrand Russell, late philosopher and mathematician wrote in his book, *Why I Am Not A Christian*, pg. 24, speaking of religion and Christianity, "I regard it as a disease born of fear and as a source of untold misery

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

to the human race.” A contemporary, self-appointed female leader of atheism in the United States said of God: “A crutch like LSD, alcohol or marijuana”; of the church of Christ: “It has never contributed anything to anybody, and place, at any time”; of the Bible: “The . . . inconsistencies, wretched history, sordid sex, sadism in it . . . shocked me profoundly.” This woman said in an interview on one of America’s campuses, “I’d rather go to hell!”

Just as Jesus had been threatened and blasphemed by His evil opposers so His disciples would be brought before wicked rulers and threatened and hear the name of their Lord blasphemed. They may stand against these threats, however, and they will have the assistance of the Holy Spirit to do so. They need not fear; they must not deny Him. The Holy Spirit was promised as a *miraculous* Guide for the Apostles (Jn. 16:13-14; 20:30-31), but not for every believer. The Holy Spirit guided the Apostles infallibly into all the truth God wished man to know for salvation and the Apostles left this complete truth in a written record. Any believer now who faces falsehood, unbelief, temptations, and persecutions may know the truth and speak the truth by knowing and speaking what the New Testament says. Jesus’ promise (12:11-12) was fulfilled a number of times in the first century (cf. Acts 4:8, 13, 19, 20).

SECTION 2

Astuteness in Alertness (12:13-34)

13 One of the multitude said to him, “Teacher, bid my brother divide the inheritance with me.” ¹⁴But he said to him, “Man, who made me a judge or divider over you?” ¹⁵And he said to them, “Take heed, and beware of all covetousness; for a man’s life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.” ¹⁶And he told them a parable, saying, “The land of a rich man brought forth plentifully; ¹⁷and he thought to himself, ‘What shall I do, for I have nowhere to store my crops?’ ¹⁸And he said, ‘I will do this: I will pull down my barns, and build larger ones; and there I will store all my grain and my goods. ¹⁹And I will say to my soul, Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; take your ease, eat, drink, be merry.’ ²⁰But God said to him, ‘Fool! This night your soul is required of you; and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?’ ²¹So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.”

22 And he said to his disciples, “Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you shall eat, nor about your body, what you shall put on. ²³For this life is more than food, and the body

more than clothing. ²⁴Consider the ravens; they neither sow nor reap, they have neither storehouse nor barn, and yet God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds! ²⁵And which of you by being anxious can add a cubit to his span of life? ²⁶If then you are not able to do as small a thing as that, why are you anxious about the rest? ²⁷Consider the lilies, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin; yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. ²⁸But if God so clothes the grass which is alive in the field today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more will he clothe you, O men of little faith! ²⁹And do not seek what you are to eat and what you are to drink, nor be of anxious mind. ³⁰For all the nations of the world seek these things; and your Father knows that you need them. ³¹Instead, seek his kingdom, and these things shall be yours as well.

32 "Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. ³³Sell your possessions, and give alms; provide yourselves with purses that do not grow old, with a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches and no moth destroys. ³⁴For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

12:13-21 Foolishness: One of the multitude was very alert. He caught quickly the authoritative manner of Jesus. Jesus had spoken with the presence of a rabbi—as one who honestly and clearly stood for truth and fairness. When He paused, a man in the crowd ordered Jesus (Gr. *eipe*, imperative mood verb, *Tell!*) bid his brother to divide the inheritance with him. The Greek word *kleronomia* means literally, "to portion by lots" and is translated, "inheritance" (cf. Mt. 21:38; Mk. 12:7; Lk. 20:14) or "birthright" (cf. Gal. 4:30; Heb. 1:4; 12:17). This man may have been a younger brother, dissatisfied with the handling of his father's estate (cf. Lk. 15:11-32). Oftentimes an elder brother, according to Jewish custom, was given a double portion (cf. Deut. 21:15-17). Perhaps this man was being cheated in the division of the family estate. Whatever his complaint, he recognized in Jesus a "teacher" who would judge fairly. In Jesus' day it was Jewish practice to have rabbis make civil and judicial decisions. Moses appointed leading men to help him make such judgments at the founding of the nation of Israel (cf. Ex. 18:13-27; Deut. 16:18ff.). This authority probably passed to the "scribes" as early as the days of Ezra (cf. Ezra 7:1-28). In orthodox Judaism today a few similar judgments are still made by rabbis.

But this Rabbi will not be drawn into the man's family dispute. Why did Jesus refuse, almost curtly, this opportunity to rectify an apparent injustice? Actually, Jesus provided the only real solution to the man's

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

problem with His subsequent admonition. Jesus refused to make a judgment because:

- a. His primary mission on earth was not to personally judge in social things. He was no social activist. His primary mission was to save, to regenerate the hearts of men.
- b. He refused to make a moral judgment or force a moral action that the individual should make for himself. To do so would violate freedom of the human will and preclude the possibility of moral development of the individual.
- c. He has already spoken about the most important "inheritance"—the eternal inheritance. Men were neglecting that. Had they given that first priority, they could easily settle all earthly disputes about material things.
- d. He will speak of the heavenly treasure more explicitly. If men will only become true members of the kingdom of God they will treat all men as God intended they should be treated (cf. Mt. 7:12; Col. 3:16, etc.).

Jesus went right to the heart of the man's problem—covetousness. The Greek text translated literally would have Jesus command the crowds, "Be continually on the lookout and guard yourselves from all desires to have more." The Greek word *pleonexia* is from *pleion* (more) and *echo* (to have), and is translated *covetousness*. Covetousness is the all-consuming desire to have more of something. It is the urge to acquire gone mad, unrestrained, unconcerned with the will of God. It is the attitude that material possessions will satisfy all human needs. Covetousness is called idolatry (Col. 3:5) because the covetous person worships (depends on) things—not the Person, God. One out of every six verses of the Gospels has to do with man and his possessions! That is because acquisition of wealth is the chief ambition of the majority of men. Wealth impresses men with its pseudo-power. Covetousness is probably the chief barrier to man's acceptance of the Lord's philosophy of what life is all about. The Lord's truth about life is this: There is more to life than a material inheritance. Life does not consist (hold-together) in the abundance of material possessions. This life and this world is temporary; the eternal treasure is infinitely more to be desired (cf. II Cor. 4:16-18). To illustrate His truth, Jesus told a parable about a farmer God called a fool.

The man Jesus told about was rich but he was a fool. The Greek word translated *fool* is *aphron* and means literally, "without mind." Someone has defined the word as "the lack of commonsense perception of the reality of things natural and spiritual—or the imprudent ordering of one's life in regard to salvation." The farmer certainly made serious mental and moral misjudgment about the priorities of life.

- a. His life centered in himself. Twelve times in five verses, "I," "My" and "Mine" appear in this tiny tragedy. The Greek text translated literally would stress his self-centered ego even more.
- b. He thought to feed his soul on things. He exchanged truth, generosity, conscience, love and helpfulness for things. He made earth and its riches his business so completely, heaven and spirituality would have bored him.
- c. In seeking a way to deal with his prosperity he reasoned with his natural inclinations and did not seek God's word on the subject. Even the Old Testament could have given him divine guidance in proper use of his wealth.

Someone has rightly observed, "This parable shows an honest man in the act of being executed by his own estate." It was where he thought it came from and what he did with it that made him forfeit his life for it. Jesus did not say that the possession of wealth was wrong; it was the wrong use of it that He condemned. It is all right for a man to possess things—but not right for things to possess a man.

Covetousness is the desire for the wrong things. Men are not to covet their neighbor's possessions (Ex. 20:17). Christians are to seek and to rejoice at the gain of a neighbor like we would at our own gain (Rom. 12:15; 15:2; I Cor. 10:24, 33; II Cor. 12:15). Men are not to desire worldly possessions for their own sake to the neglect of higher things. Men are not to desire worldly possessions for their own use only, for ". . . those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and hurtful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction . . ." (I Tim. 6:9). "The love of money is the root of all evils . . ." (I Tim. 6:10):

- a. It caused Judas to betray Christ, lose his life, his self-respect and his eternal soul (Jn. 12:4-6; Mt. 26:14-16).
- b. It caused Ananias and Sapphira to lie to God and receive sudden death (Acts 5:1-11).
- c. It caused Achan to steal at Jericho and all Israel to be defeated at Ai, and for it he and his family were destroyed (Josh. 7:1ff.).
- d. It caused a young man to reject Christ and to go away sorrowful (Mk. 10:17-22).
- e. It caused some to teach things they ought not (Tit. 1:11; II Pet. 2:1-3).
- f. It caused some to turn God's house into a house of merchandise (Jn. 2:14-15) and a den of robbers (Mt. 21:12-13).
- g. It caused Elisha's servant to lie, and to be made a leper (II Kings 5:22-27).
- h. It caused Saul to disobey God who gave him victory in war (I Sam. 15:9-23), and for it Saul was rejected.

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

- i. It is the root of all kinds of evil (I Tim. 6:10); including murder (Ezek. 22:12), and many foolish and hurtful lusts (I Tim. 6:9).
- j. It is the cause of domestic troubles (Prov. 15:27).
- k. It causes some to be led astray from the faith (I Tim. 6:10).
- l. It causes some to be pierced through with many sorrows (I Tim. 6:10).

“There is great gain in godliness with contentment” (I Tim. 6:6). The man of God (every Christian) must shun all covetousness (I Tim. 6:11), because covetousness:

- a. Chokes the word of God in many hearts and causes the life to be unfruitful (Mt. 13:22; Mk. 4:19).
- b. Robs God (Mal. 3:7-10).
- c. Neglects the needy (I Jn. 3:17).
- d. Leaves many unevangelized, to die without God and without hope; it defies the great commission.
- e. Will drive the love of God out of our hearts (Lk. 16:13).
- f. Makes a man unfit to be an overseer in the church (I Tim. 3:3; Titus 1:7).
- g. Is not to be tolerated and overlooked in one that is named a brother, but to be rebuked and corrected (I Cor. 5:10-13).
- h. It is mentioned in the N.T. as among the worst of sins (Eph. 5:3; II Tim. 3:2).
- i. Is idolatry (Col. 3:5).
- j. Will damn the soul (I Cor. 6:10; Lk. 16:19-31).
- k. Is certainly unnecessary and unfitting for a follower of Christ (Mt. 6:33; Heb. 13:5-6; Phil. 4:11-19).
- l. Consider: Balaam (Num. 22-24; 31:16; Rev. 2:14; Jude 11); and Ahab (II Kings 21).

“As for the rich in this world, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on uncertain riches but on God . . .” (I Tim. 6:17). Covetousness or the desire to be rich with this world’s goods is foolishness in the light of eternity. Every man and woman faces the certainty of death. Of course, if there is no life after death, then we should “eat and drink, for tomorrow we die . . .” (I Cor. 15:32). However, the certainty of life after death has been established historically and empirically by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Therefore, we ought to come to our right mind and sin no more (I Cor. 15:34), realizing that sooner or later, our soul will be required of us. We brought nothing into this world, neither can we carry anything out of this world (I Tim. 6:7). What then is the point in devoting all our time, energy and capabilities to accumulating “things” of this world? This world’s goods certainly are not an end in themselves. The only reason for worldly possessions is that through them a man might

serve the Lord by serving his fellow man! To accumulate worldly possessions for any other reason is foolishness!

We may even covet (be greedy for more) time. Christians must use *time* wisely (Eph. 5:15-16; Col. 4:5; Jn. 9:4). We are not to covet the past (Lk. 9:62); we are not to covet the future (Mt. 6:34); *now* is the time with which we are to be concerned (II Cor. 6:2). How we invest our time in the bank of eternity will determine the dividends of the future. Every person has the same twenty-four hours. Time comes indiscriminately and simultaneously to every inhabitant of earth. We may covet time by spending it mostly on ourselves, or we may be rich toward God with it by spending it in His service by serving others. Time is a possession—time is a stewardship!

Being rich is never condemned by the Lord—nor even growing richer. Poverty does not necessarily insure righteousness. The man is a fool who is not rich toward God whatever his financial situation in this life may be. How is one to conquer covetousness and be rich toward God?

- a. Believe that what God's word says about it is right and to be obeyed!
- b. Pray that you enter not into temptation.
- c. Give generously, cheerfully and systematically to the Lord's church (II Cor. 8-9; I Chron. 29:6-19; I Cor. 16:1-4, etc.).
- d. Invest your time and money in people by helping their needs (Lk. 16:9; James 1:27; 2:1-26; I Jn. 4:7-21; Heb. 13:1-6).
- e. Be content with what you have (Lk. 3:14; Phil. 4:11ff.; I Tim. 6:7; Heb. 13:5).

12:22-34 Faithfulness: The Greek word for *anxious* is *merimna* and is probably connected with *merizo* which means, "to draw in different directions, to be distracted." The anxious person is one who is mentally tossed to and fro like a leaf in the wind. The anxious person is one who rides an emotional roller-coaster—up and down, up and down. Anxiety is a result of divided loyalty. Covetousness is really at the bottom of all avarice and anxiety. The covetous rich man is filled with avarice; the covetous poor man is overcome with anxiety. It is only a matter of circumstances whether covetousness shows itself as greed or worry. A survey taken in a national periodical found that seventy percent of all our worries are about money! A Gallup poll indicated that most people believe they would have no more financial worries if they could increase their income by only ten percent. Some physicians believe that anxiety causes or contributes to a myriad of physical illnesses such as ulcers, colitis, asthma, migraine, stroke, paralysis, arthritis, fatigue, hypertension, diabetes. Researchers have stated that more than half our hospital beds are occupied by anxiety-ridden patients. Doctors think that one out of every twenty Americans now living will spend part of his life in an institution for the mentally-ill because of anxiety.

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

Covetousness, greed, and anxiety are causes for much of our social evil such as theft, embezzlement, robbery, murder, suicide, marital problems, even war (James 4:1-3).

When Jesus says, "Be not anxious . . ." He is not advocating financial dereliction. The disciple of Jesus is not permitted to be shiftless, reckless or thoughtless. Believers are admonished to work, if physically able, to provide their own living (cf. Prov. 6:6-8; II Cor. 12:14; I Tim. 5:8; II Thess. 3:6-15; I Thess. 4:10-12; Col. 3:22-25; Eph. 6:5-9, etc.). They are also taught by Jesus to be wise stewards of their material possessions (Lk. 16:1-13). Jesus and His apostles taught that honest labor deserves honest wages (cf. I Cor. 9:3-14; Mt. 10:10; Lk. 10:7-8). But the lust for accumulating things which would distract the believer's mind and heart from his first priority—the revealed will of God—is the "anxiety" Jesus forbids. It is significant that the Greek word *merimnate* is in the imperative mood and means that Jesus is *commanding* us, "Be not anxious!" If we say we know Him and we are anxious, we are not being truthful (I Jn. 2:4) because we are not keeping His commandment. What Jesus says to His disciples about anxiety is more than just suggestion—it is an order!

Anxiety is *unnecessary*. Jesus appeals to our *reason* to tell us so. Any honest-minded meditation will tell us that Life is more than the body. The *psyche* is more than *soma* (flesh). The spirit of man is sustained without anxiety over food and clothing. Jesus proved that in His incarnation. "Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God" (Mt. 4:4). Jesus points to *nature* to demonstrate that anxiety is unnecessary. Birds and flowers do not worry, and God sustains them. They function according to their God-given capacities and He provides their needs. Men are of more value than these. Finally, the Lord says *experience* should teach man that anxiety is unnecessary. In all our fretting and fuming and worrying we do not add one "cubit" to the length of our lives. As a matter of fact, worrying probably shortens life!

Anxiety is *unworthy*. It is unacceptable for a Christian to be distracted. The disciple who is anxious about worldly affairs is not fit for the kingdom (cf. Lk. 9:57-62). Anxiety is a display of faithlessness and *disobeys* the specific commandment of Christ prohibiting it. It is shameful for a Christian to worry because it is *pagan*. The heathen are tossed about by their anxiety over sustaining the flesh. The Greek word *meteorizesthe* is translated "anxious mind." This word is used nowhere else in the N.T. In classical Greek it is used to mean, "tossed up and down, or suspended, like a boat in a stormy sea." Christians must not be in suspense about life. Anxiety is characteristic of heathen unbelief. Ceremonial orthodoxy and evangelistic zeal are only hypocrisy if in the financial affairs of life we do not trust God completely. The Christian is a citizen of God's kingdom. His King is absolutely beneficent. The heavenly Father is infallibly aware

of His children's needs. He has infinite power to equip every individual with everything needed. He promises to do so. If the Christian will seek the kingdom of God as his first (cf. Mt. 6:33) priority, God promises to make possible all the physical necessities for such seeking. The cure for anxiety is simply—believe God keeps His promises!

Why would Jesus say "Fear not *little* flock"? Because there will be few who will ever take seriously His admonitions about worldliness and anxiety! Does Jesus intend His command, "Sell your possessions . . ." to be taken literally? Yes! That should be qualified, however, by a consideration of other scriptures. The Lord does expect us to "earn our own living" (II Thess. 3:12). He does expect us to work at our jobs with our best craftsmanship (cf. Col. 3:22-23). The Lord expects us, if we are able, to earn our own food, our clothing and our shelter. He will provide health and opportunities to do so. And whatever is necessary (a house, tools, transportation, etc.) to earn our living we should not feel compelled "to sell." Should we have more than this, more than we may use for our living, we should sell and give to the poor, or to the work of the kingdom. Anything above what we need is "riches." Jesus counsels every would-be follower of His to sell his "riches" and give them as "alms," so the poor may be fed both; physical and spiritual food. We certainly cannot hoard riches in order to buy our way into His kingdom. It is His good pleasure to *give* us the kingdom. All of His kingdom we shall ever have shall be that which is given as a gift.

The Christian is to have a purse that does not grow old. In other words, he is to wear his purse out rapidly from continually opening it to give "alms" or dispense his riches to others. The Christian is to provide himself with a treasure in heaven that never depreciates, is never lost, never stolen and lasts forever. The only way the Christian can do that is to invest his "riches" (everything he has left from his basic living) in *people* (cf. Lk. 16:9), because people are all that shall survive this world. The rich man who died and went to "torments" realized too late that he should have invested his riches in the salvation of others (cf. Lk. 16:27-31), rather than squander them on himself. It is a fundamental principle that man gives his life to that which he values most. If one values spiritual things most, his whole heart will be devoted to acquiring spirituality. If a man values the same things heaven values, he will invest his life in things, and heaven is where his desires will focus. We must look to Jesus, who for the *joy that was set before Him*, endured the cross (Heb. 12:1-2). Let us set our minds on things above (Col. 3:1-4). As one commentator has said, ". . . it is the Master's will that his followers should sit loose to all earthly possessions, possessing them as though they possessed not." The Christian will pray that the Lord give him neither poverty nor riches (Prov. 30:8-9)!

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

SECTION 3

Action as Alertness (12:35-48)

35 "Let your loins be girded and your lamps burning, ³⁶and be like men who are waiting for their master to come home from the marriage feast, so that they may open to him at once when he comes and knocks. ³⁷Blessed are those servants whom the master finds awake when he comes; truly, I say to you, he will gird himself and have them sit at table, and he will come and serve them. ³⁸If he comes in the second watch, or in the third, and finds them so, blessed are those servants! ³⁹But know this, that if the householder had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have left his house to be broken into. ⁴⁰You also must be ready; for the Son of man is coming at an unexpected hour."

41 Peter said, "Lord, are you telling this parable for us or for all?" ⁴²And the Lord said, "Who then is the faithful and wise steward, whom his master will set over his household, to give them their portion of food at the proper time? ⁴³Blessed is that servant whom his master when he comes will find so doing. ⁴⁴Truly, I say to you, he will set him over all his possessions. ⁴⁵But if that servant says to himself, 'My master is delayed in coming,' and begins to beat the menservants and the maidservants, and to eat and drink and get drunk, ⁴⁶the master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he does not know, and will punish him, and put him with the unfaithful. ⁴⁷And that servant who knew his master's will, but did not make ready or act according to his will, shall receive a severe beating. ⁴⁸But he who did not know, and did what deserved a beating, shall receive a light beating. Every one to whom much is given, of him will much be required; and of him to whom men commit much they will demand the more.

12:35-44 Watchful Servants: In describing what spiritual alertness is, Jesus makes a parabolic contrast between wise and wicked servants. These two parables continue His teaching about proper attitudes toward the things of this world. No servant of the Lord knows when the Lord will return. The Lord's servant must be constantly alert to his spiritual servanthood. In the first parable the lord (Gr. *kurion*) of the house went away to a marriage feast. Hour after hour passes, and the master does not return. This man's faithful servants never go to sleep nor even relax while he is gone. They are watchful. The Greek word *gregorountas* is translated *awake*; it means "watchful, alert, vigilant." It is the word from which we get the English name, Gregory. Watchfulness in the N.T. means spiritual alertness (cf. I Cor. 16:13; I Pet. 5:8; Col. 4:2; Acts 20:31; I Thess. 5:6, 10; Rev. 3:2-3; 16:15, etc.). Watchfulness involves:

- a. *Preparation*: Common dress in those days (and even among some Arabs today) was long, loose-flowing outer robes. When strenuous labor and alacrity was required, these robes had to be gathered up and the skirt fastened under the belt (girdle). Lamp wicks must be constantly trimmed of the black, sooty burnt portion lest the flame sputter and smoke and the lamp's light grow dim.
- b. *Maturity*: "Be like men . . ." not like boys, playing at the job. The watchful servant must have enough maturity to stay awake and on the job. They spend their time readying the house for the master's return. They do not have to be supervised like children; they involve themselves in all kinds of activities even though the night wears on and on.
- c. *Alertness*: In Jesus' day the old Jewish division of the night into three "watches" had given way to the Roman division of four watches, divided thusly: first watch from six to nine p.m.; second watch from nine to midnight; third watch from midnight to three a.m.; fourth watch from three to six a.m. The faithful servants, and especially the house-master (Gr. *oikodespotes*, "despot-of-the-house") or chief-servant, are on guard even in the midnight hours. Any chief-servant worth trusting would know you cannot anticipate when the thief will decide to break in (Gr. *dioruchthenai*, "dig through" the adobe walls of Palestinian houses). The master's servant must be on guard every moment.

The servants who are watchful will be ready to receive their master the very moment he returns. The master, pleased to find such faithful servants, will treat his servants as friends and equals bidding them to sit (Gr. *anaklinei*, recline) at his own table and he will minister to their wants. (cf. Rev. 3:21, "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne").

Jesus abruptly applies the lesson of the parable to His own Second Coming. All the servants of Christ must constantly apply the principles of these two parables to their discipleship. The Lord's Second Coming will come as a thief in the night, unexpectedly, unanticipated (cf. I Thess. 5:1-2; II Pet. 3:10; Rev. 3:3; 16:15; Mt. 24:36—25:30).

Peter, impressed by the part of the parable that pictured the "lord" serving the "servants," wants to know if this glorious promotion to equality with the Lord was going to be given to all the apostles, or just a few (like himself). Peter evidently anticipated the same kind of promotion to equality when Jesus was trying to teach humility by washing Peter's feet (Jn. 13:6-9). Jesus, apparently disregarding Peter's ambitious question, goes on with His parable, actually answering Peter by correcting his concept of *who* deserves to be rewarded:

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

- d. *Following Instructions*: “Who is the faithful servant?” It is interesting to note how the Lord started the parable by using the word for slave (Gr. *doulos*—v. 37) and now uses the word for steward or house-servant (Gr. *oikonomos*—v. 42) and the word for attendants (Gr. *therapeias*, from which we get the English word *therapeutic*, but translated, “household” in v. 42). Faithful servants of the Lord are of more value than mere bond-slaves, but they are servants nonetheless. The servants who are considered true friends by the Master are those who administer His affairs (“give them their portion”) according to His instructions (“at the proper time”). They do not presume to change the portion or the time on their own—they follow His will, realizing they are only stewards—not masters.
- e. *Serving*: “Who is the faithful servant . . .?” The one found “so doing.” Blessedness will come to those who “do” faithfulness. Faithfulness starts with an attitude but does not end there—it ends in *doing* and *being*. “If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them. . .” (Jn. 13:17). When the Lord returns and finds His servants being faithful in the small stewardship they have been given, He will then put them in charge of everything He has, for whoever is *faithful* in very little is faithful also in much (cf. Lk. 16:10).

Watchfulness is not trying to guess when the Master may return—but it is serving faithfully until He does return.

12:45-48 Wicked Servants: In the second parable (or the second part of the one parable) Jesus characterizes spiritual negligence:

- a. *Subjectivism*: The wicked servant “says to himself” (Gr. *en te kardia autou*, “in his heart”). The only righteous and infallible guidance for spiritual alertness is in the revealed will of the Lord—not in the subjective thoughts of a man’s own mind (cf. Jer. 17:5-6, 9-10). This was the wicked servant’s first mistake—and so it is of many a man. To follow human reason and human emotion is spiritual disaster.
- b. *Unbelieving*: The wicked servant said, “My master is delaying . . . he is not coming very soon . . .” This servant does not believe the master’s warning that he may return at any moment. This servant’s company is with the “unfaithful” (v. 46), the unbelieving, the distrustful and distrustful.
- c. *Exploitation*: The wicked servant began to cruelly abuse his fellow-servants. This wicked servant lives only by force. When his master is absent and no longer controlling him by force, he is ungovernable. Motivated only by force himself, he thinks that all others must be forced to serve. He is of a perverse and an unmerciful nature. He will use and abuse people and things for his own disadvantage.

- d. *Self-Indulgent*: The wicked servant began to eat and drink and get drunk. The master had left him in charge of his house to protect his possessions and promote the well-being of his estate. The wicked servant shows how little he cares for the master by indulging himself until he is senselessly drunk. The servant is not only of no benefit to his master, he is a menace.
- e. *Unprepared*: The wicked servant did not "make ready" (v. 47). How could he—he was too busy abusing the other servants and drinking himself into a stupor. Either the servant watches for his master's return which requires sobriety and honor and respect—or he becomes engrossed in watching out for himself. Self-indulgence tends to blind a person to reality. The master surprised the wicked servant.
- f. *Not Following Instructions*: The wicked servant did not act according to his knowledge of the master's will. All servants are responsible to know the master's will. If they do not know his will, they will be punished; if they do know his will and disobey it they will be punished.

Wicked servants who take what their master has entrusted to them as stewards and try to use it, abuse it and hoard it for themselves, will be punished. The Greek word translated *punished* is *dichotomesei* and means, "to cut asunder"—it is the word from which we get the English word, *dichotomy*.

Jesus makes it plain (v. 47-48) that reward will be according to faithfulness. Much has been conjectured about reward and punishment in the life to come. Certain things are clearly perceived from the scriptures:

- a. God does not judge according to human standards (cf. I Sam. 16:7; Isa. 55:8; Jn. 7:27; Jer. 17:10; II Cor. 10:12). God judges according to motives (cf. Mt. 6:1ff.; Mt. 23:27; Heb. 4:12-13), and intentions.
- b. Faithfulness is God's criterion for judgment; not how much was known or how much was accomplished. The wicked servant was punished because he was unfaithful to what he did know. The servants of the parables of the Talents and Pounds were rewarded according to faithful use of what they had been given—not according to what they had not been given.
- c. It is a fact of life that some people are given greater opportunities and capacities to know the will of God and to use it than others are. Perhaps reward and punishment will have to do with a man's capacity and opportunity to desire, appreciate and give himself to good—or to evil.
- d. One thing is certain—all who do not believe and prepare for the Master's return are considered to be wicked servants and they will be punished according to their choice to disregard His return.

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

One very important thing a faithful servant will do continually is take inventory of how much he has been entrusted with in order that he may calculate how much he will be called to account for—and he will act accordingly to his inventory!

SECTION 4

Attitudes That Aid Alertness (12:49-59)

49 "I came to cast fire upon the earth; and would that it were already kindled! ⁵⁰I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how I am constrained until it is accomplished! ⁵¹Do you think that I have come to give peace on earth? No, I tell you, but rather division; ⁵²for henceforth in one house there will be five divided, three against two and two against three; ⁵³they will be divided, father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against her mother, mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law."

54 He also said to the multitudes, "When you see a cloud rising in the west, you say at once, 'A shower is coming'; and so it happens. ⁵⁵And when you see the south wind blowing, you say, 'There will be scorching heat'; and it happens. ⁵⁶You hypocrites! You know how to interpret the appearance of earth and sky; but why do you not know how to interpret the present time?

57 "And why do you not judge for yourselves what is right? ⁵⁸As you go with your accuser before the magistrate, make an effort to settle with him on the way, lest he drag you to the judge, and the judge hand you over to the officer, and the officer put you in prison. ⁵⁹I tell you, you will never get out till you have paid the very last copper."

12:39-53. Determination: The incarnate work of redemption which Jesus Christ would accomplish on the cross and in the resurrection would be the ultimate touchstone between truth and falsehood—between good and evil. His death and resurrection would be the final judgment upon unbelief. He would bring the final separation between sheep and goats, saved and lost, wise and unwise. The "fire" Jesus says He came to bring probably refers to the prophecy in Malachi 3:1-4. There it is predicted that the Messiah will come to the world to sit as a "refiner's fire and fuller's soap" to "purify the sons of Levi." This prophecy predicts the Messiah's first coming because it is in the same context which predicts the coming of Messiah's forerunner (3:1). Fire, in this instance, symbolizes purging or purifying. Messiah's death purifies and purges all who will believe from all who will not believe. Messiah's death is the great crucible of humanity. God judges all humanity

according to its response to His Son. Those who obey the Son are God's precious possession; all who disobey the Son are dross and refuse to be destroyed.

This holocaust of suffering the second death which the Perfect Son chose to endure constantly immersed Him in pressure. He was *determined* that it would be accomplished (cf. Heb. 5:8-9; 10:1-5; 12:1-2), but the longer it took to be completed, the more intense became the temptation to refuse it. The prospect of His suffering for the sin of the world was a perpetual Gethsemane for Jesus, (Jn. 12:27-28; Lk. 22:39-46). He would gladly have done with it immediately—but God's will decreed, "Not yet." The Greek word *baptisma* is used by Jesus to characterize His atonement. Jesus would be immersed in death: He would take all the second death, be immersed in punishment for sin; that is what the word *baptisma* means—*immersion*. Anything short of that meaning would be ridiculous respecting Christ's death. That is how the word should be exclusively interpreted when it refers to Christian baptism (immersion; not sprinkling or pouring).

The Greek word *sunechomai*, literally means, "come together with," and is translated "constrained." It means "press together" or "pressure." Jesus experienced *pressure* as no other human being ever experienced it. There was no reason for Him to die; He could claim eternal life by right of His perfect obedience to God's will. No one could take His life from Him—He had power to lay it down and take it up if He wished. It was not fair, not just, not right that He should die for someone else's sins. But it was perfect, infinite, unadulterated love that determined He would! What pressure!

This infinite love and grace becomes the infallible rule by which all mankind will be judged. Jesus' death divides the world into believers and unbelievers. Upon no other point (besides the resurrection, of course) are we to decide who are believers and unbelievers. Those who do not decide to believe and accept His blood for their sins will oppose and persecute those who do. Jesus' death does not bring "peace" (as men think of peace—absence of trial and testing)—it brings division and a sword (cf. Mt. 10:34). The servant who wishes to be found watching may have to choose against his own family if it is so required to remain faithful to Christ. The water of Christian baptism is thicker than human blood-ties. Not even genetic relationship must stand in the way of loyalty to Christ. The highest human relationships must become secondary to the highest of all relationships—sonship to God, through discipleship with Jesus. Immersion of oneself in such complete self-sacrifice will require the *determination* of faith Jesus Himself exercised in the "baptism with which He was baptized." Self must die; Jesus must be formed in us (Gal. 2:20-21; 3:26-27; 4:19).

12:54-59 Discernment: Jesus chides the multitudes with the admonition to use the same intensity discerning the spiritual time as they do in discerning

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

the weather. Heat and drought, wind and rain, affected the prospects of wheat-harvest, the vine-yield, and the fruitfulness of orchards and olive trees. The Jews probably made amateur forecasts of the weather every day just as the modern farmer does. The weather of Palestine is less variable than in most European and American countries. Jewish farmers and others made it their daily routine to check and try to read the signs indicating what the weather would be. If a cloud rose in the west, it would be bringing rain in off the Mediterranean Sea; if a wind blew from the south and east, it would be bringing scorching, drying wind in off the desert. They paid attention to these signs. But, just like men today, they seemed to be oblivious to spiritual signals all around them.

Why is it that men exert great effort, display expertise and logic in forecasting the weather (practicing law, medicine, constructing machines and buildings) but cannot arrive at the historical, logical deduction that Jesus is who He claims to be—the divine Son of God, God in the flesh? It is a moral problem! The facts that pertain to the weather, etc., are facts that do not demand a moral commitment; the second are facts which do! The facts of agriculture and buildings have to do with selfish accumulation of worldly riches; the second facts demand renunciation of worldly riches. Jesus made this same criticism earlier in His ministry (cf. Mt. 16:3).

What signs should they have been able to discern of the spiritual crisis surrounding them? Undoubtedly Jesus was referring to the very plain fulfillments of Old Testament prophecies then occurring in His incarnation. Micah 5:2 predicted His birth and messiahship; Isaiah 52 and 53 predicted what countenance the Messiah would present to the world; Isaiah 61:1-3 predicted the Messiah's ministry (cf. Lk. 4:16-32); Malachi predicted the Messiah and His forerunner (Mal. 3:1-4; 4:5-6; Isa. 40:3-5); Daniel 9:24-27 predicted the precise time in history when the Messiah should be expected to appear and certain political signs that should be looked for. Then, there was the recent ministry of John the Baptist as a sign of the Messiah's time. Finally, there were all the miracles and teachings Jesus Himself had been doing (even raising the dead). How, in the name of all that is logical, empirical, honest and practical could men not interpret (discern) the "present time"?

The same admonition applies to the world of unbelievers today. Wake up, be alert and watchful, and apply your minds and hearts to discern the signs of history. Declare that God came in the flesh in the Person of His Son, Jesus Christ. God's Son accomplished redemption and offers it to all men by faith and obedience to His New Covenant terms. They are there in His divinely inspired New Covenant scriptures for all to read and understand. Judge for yourself what is right, true and final—while there is still time:

- a. Every man must judge what is right and true for himself—we cannot decide for one another.
- b. There is only a certain amount of time to make our choice about truth—Today is the only day we really have to choose.
- c. We must settle with “the Judge” about our sins before we are taken into the court of no appeal. We settle about our sins by accepting the blood of the Judge’s Son as atonement. We do this by faith and obedience to His commandments.
- d. It will be too late when we stand before the Judge. Then the only thing left is eternal imprisonment, because imperfect men can never pay the perfect price required for fellowship with a perfect God.
- e. The next discourses of Jesus (Luke, chapter 13) will tell men how to settle with the Judge about their sins.

STUDY STIMULATORS:

1. What is the “leaven” of the Pharisees? Since there are no longer any Pharisees, do Christians today need to beware of this? Why?
2. Do you think God is aware and involved in the minute details of your life? How does that make you feel toward God?
3. Have you ever been tempted to doubt or deny that Jesus was God in the flesh? What do you think made you be tempted—persecution? human opinions?
4. What is the “unpardonable sin”? Do you think it is possible to commit that sin today? How?
5. What is covetousness? Why does the Lord say it is idolatry? Why is a man a fool to covet? How may covetousness be overcome in your life?
6. Are you ever anxious? Is it a sin to be anxious? Can you help it? How?
7. Name five characteristics of a “watchful” servant of the Lord.
8. Characterize the “wicked” servant—have you ever been one? When?
9. Do you think the Lord will reward or punish all people the same? Why?
10. What are the two attitudes that aid spiritual alertness? Are you cultivating these two attitudes in your daily walk with Christ?

Chapter Thirteen

(13:1-35)

THE SON OF MAN CALLING FOR REPENTANCE

IDEAS TO INVESTIGATE:

1. If the Galileans were not worse sinners than others, why did God allow Pilate to mingle their blood with the sacrifices (13:1-5)?
2. What is repentance (13:1-5)?
3. Is Satan the cause of all our diseases (13:16)?
4. How many will be saved (13:23-24)?
5. Wouldn't it be easier to believe in Jesus if we could eat and drink in His presence (13:26)?
6. Why did Jesus call Herod a "fox"; isn't it wrong to call people names (13:32)?
7. How could Jerusalem be "forsaken"—isn't it still a city today (13:35)?

SECTION 1

Repentance Defined (13:1-9)

13 There were some present at that very time who told him of the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. ²And he answered them, "Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans, because they suffered thus? ³I tell you, No; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish. ⁴Or those eighteen upon whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them, do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others who dwelt in Jerusalem? ⁵I tell you, No; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish."

⁶ And he told this parable: "A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came seeking fruit on it and found none. ⁷And he said to the vinedresser, 'Lo, these three years I have come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and I find none. Cut it down; why should it use up the ground?' ⁸And he answered him, 'Let it alone, sir, this year also, till I dig about it and put on manure. ⁹And if it bears fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down.'"

13:1-5 Importuned: The Lord's discourse on preparation for being called to judgment reminded some of those present of the great calamity that probably had recently occurred. Pontius Pilate, procurator of Judea, had

ordered some Galileans slain as they worshiped in the Temple and their blood was "mingled" with that of the animals they had just sacrificed. This event is extant in no other historical record than Luke's. Pilate was the son of Marcus Pontius (according to tradition), a Roman general. Pilate was a friend of the famous Germanicus, and his wife was a granddaughter of Caesar Augustus. The Pilate we know from the Gospels and from secular history was a typical pragmatic Roman politician. He was not excessively wicked or cruel, but he was weak and vacillating and would sacrifice principle and honor for his own ends. He was assigned the most unrewarding and difficult post that existed in the Roman provinces—Judea. He went there in 26 A.D. and remained about ten years. He was not particularly adept at administering his post because of the intransigent nature of the Jews and his own fear of displeasing the emperor Tiberius. Once he put shields of war which were used in worship of the emperor and a portrait of the emperor into the Temple by night. This nearly precipitated a revolution. On another occasion when he needed money to build an aqueduct into Jerusalem, he took it from the Temple's treasury. This started a demonstration by the Jews that had to be put down by Roman force. About six years after the death of Christ he got involved in a confrontation that ended his career. A self-made prophet appeared in Samaria and claimed that the ancient Tabernacle of the Jews and its vessels were buried on the top of Mt. Gerizim. He gathered a crowd and they ascended the mountain, singing psalms and shouting patriotic slogans. Pilate sent his troops to stop the crowd but the confrontation turned into a riot and a massacre. Pilate was reported to his superiors, called back to Rome, banished by Caligula to Gaul where, it is reported, he killed himself.

The Jews had the idea that any great physical calamity upon a nation or an individual must be considered a direct result of extraordinary sinfulness by the persons or person upon whom the disaster had fallen. Job's friends attributed his calamities to Job's sinfulness (cf. Job 22:5ff.). Jesus' disciples just knew that the man born blind was a terrible sinner—or his parents were (cf. Jn. 9:1-2). This view was also held by many Gentiles (cf. Acts 28:4). Generally speaking, the understanding that physical calamity in the form of war, pestilence, flood, famine, drought, disease and death are God's portents that this material order has been judged is correct! The Bible teaches very plainly that whirlwinds, earthquakes and other natural disasters are God's constant warnings to this world that it is doomed and that mankind must repent in order to be saved (cf. Joel 1:1-20; 2:30—3:3; Amos 3:6; 4:1-13; Romans 1:18-20; Rev. 8:1-13; 16:8-11, etc.). Even the diseases and maladies men bring on themselves as a consequence of sinful living are God's signals for repentance (cf. Rom. 1:26-27). The wrath of

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

God is revealed from heaven against man's sin in the dissolution and disorder of "nature." Of course, the goodness and patience of God is also generally revealed in the natural order (cf. Acts 14:16-18; 17:24-31; Mt. 6:25-30; Rom. 4:2). But these are all *general* announcements from God to the world that it must repent. When people are killed by riots or accidents or natural disasters it does not mean they are all greater sinners than those who might not be killed in such calamities. Nor does it mean that the locale of any calamity signifies its recipients are worse sinners than those in a neighboring locale which might have been spared the disaster. In the book of Revelation, John predicts a great holocaust of judgment upon the Roman empire in the form of natural disasters, wars, and internal disintegration. While millions will die during those years of tribulation to come upon Rome, including many Christians, the Christians will go through the great tribulation to heaven to be with the Lamb. The impenitent will die and go to eternal torments. When God's judgments fall upon the earth to call the world to repentance, both righteous and wicked die—but their eternal destiny is what is important.

Notice how Jesus corrected the view of His questioners without denying the fundamental truth that was already there in their minds. Yes, the two events, one deliberately brought about by Pilate's orders and the other an "accident," do mean God is calling the whole world to repentance. No, neither of the events give any justifiable reason to judge that certain people (those suffering extraordinary disasters) are more wicked than others. The Siloam Tower "accident" is recorded in no other historical document than Luke's—however, accidents like this occur every day. No, violent death does not mean the victim was unquestionably some specially wicked person. But all death and all dissolution of nature means God has cursed this created universe and its destruction is inevitable! Unless every man repents, he will likewise perish in eternal death. God has promised to create a new heaven and earth which shall be eternal. He has also promised that any person who repents and enters into covenant relationship with His Son will be regenerated at that moment and will continue to be recreated, so long as repentance is continued, into the image of His Son and saved forever. All the frailties of man and nature in this present world order are focused on leading man to glorify God, if man will only repent and believe (cf. Jn. 9:1-38; II Cor. 1:8-10; 12:1-10; Heb. 12:1-17).

Repentance—what is it? Perhaps to see what it is *not* would be the place to begin. Repentance is *not*:

- a. Just being "blue" or sorry or regretful. Criminals regret getting caught but they do not repent. Judas was sorry he betrayed Christ but he committed suicide—he didn't repent. King Saul was sorry

the kingdom was being taken from him but he didn't repent (cf. Mt. 27:3-10; I Samuel; II Cor. 7:10, etc.).

- b. Just being hyperactive in "church-work." The legalistic Pharisees were hyper-active but impenitent. Paul was "more zealous" than all his brethren, but needed to repent (cf. Acts 22:3-5; Phil. 3:4-11, etc.).
- c. Just reformation of outward actions; not just changing of bad habits to good habits; not just enrolling in self-improvement or image-building programs. Impenitence is deeper than the outward appearance (cf. Heb. 4:11-13).
- d. Just penance or doing assigned acts of contrition, trying to "pay-off" God or make atonement for one's own sins by severity to the body (cf. Col. 2:20—3:4). Going into a monastery or becoming an ascetic will not suffice for repentance.

The Greek word *metanoia* is translated *repentance* and means literally, "to have another or different mind." Repentance is a change of mind. The word was used by the Greeks as a military command, "about face," or "reverse your march." Repentance is to go in a different direction. Biblical repentance is redirecting the mind and heart constantly toward the revealed will of God and away from worldly-mindedness. One cannot become a Christian without repentance and he cannot remain a Christian unless he continues it. Repentance is the mental, emotional and volitional metamorphosis (transformation) that changes a person from a son of darkness to a son of light. William Chamberlain in his book, *The Meaning of Repentance*, wrote, "Repentance is a pilgrimage from the mind of the flesh to the mind of Christ." Repentance is a journey, a life long journey. A person never reaches in this life the point where he needs no more changing in his mind to that of Christ's will.

Repentance involves a change of mentality. New direction, new knowledge is sought and gained—the knowledge of God's revealed will (the Bible). Scripture places great importance upon the place of the mind in a person's relationship to God (cf. Rom. 12:1-2; Col. 3:1-4; Mt. 22:37; I Pet. 1:13; Eph. 4:23; Rom. 8:5; Phil. 2:5ff., etc.). The impenitent are those who are "hostile in mind" (Col. 1:21; Phil. 3:16-19; Jas. 1:8; Eph. 4:17). If we are to truly repent, we must "mind the things of God and not the things of men" (cf. Mt. 16:23; Mk. 8:33). Repentance means to think the thoughts of God. The thoughts of God are communicated to man *only* in the divinely inspired scriptures (cf. I Cor. 2:9-13). The mind of man *can* be directed, changed, renewed—it is up to man. Jesus taught that men must change their minds (repent) about what the nature of God's kingdom is—who the Messiah is—and what the right covenant relationship of men and women to God is (faith).

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

Repentance involves a change of values. God wants men to love what He loves and hate what He hates. What we treasure determines the formation of our character (Hosea 9:10; Mt. 6:19-21; Prov. 23:7). Whatever is true, honorable, just, pure, lovely, gracious—value these things (Phil. 4:8ff.). Joy, appreciation, and satisfaction are found in fellowship with God's revelation of what is available—and that revelation is in the Bible. Man must repent and change his values to those of God. Jesus taught men that they must treasure right relationship with Him more than all other relationships. He said men must treasure God's word above all human opinions and traditions—treasure true and pure character above worldliness—treasure the welfare of people above rituals and ceremonies. He insisted that men must treasure discipline above indulgence and right motives above religious play-acting.

Above all, men must value the approval of God more than the applause of men. The repentance that demands a change of values is not easy!

Repentance involves a change of choice or will. The power to choose and decide is deliberately redirected in true repentance toward the expressed choices and purposes revealed as God's will. Surrendering the autonomy of our will to the rule of God is the epitome of repentance! We are free to choose or refuse His will. Truth and the evidences for it are not, of themselves, irresistible. Man may choose either truth or falsehood. With the choice comes the responsibility to accept the divinely-decreed consequences. God is going to give us what we choose! Jesus taught that men should surrender their wills to the will of God and put self-rule to death. The peace (will) of Christ should *rule* (Gr. *brabeueto*, arbitrate or umpire) in our hearts (Col. 3:15). Man must change his own self-determined righteousness and accept imputed righteousness from God. A kingdom with its citizens in revolt could not have peace. Men must surrender to God's rule in order for the kingdom of God to be a reality. Unless they do, they are subversives, enemies of God.

Repentance involves a change of conduct. The logical result of a truly changed spiritual nature is godly conduct. Repentance must be effected in deeds and actions because man is body and behavior as well as thoughts and feelings. Repentance is wholistic (Rom. 6:1-23). Man should conform his life to the "image" of God's dear Son (cf. Rom. 8:29). There are deeds "worthy" of repentance which the believer must do (cf. Mt. 3:8; Lk. 3:8; Acts 26:20, etc.). Not everyone who says, "Lord, Lord . . ." but the one who *does* the will of the Father in heaven is the one who repents, (cf. Mt. 7:21).

The Bible is the story of clashing viewpoints. Therein is recorded the clash between the will of God for man, and man's volitional rebellion against God's will. This clash occurs along the entire front of human life. The classic example of the clashing viewpoints is shown in Mark 8:31-33

and Phil. 3:4-11. When man's thinking centers in himself he is always antagonistic toward God. When God's will is made the center of a man's purpose then man finds peace. Satan assumes that even in religion man's primary objective is to feather his own nest. Satan thinks when religion ceases to yield physical dividends man will cease to worship God (cf. Job 1:9-11). This is the mind of the flesh personified in the devil. The *change* represented by the transition of mind from this Satanic philosophy to that of Christ, who, in the flesh, lived as a Perfect Man, is repentance.

13:6-9 Illustrated: Jesus brushed aside the demand for theological argument about the relationship of disasters to human wickedness and focused on the need of all men to repent—especially the Jewish nation. While the whole world needs to repent, the primary target of the Lord's teaching here is the Jewish people of His day. They must repent of their rejection of His messiahship lest the destruction predicted by their prophets come upon them (Deut. 28:58ff.; Dan. 9:24-27, etc.). Jesus illustrates His warning to them with this short but succinct parable.

A man planted a fig tree in his vineyard. He came seeking fruit but found none. He said to his vinedresser, I have come three years seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none. Cut it down. The vinedresser begged for more time to cultivate it, then if it bears no fruit, he will cut it down. Whom do the characters in this story symbolize? God is the owner, Israel is the fig tree, and Jesus is the vinedresser. God has given Israel centuries to produce the fruits of repentance, but all that time (for the most part) she produced nothing in true repentance. She had been planted in a very fertile land. She had promised to produce (cf. Ex. 19) a kingdom of priests (servants of God). But through the centuries she had defaulted on her purpose. Now God is ready to "cut it down" but by His grace He gives Israel additional time to repent while the Messiah preaches to her. He even gives Israel forty years of grace beyond the preaching of the Messiah before He cuts her down in 70 A.D. Because she would not repent and serve her purpose, she became of no more use to God in His redemptive work, so He destroyed her.

What Jesus is saying to His audience is that repentance is something to do—not just talk about. Repentance is to produce in one's nature and life that for which he was created. Repentance is to fulfill one's God-ordained purpose. What is applicable to the nation of Israel is applicable to the whole world and to every individual in the world.

How shall such a transformation be wrought in men? First, it will be done gradually. Repentance, because it is a lifetime journey, cannot be accomplished all at one time. There is no "instant repentance." Repentance is *not* produced by:

- a. Intimidation. Mankind cannot be frightened or forced into repentance (cf. Rev. 9:20-21).

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

- b. Indulgence. God makes His rain to fall on the just and unjust alike and yet all men do not repent. We cannot expect to produce repentance in people's lives by indulging them in their self-centeredness.
- c. Intuition. Man cannot find motivation within himself to repent. The heart of man is deceitful above all things, and desperately corrupt . . . (Jer. 17:9).
- d. Intoxication. Emotional, experiential excitation does not produce lasting repentance—it does not produce stability and steadfastness. Saul did not repent though he became emotional (I Sam. 24:16-22 and I Sam. 26:1ff.).
- e. Inventions. Organized programming of people, entertaining people, or inventing new human philosophies or ideologies does not produce godly repentance.
- f. Impressiveness. Our "testimony" or our example is not sufficient alone to produce repentance in others. God is the only absolutely faithful Person existing (Rom. 3:4) and His Life, manifested in His Son, is the only sufficient example to produce repentance.

Repentance is produced by the transforming of the human mind through the word of God (cf. Rom. 12:1-2). Repentance is produced by the infusion of the will (nature) of God into the mind and nature (will) of man. This is done when the word of God is preached and men believe it (cf. Rom. 10:14-17; Lk. 24:47; II Pet. 1:3-11; Jn. 6:63). Although some of the character or will of God is revealed in nature (cf. Rom. 1:18ff.; 2:4; Acts 14:16-17; 17:24-29), God's will for man's salvation is found in *only one place—the Bible*.

The mission of every follower of Christ is to proclaim repentance and remission of sins in Christ's name (Lk. 24:47; Acts 17:30-31, etc.). Repentance is begun when through the gospel we capture the minds of men for obedience to Christ (cf. II Cor. 10:3-6). Bringing men to repentance *is evangelism*. The classic example of the opposite of the mind of Christ is a quotation from H. L. Mencken (1880-1956): "I have done, in the main, exactly what I wanted to do. Its possible effects on other people have interested me very little. I have not written and published to please other people, but to satisfy myself, just as a cow gives milk, not to profit the dairyman, but to satisfy herself. I like to think that most of my ideas have been sound ones, but I really don't care."

The mission of the Christian is not to *eliminate* the will of man, but to *conform* it to the will of Christ. Alexander Campbell in *The Christian System* defined it as "impressing the moral image of God upon the moral nature of man." It is significant that even the church of Christ itself must carry on a constant program of repentance (cf. Revelation, chapters 2 and 3). In any program of repentance for the world or the church, preaching

the word of God is primary. There is no true repentance unless men hear and obey the word of God.

SECTION 2

Repentance in Doctrine (13:10-17)

10 Now he was teaching in one of the synagogues on the sabbath. ¹¹And there was a woman who had had a spirit of infirmity for eighteen years; she was bent over and could not fully straighten herself. ¹²And when Jesus saw her, he called her and said to her, "Woman, you are freed from your infirmity." ¹³And he laid his hands upon her, and immediately she was made straight, and she praised God. ¹⁴But the ruler of the synagogue, indignant because Jesus had healed on the sabbath, said to the people, "There are six days on which work ought to be done; come on those days and be healed, and not on the sabbath day." ¹⁵Then the Lord answered him, "You hypocrites! Does not each of you on the sabbath untie his ox or his ass from the manger, and lead it away to water it? ¹⁶And ought not this woman, a daughter of Abraham whom Satan bound for eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the sabbath day?" ¹⁷As he said this, all his adversaries were put to shame; and all the people rejoiced at all the glorious things that were done by him.

13:10-14 Attack: This is another occasion when Jesus had been invited to give the Sabbath teaching in one of the Jewish synagogues. This particular synagogue is somewhere in Judea (probably in Jerusalem). This is the "hot-bed" of religious orthodoxy. There was a woman who had a spirit (Gr. *pneuma*) of infirmity (Gr. *astheneias*, lit., "lack of strength, weakness"). She had something that kept her bent double (Gr. *sugkuptousa*) and unable to stand erect for eighteen years. Apparently it was another case of demon possession. Luke calls it a "spirit" of infirmity and Jesus attributes her predicament to some "binding" by Satan (v. 16). Note, there is no suggestion of immorality in this woman's life. She was the victim of Satanic activity without any deliberate or conscious surrender to wickedness on her part. Why? We do not know. Perhaps the ancient incident in the life of Job (Job 1) may furnish some explanation. There is not even the slightest hint that this demonic invasion of her body had caused any immoral effects in her life. Here she was in the synagogue on the Sabbath. Evidently Jesus saw in her a faith that stood above some of the religious leaders and He called her "a daughter of Abraham." Jesus did not grant that appellation to every Jew!

Jesus saw her. He called to her, "Woman, you are freed from your infirmity." Then He laid His hands on her, and immediately her twisted and bowed

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

frame straightened up and she continually praised God. Jesus did not have to lay His hands on her to effect the healing. He could heal with a word (He cast the demon out of the daughter of a Syrian woman with a word, Cf. Mt. 15; Mk. 7). When Jesus healed it was immediately and permanently. Luke uses the Greek word *apolelusai*; perfect tense verb meaning, "loosed and continually loosed." The healing was immediate, complete, unquestionable, unhysterical and without prolonged efforts to convince the woman she had been healed. Jesus probably laid His hands on her to make it absolutely clear that the powers of deity were in Him.

People with compassion and a common-sense judgment of what is good, right and true, would have joined the woman in rejoicing and giving praise to God. But not everyone in that synagogue had this kind of fundamental honesty and compassion. This healing was unquestionably an act of deity. The ruler of the synagogue was indignant (Gr. *aganakton*, originally signified physical pain or irritation). The official of the synagogue was angry because Jesus had broken a rabbinical tradition. The Old Testament Law specified only a few Sabbath restrictions. On the Sabbath, the Jew could not:

- a. Do any work (Ex. 20:9-10)
- b. Plow or harvest (Ex. 34:21)
- c. Kindle a fire (Ex. 35:3; Num. 15:32-36)
- d. Bake or boil food (Ex. 16:23)
- e. Tread the winepress (Neh. 13:15)
- f. Haul goods to market (Neh. 13:15)
- g. Trade or sell (Neh. 13:16; Amos 8:5)

The main thrust of the Sabbath legislation was not negative. The prohibitions of the Law were to force a spiritually-immature people to concentrate on the real issues God ordained the Sabbath for:

- a. to give men an opportunity to trust completely in God for providing all they needed for sustenance (Ex. 16:22-29).
- b. to be for man an opportunity to sanctify himself to God's holy way of life (Ex. 20:8ff.; Lev. 16:31), a day for "afflicting the soul in repentance" and thinking God's thoughts.
- c. to be a day set aside for worshipping the Lord in sacrifice and offerings (Num. 28:9ff.).
- d. to be a day for men to do good to their fellow man—to let their servants and sojourners find rest and help (Ex. 23:12ff.; Deut. 5:12-15).

The seventh day is no longer legislated as a special day since the Law was "nailed to the cross" (cf. Col. 2:14; Gal. 5:2-6; Eph. 2:14-16; Rom. 14:5-9, etc.) in the death of Christ. His death abrogated the entire Law of Moses, fulfilling it, suffering its penalty, and instituting a "better covenant."

But Christians are to live "a sabbath-kind-of-life." The Old Testament prophets kept predicting that the Messianic age was to be a sabbath-kind-of-life (cf. Isa. 56:1-4; 58:13-14; Jer. 17:19-27; Isa. 66:22-23; Ezek. 44:24; 46:3). In Hebrews 4:9 the Greek word, *sabbatismos*, is translated, "a sabbath rest." It is a word not found anywhere in all the Greek language until Paul uses it there. Paul "coined" this word to express or illustrate the experience of spiritual rest he said Christians are to have in their New covenant relationship in Christ. The Christian should live a sabbath-kind-of-life every day of his life—not just one day.

The major portion of the Jewish people never did comprehend the higher and more spiritual essence of the Law of Moses, including the Sabbath legislation. The people of the days of prophets, for the most part, profaned the Sabbath (cf. Amos 8:4-6; Ezek. 20:12; 22:8; 22:26; 23:38, etc.). After the captivities of the Jews, myriads of rabbinical traditions were accumulated and enforced regarding the Sabbath. There are thirty-nine kinds of forbidden Sabbath activity in the rabbinical tractate called *Shabbath*. The list includes such things as tying or untying a knot, seizing any prey, writing two letters of the alphabet or sowing seed. In addition to these specific rules, there was a huge collection of traditions argued by some as binding and not binding by others. Some argued such absurdities as:

- a. It was unlawful to eat an egg laid upon the Sabbath since the hen had broken the Law by laying the egg on Sabbath.
- b. It was unlawful to slaughter an animal on Sabbath, unless it was a louse—some would only allow that the louse's legs might be plucked off on Sabbath.
- c. Women were not allowed to look into a mirror on Sabbath lest they brush loose hairs from their shoulders and be working on Sabbath.

Some of the more liberal and conscientious rabbis held that it was legitimate to fight in self-defence on the Sabbath—that other religious duties might supersede the Sabbath such as keeping certain of the great feasts and circumcising a Jewish male-child. The saving of life takes precedence over the Sabbath (so says, Yoma 85a), so that anyone being assaulted or anyone dangerously ill (life-threatening illness) could be assisted on the Sabbath. The more rigid rabbis would have no part of such liberalism and forbade any kind of ministration to the sick on the Sabbath.

The effect of such multiplication of traditions and extreme legalism about the Sabbath (and rites of purification, etc.) was that many Jews, including the rabbis, learned devious and hypocritical ways to evade them. For instance, since on the Sabbath one might only travel a "Sabbath day's journey" (six stadia, or seven-eighths of a mile) a fictitious domicile would be invented, so that from that point it was within the Law to start off on another six stadia.

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

13:15-17 Answer: Jesus denounces the hypocrisy of the rabbis here in His reminder, "Does not each of you on the sabbath untie his ox or his ass from the manger, and lead it away to water it?" Edersheim notes that rabbinic tradition in the Talmud provided for water to be drawn for beasts on the Sabbath. Jesus is showing the vicious perversity of this rabbinic legalism which would allow a beast to be watered, but not a faithful worshipper of God to be released from the malicious cruelty of Satan's invasion of her body. The hypocrisy of the ruler of the synagogue is evident:

- a. He was pretending to censure the crowd, but was really aiming at Jesus. "But the ruler . . . said to the people . . ." (13:14)
- b. He blamed the woman for coming to the synagogue for healing when he knew she came to worship. She had no idea Jesus would heal her.
- c. He placed institutional values above human values.
- d. He was more concerned about his animal property than the Sabbath. He was only pretending to hallow the Sabbath!

It is so easy to lose the sense of values with respect to people in a highly technological and institutionalized society. There is even the danger in the church that we will manipulate, count, organize, systematize and institutionalize until people lose their identity. Let the church beware! Jesus makes it plain, "It is lawful to do good on the Sabbath" (cf. Mt. 12:12).

God rested from His creative work and on the seventh day began His eternal sustaining or sanctifying work (cf. Gen. 2:1-3). It is as Jesus said, "My father worketh until now, and I work . . ." (Jn. 5:17). God continues doing good, even on the Sabbath. In fact, doing good is God's way of resting. Rest, as God defines it, is not the cessation of work, but the doing of holiness which brings peace, satisfaction, joy, spiritual growth. That is rest!

Luke used the Greek word *deo* which is translated in English "ought." *Deo* is much more intense than two other Greek words (*opheilo* and *chre*) translated "ought." *Deo* means "it is binding, it is obligatory, it is inevitable, it is proper and right." There is no hint of any other option or alternative in this word. Jesus is saying that ethically and theologically, the need of this daughter of Abraham takes precedence over Sabbath laws, and especially over Sabbath traditions. The Sabbath was made for man's highest good—not man for the Sabbath. Jesus is saying that doing good, even in this particular case, is exactly the purpose for which God instituted the Sabbath. Not only was the woman's body delivered from Satan's invasion, knowledge of Jesus' deity was given her so she might accept the Messiah and His kingdom.

The irrefutable righteousness of Jesus' answer to the attack of the ruler of the synagogue had two results:

- a. His adversaries were put to shame. The Greek word *kateschunonto* means they were "confounded" or "dishonored." It is doubtful that Luke is referring to their shame in connection with any repentance. Jesus' answers exposed His adversaries' hypocrisy.
- b. All the people rejoiced. They rejoiced not only that the woman had been delivered from her physical malady, but also that they had seen divine truth about God's love for man and the real truth about the Sabbath.

SECTION 3

Repentance in Destiny (13:18-21)

18 He said therefore, "What is the kingdom of God like? And to what shall I compare it? ¹⁹It is like a grain of mustard seed which a man took and sowed in his garden; and it grew and became a tree, and the birds of the air made nests in its branches."

20 And again he said, "To what shall I compare the kingdom of God? ²¹It is like leaven which a woman took and hid in three measures of flour, till it was all leavened."

13:18-19 Infamous Kingdom: Jewish rabbis and politicians expected the messianic kingdom of God to begin in splendor, hugeness and power. Jesus tells this audience, especially the officials of the synagogue, that the messianic kingdom will begin very unpretentiously. It will begin like the tiny, speck-like mustard seed, but it will grow into a great "tree." The Greek word for "mustard seed," is *sinapi*, a word of Egyptian origin. The domestic mustard plant was known as *sinapis nigra*. The seed was well known for its minuteness. In good soil the plant often attained a height of 10 or 12 feet and had branches in which birds could nest or perch. The tree is a familiar figure of speech in the O.T. to portray a grand, great, benevolent kingdom (cf. Dan. 4:10-27; Ezek. 17:22-23; 31:6, 12).

That the messianic kingdom of God could arrive at such greatness with such an unpretentious beginning through the Rabbi from Nazareth and His fishermen-disciples was incredible to the apocalyptic-minded Jews of that day. While Jesus Himself was in His fleshly ministry, a statistical review of His "hard" countable successes would have confirmed their estimate of failure. Jesus' kingdom did not reach the proportions of a "tree" while He was here on earth. God's messianic kingdom must, by its very nature, begin unpretentiously. It does not have its origin in force, but in the acceptance of His word by free choice. His kingdom is not concerned primarily with any of this world's riches or fame, but in character and eternity. It has no power-structures through which men must climb to the top. Its King

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

proved that greatness is found in humble service for others. God's great universal kingdom began in Palestine, the most obscure, despised and unlikely province of the glorious Roman empire of the first century. Its founder was a Jew, from Nazareth, in Galilee—a carpenter's son, despised and hated by His own political leaders. Both He and His principal assistants were unknown, unschooled, uninfluential people. They had no army, no budget, no capital city and no support from the masses. But after the death of its founder, this kingdom grew and grew and permeated the whole world (cf. Rom. 16:25-26; Col. 1:6, 23; I Thess. 1:6-10; Acts 28:22; 17:6, etc.). But that is the way God chose to conquer (cf. I Cor. 1:27-29) and conquer He did! In Paul's day some even of Caesar's own household had come into this universal kingdom (cf. Phil. 1:12-13)!

13:20-21 Infectious Kingdom: The Greek word for leaven is *zume*. It is "sour dough" in a high state of fermentation. Today's housewife uses yeast. Such fermentation makes bread dough "rise" giving it lightness and flavor. Unleavened bread is heavy, hard and tasteless. Leaven is used in the scriptures mostly to symbolize defilement or uncleanness—to characterize the pervasive nature of evil. In this case, however, the only point to be symbolized is the infectious, contagious nature of the messianic kingdom of God. The small, insignificant kingdom provides spiritual leavening for the whole world. Quietly, silently, unobtrusively the truth of Jesus made its way into the hearts of men and women. The word of God is like leaven. It works slowly (cf. Mk. 4:26-32), unseen in its working, but dynamically. It transforms as it permeates. God's truth, heralded by the church, has its influence in all of human culture (e.g. politics, commerce, science, arts, etc.), as well as in the transformation of individual people into the image of Christ, (cf. II Cor. 2:14; Rom. 16:19, 26; Col. 1:6, 23; Rev. 11:15; II Cor. 3:17-18; 5:17; I Cor. 6:9-11). Even by the time the apostle Paul wrote his epistle to the Colossians (about 60 A.D.) this leaven-like working of the Gospel had infected the known civilized world (Col. 1:6, 23) and by 313 A.D. (the edict of Constantine) it had conquered Western civilization. The Jews expected the messianic kingdom to be established almost instantaneously, spectacularly, powerfully and Jewishly. Never did they expect it to come slowly, quietly and universally. The Jews expected God to "signal" with some cosmic, catastrophic upheaval of political structures—they were so accustomed to God working through such natural spectacles they could hardly envision Him working otherwise. Elijah looked for God to come in an earthquake or storm—but God came in a "still, small voice" (I Kings 19:12). The prophet Zechariah had to remind the people of his day that God most often works "not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit . . ." (Zech. 4:6). Jesus cautioned the Jews that the kingdom would come "not with observation, but within" the hearts of men (Lk. 17:20-21; Rom. 14:17).

There are very important lessons for all followers of Jesus to learn from these two parables. First, we must not despise the smallness of things in the kingdom. God works with things small in the eyes of men (cf. I Cor. 1). Second, we must not try to make the kingdom into some humanistic, big-time, proud, world-like corporation and manipulate or regiment men and women. The kingdom works like leaven. All that is necessary is that the Word of God make contact with the hearts of men—the Word itself is the *only* agent able to transform the “dough,” (cf. Heb. 4:11-13, Jn. 6:63, James 1:18; I Pet. 1:22-24, etc.). Third, we must believe that the kingdom, though its beginnings are small and its working is unnoticed, will become great and accomplish its purpose and endure forever. These parables permit no pessimism or despondency. Men may take the good things of God’s creation (like the Sabbath) and violently pervert them and it may *appear* that such evil men control God’s kingdom. But the truth of the matter is, things are not as they appear. God’s kingdom does not operate as the “kingdoms” of men—but His kingdom will survive and conquer.

SECTION 4

Repentance is Difficult (13:22-30)

22 He went on his way through towns and villages, teaching, and journeying toward Jerusalem. 23 And some one said to him, “Lord, will those who are saved be few?” And he said to them, 24 “Strive to enter by the narrow door; for many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able. 25 When once the householder has risen up and shut the door, you will begin to stand outside and to knock at the door, saying, ‘Lord, open to us.’ He will answer you, ‘I do not know where you come from.’ 26 Then you will begin to say, ‘We ate and drank in your presence, and you taught in our streets.’ 27 But he will say, ‘I tell you, I do not know where you come from; depart from me, all you workers of iniquity!’ 28 There you will weep and gnash your teeth, when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God and you yourselves thrust out. 29 And men will come from east and west, and from north and south, and sit at table in the kingdom of God. 30 And behold, some are last who will be first, and some are first who will be last.”

13:22-27 Urgency: After Jesus taught these two parables on the kingdom He apparently went to the Temple in Jerusalem for the Feast of Dedication. That visit is recorded exclusively in John’s Gospel (Jn. 10:22-39). The Feast of Dedication is better known by its Jewish name, *Hanukkah*. In 167 B.C., on the 25th of December, Antiochus Epiphanes (a Greek-Syrian)

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

maliciously defiled the Jewish Temple by erecting an altar to Jupiter in it and by sacrificing a sow on the Temple altar. Exactly three years later, to the very day, Judas Maccabeus (Jewish patriot) defeated the forces of Antiochus, slew five thousand of them, recaptured Jerusalem and cleansed the Temple. He rededicated the Temple and declared a holy feast, *Hanukkah*, which means literally, "Feast of Lights." According to legend, Judas found only one cruse of oil fit to use in the Temple, which would normally have lasted but one day. A miracle occurred (supposedly) and the oil lasted eight days. All this legend is recorded in the Jewish Talmud. The *Hanukkah* ceremony is festive and happy. It begins by the recitation of two traditional blessings followed by the lighting of the 8-lamped *Menorah* (one lamp lit each night). Then the singing of Jewish hymns which would include the canting of the Hallel (Psa. 113-118). There are special readings of the Torah taken from Numbers chapter 7, and from the Haphtarah (Prophets) in Zechariah 2:14 through 4:7. These religious ceremonies are followed by games, dancing and eating. At this particular *Hanukkah*, Jesus gave one of the plainest affirmations of His messiahship He had ever given. He even claimed He had the power to give eternal life and to keep anyone who believed in Him from perishing. His "sheep" could never be lost or taken away from Him (cf. Jn. 10:24-30). When the Jews heard this they considered it blasphemous so some of them picked up large stones from the accumulated rubbish piles associated with Herod's remodeling work there and threatened to stone Him to death. Jesus withdrew from Jerusalem crossing over the Jordan river at Jericho and came to Bethany "beyond" the Jordan where John the Baptist had immersed many people, including Himself. In this area (and throughout southern Perea) Jesus conducted an extensive preaching tour which is summarized by Luke, "He went on his way through towns and villages, teaching, and journeying toward Jerusalem" (Lk. 13:22). All the preaching Jesus does from Luke 13:22 through Luke 17:10 is apparently done "beyond" the Jordan in Perea. It was the earlier trip to Jerusalem for *Hanukkah* and Jesus' astonishing claim to give eternal security that prompted someone to ask, "Lord, will those who are saved be few?"

Three other trends appearing in the Lord's public ministry were also responsible for this question: (a) Jesus was increasingly emphasizing the individual spirituality necessary for salvation; (b) there was a visible defection of disciples beginning to take place—many out of the clamoring multitudes of the second year were beginning to feel disillusionment with Jesus' refusal to get involved in politics; (c) and there was very evident intensification of the opposition by the Jewish rulers. Jewish exclusivism might also have prompted the query. In the Jewish apocrypha we read statements like: "The Most High hath made this world for many, but the world to come for few" (II Esdras 8:1), and "There be many more of them which perish, than of them which shall be saved: like as a wave is greater

than a drop" (II Esdras 9:15-16). Since those who lived in Perea were considered outside the pale of orthodox Judaism, one of the crowd in Perea might have been wanting to see where Jesus stood in relation to the Pharisaic haughtiness of those Jews in Judea.

The Lord's full answer to this question appears almost enigmatic. He says, "Yes, few—No, many!" Jesus does not answer specifically because the number of those who will be saved is information only God is capable of bearing. Man's standards and abilities to comprehend such a possibility are totally inadequate, (cf. Acts 1:7; Jn. 16:12; Rev. 7:9). Jesus answers first by saying, "Yes, few will be saved because so many are unwilling to enter salvation by the narrow gate." The Greek word *stenes* is translated "narrow" but means "difficult, pressurized, restricted on both sides." Matthew uses the word *tethlimmene* to describe the "narrow" road Jesus proclaimed (Mt. 7:14). *Tethlimmene* means "afflicted." It is through "many tribulations" that we enter the kingdom of God (cf. Acts 14:22). If only few are saved, it will not be because the Jews are few and the Gentile nations are many, but because of all people of the world, only a few really strive to enter through the "narrow" door. The Greek word *agonizesthe* is translated "strive" and is the word from which we get the English word, "agonize." The same Greek word *agona* is used in Hebrews 12:1 to describe the Christian life as a "race," a "contest." Never, in all His preaching, did Jesus suggest it would be easy to be saved. That idea is the heresy of men who are afraid of self-discipline and in love with statistics. Some want to "instant-package" salvation into some handy-dandy system, an emotional experience or "five easy steps." Many, who refuse to make strong, agonizing efforts to do the whole counsel of God, will be disappointed. Do not worry about debating the number of those who will be saved or not saved. Let each Christian concentrate on entering by the "narrow gate." The narrow gate demands stern self-surrender and painful self-sacrifice.

In the mini-parable Jesus tells here He is emphasizing difficulty of entering—a definite manner of entrance—few exercising the persistence to attain. Jesus knows nothing of "many" ways of salvation. He does *not* mean here to imply that many would be *seeking* to enter. His parable implies that many will shun the "narrowness" of the gate in this life and then cry out for access at judgment (cf. Lk. 16:19-31). Those who faithfully seek the narrow door shall find it.

Once the door is "shut" the opportunity to enter is over. Once death to this life comes or the final judgment (whichever is first), there is no more opportunity for salvation (cf. Heb. 9:27; Lk. 16:26). Jesus paints a terrifying picture here of those who find themselves *too late* to get in the door to salvation. It was there all their earthly lives to enter, but one day it will be closed *forever*! The people Jesus portrays here are those who socialized, played at religion, even condescended to associate with Christ on a non-surrendering basis. They recalled their opportunities. They remembered

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

they had been invited by Him to follow Him and they had even been in His company while He was here in the flesh. But religious environment does not save—character does (cf. Lk. 11:27-28). Not even the power to work miracles saves (Mt. 7:23). Many today think they would have a better relationship with Christ if only they might “eat and drink” in His physical presence. Jesus pronounced those “more blessed” who have “not seen” and yet have believed (Jn. 20:29). The impenitent cities (Capernaum, Chorazin, Bethsaida) all had Jesus teach in their streets but most of their citizens did not enter His kingdom by the narrow door (cf. Lk. 10:13ff.). The greatest suffering of Hell may be the constant memory of lost opportunities (cf. Lk. 16:25—“son, remember . . .”).

13:28-30 Universality: It would be difficult for Jews to repent (change their minds) about the universality of the messianic kingdom. Jesus deals with that here in answer to the question “Will those who are saved be few?” “No,” says Jesus, “many will be saved.” Even those who never had opportunity to eat and drink and hear Jesus teach like Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and all the prophets. They came to God by the “narrow door” of agonizing, struggling, self-sacrificing faith. It is loyalty, faith and repentance that saves. None of these Old Testament saints depended on their own self-righteousness. They depended on God’s mercy and by faith accepted God’s covenant terms. Jesus continues by saying that men will come from “the east and the west, from the north and the south” and enter the kingdom. The kingdom will have as citizens men from every tribe, tongue, people and nation. The prophets of the Jews predicted this universality (especially Isaiah 2:2; 19:16-24; 25:6-12; 60:8-14; 66:18-24; Hosea 1:10-11; Zech. 14:16-21, etc.). However, the Jews, for the most part, refused to interpret their prophets as promising covenant acceptance for the Gentiles.

Jesus says, “Behold!” “Surprise, some are last who will be first and some are first who will be last.” In other words, there are going to be some shocking surprises in the matter of salvation. Those who enter by the narrow door are those the world expects to be lost! God’s judgment of saved and lost is in direct opposition to the world’s! Those the world would consider as prime prospects for salvation (first) will be last; those the world thinks have no chance at all to be saved (last) will be first, (cf. Mt. 19:30; 20:16; Mk. 10:31). Salvation does not depend on erudition, wealth, race, self-justification, or any form of law-keeping. “By the law shall no flesh be justified” (Gal. 2:16). Salvation is by the grace of God, appropriated by faith (Eph. 2).

SECTION 5

Repentance or Doom (13:31-35)

31 At that very hour some Pharisees came, and said to him, “Get away from here, for Herod wants to kill you.” ³²And he said to them,

"Go and tell that fox, 'Behold, I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I finish my course.' ³³Nevertheless I must go on my way today and tomorrow and the day following; for it cannot be that a prophet should perish away from Jerusalem.' ³⁴O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, killing the prophets and stoning those who are sent to you! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not! ³⁵Behold, your house is forsaken. And I tell you, you will not see me until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!'"

13:31-33 Denunciation: Herod Antipas was tetrarch of Galilee and Perea. He was the son of Herod the Great by Malthace (a Samaritan woman) one of his father's eight wives. Antipas married the daughter of Aretas who was a Nabatean king. While married to her he seduced and married his half-brother's wife, Herodias, who was also his niece. He was sly, treacherous, weak-willed, insecure, sensual, opportunistic and grovelled before the Caesars for his office. Accused of treason to Caligula by his nephew, Herod Agrippa I, he was deposed about 36 A.D. and spent the remainder of his days in exile. His attitude toward Jesus was one of curiosity (to see miracles, Lk. 23:7-12), yet He was jealous and fearful of Jesus' popularity (Lk. 9:9ff.—see comments there) lest Jesus be a threat to his throne. Jesus would not present Himself before Herod, either by invitation or threat. Jesus never feared Herod, neither his influence (Mk. 8:15) nor his power (Lk. 13:31ff.).

It is interesting to note that the Pharisees, of all people, warned Jesus of Herod's intentions. It is possible that some of the Pharisees (like Nicodemus and perhaps Joseph of Arimathea) were sincerely trying to protect Him. But it is more probable that these Pharisees were hoping to scare Jesus out of Perea (Herod's domain) into Judea or Jerusalem where the Sadducees and Pharisees had control (supervised, of course, by Pontius Pilate). They especially wanted to get Jesus away from the Galilean and Perean multitudes with whom He was still very popular. The Greek word *alopeki* is "she-fox" and some think Jesus intended His reply for Herodias who was the murdering conniver behind most of Herod's orders. She had married Herod because he was ruler of more territory than her former husband and she was power-hungry. Whatever the case, Jesus' reply was that of the sovereign Son of God. His answer to Herod might be paraphrased:

- a. I work miracles; I have divine power; I have more of that to do in Perea. I will leave when I am ready—not before.
- b. My program is definitely set by God. Herod will not be able to thwart it.

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

- c. My mission will reach its goal.
- d. I will leave at the exact time that fits My appointed schedule.
- e. I must leave here, and go to Jerusalem (sarcasm) because that is where all prophets are killed. The "holy" city, the messianic city of "peace" and "righteousness" is the murderess of holy men.

"Three days" was merely a proverbial expression for a short time. Jesus remained in Perea longer than three days. He does not go to Judea until He is called there because of the death of Lazarus (cf. Lk. 17:11 with John 11:1-16).

Herod was a moral weakling. He could be manipulated by those who played on his sensual appetites. Occasionally, he regretted his wicked deeds, but he did not repent (change his mind and life). Jesus knew his heart and denounced him for what he was—a cunning, predator-like animal, a fox. Jesus' refusal to appear before Herod is a classic demonstration of His teaching in the Sermon on the Mount, "Do not give dogs what is holy; and do not throw your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under foot and turn to attack you" (Mt. 7:6).

13:34-35 Desolation: The reminder that He would soon (in about 3 months) be killed in Jerusalem pierces His heart, not for Himself, but for the impenitent people of the city who shall do the deed. God tried desperately to save these people and their city. He sent prophet after prophet to call them away from their own self-righteousness and to repentance, but they killed the prophets. Finally, God sent His Son—now they will kill Him. What more can God do? He will not violate their own freedom to choose. They have chosen not to accept God's will (cf. Jer. 6:16-19). He must leave them to their own rebellious designs. The Greek word here is *aphietai* meaning "leave in the sense of abandoning, forsaking." Luke uses the Greek word *eremosis* in 21:20 which means literally, "desert, desolate place, uninhabited place." A storm of terrible destruction is coming upon this people and their city (cf. Mt. 23:37-39; Lk. 21:20-24; 19:41-44). It was predicted by Daniel that the Jewish nation would, after rejecting its "Anointed One," bring about its own destruction in conjunction with "the abomination of desolation" (Roman armies) (cf. Dan. 9:24-27).

What did Jesus mean when He said, "... you will not see me until you say, Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord"?

- a. He may have meant that, while these Pharisees were trying to get Him to go to Jerusalem immediately, Jerusalem would not see Him until about 3 months later when the Passover multitudes would shout, "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord" (cf. Mt. 21:9; Mk. 11:9; Lk. 19:38).
- b. He may have meant that Jerusalem did not want Him when He wanted to gather her under His wings, but she would definitely see

Him again when He came in power and judgment with the Roman armies (cf. comments Luke 21:25-32).

- c. He may have meant that although Jerusalem would see Him again in the flesh when she crucified Him, she would not acknowledge Him as who He really is, Lord and God, until she sees Him at His Second Coming when every knee shall bow and every tongue confess Him as Lord (cf. Phil. 2:9-11).

Quite frankly, we do not know which is the correct meaning. We prefer the first one because it fits the context here in Luke most suitably. We also acknowledge that Jesus made exactly the same statement in Matthew 23:37-39 after He had already made His "triumphal entry" into Jerusalem. The third alternative does not appear suitable because at His Second Coming all are not going to say, "Blessed is he who comes . . ." although all will acknowledge who He is.

STUDY STIMULATORS:

1. Do you know people today who think natural disasters or physical diseases signal the victims are worse sinners than others? Will this passage in Luke 13:1-9 help you answer them?
2. If repentance is a continuing thing in a man's relationship to Christ, and is brought about by knowing and doing the revealed will of Christ, how important is Bible study or Sunday School or preaching the word?
3. Are you fulfilling the purpose for which God created you or are you merely "cumbering the ground" like the fruitless fig tree? What did God create you for?
4. Is it really true that doing good to a human being in need should take precedence over religious ceremonies?
5. Is your whole Christian life a "sabbath-kind-of-life"? What needs to be improved?
6. Do you see the church today being the "unpretentious" but "infectious" kingdom Jesus characterized in these parables?
7. Why will there not be "many" who are saved?
8. Do you think Jesus treated Herod correctly?
9. Why did Jesus leave Jerusalem to herself?

Chapter Fourteen

(14:1-35)

THE SON OF MAN DEFINING A TRUE DISCIPLE

IDEAS TO INVESTIGATE:

1. What is "dropsy" (14:2)?
2. Where is the "place of honor" at a feast (14:7)?
3. Does all this instruction about feasting apply to the twentieth century?
4. Is it wrong to invite your relatives to dine at your house (14:12)?
5. Is attending the "feast" of the kingdom of God more important than a person's marriage (14:20)?
6. How does one "bear his own cross" (14:27)?
7. Does "renounce all" that you have mean give away all earthly possessions and "renounce" one's family (14:33)?

SECTION 1

Good (14:1-6)

14 One sabbath when he went to dine at the house of a ruler who belonged to the Pharisees, they were watching him. ²And behold, there was a man before him who had dropsy. ³And Jesus spoke to the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, "Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath, or not?" ⁴But they were silent. Then he took him and healed him, and let him go. ⁵And he said to them, "Which of you, having a son or an ox that has fallen into a well, will not immediately pull him out on a sabbath day?" ⁶And they could not reply to this.

14:1-2 Cordiality: Apparently Jesus received numerous invitations to dine in the homes of Pharisees. Earlier, in the Later Judean ministry, in the fall of A.D. 29, he was invited to a Pharisee's home for a meal (cf. Lk. 11:37ff.). That invitation was after the Feast of Tabernacles (September) and before the Feast of Dedication (December). This dinner invitation is in the Later Perea ministry, probably in January or February, A.D. 30. Jesus was cordial to all men—even to Pharisees and when invited always accepted and made the most of every situation for God.

A study of Jewish meal customs of the first century furnishes interesting background for this dinner invitation to Jesus. Plutarch, the Greek historian

(46-119 A.D.) wrote: "The Hebrews honor the Sabbath chiefly by inviting each other to drinking and intoxication." Not all Hebrews were this self-indulgent, but many of them were, especially the Pharisees who indulged themselves privately and pretended publicly to be very religious men.

Jews of the first century usually ate only twice daily. The first meal was anytime from early morning to noon, depending on the occupation of the head of the house and the social rank of the family. The evening meal came usually at sunset when the working day had ended and was the principal meal. The Hebrew diet was more varied than one might expect in light of so many dietary laws. Vegetables such as beans, cucumbers, onions, garlic, leeks, lentils (peas), carob pods, wild gourds, squash and others were served. Varieties of fruits, such as grapes, figs, olives, mulberries, pomegranates, oranges, lemons, melons, dates, almonds and walnuts were also common. Bread made from wheat, often leavened (except on Sabbath), was usually eaten warm and served with sour wine or meat gravy. *Kosher* meat for the more affluent tables might be mutton, goat, fish, beef, and sometimes wild game. Milk, cheese, butter and some eggs (fish and locust) were included in some meals.

The rich (Pharisees and others) usually reclined upon dining couches in imitation of Greek and Roman ways of dining. A *triclinium* is a long couch, large enough for three people to recline on as they ate. The "ruler of the feast" in John 2:9 is called in Greek, *architriklinos*, literally, "the ruling triclinium person." Knives, forks and spoons were not used to eat with—knives were used to prepare the meals. Contents of the meat and gravy bowl were taken either with the fingers or placed on a piece of bread (sopped or dipped) and carried to the mouth. The houses of the rich were large and it was customary for the poor and curious to come into the dining room to stand and watch the rich indulge. Pharisees enjoyed such ostentation. There was always a "pecking order" or seating arrangement at formal dinners according to "importance" or "popularity" and "places of honor" were rigidly observed.

The man who invited Jesus to dine was "a ruler who belonged to the Pharisees." Not all the Jewish "rulers" were Pharisees, and not all Pharisees were rulers. This man must have been a member of the local Sanhedrin. Each city and village had its local Sanhedrin or ruling body to settle religious and civil affairs. There was the Great Sanhedrin in Jerusalem (like our Supreme Court and Congress all in one body). There were other Pharisees present at this dinner where Jesus was a guest. The invitation extended to Jesus was *not* out of cordiality or hospitality. They were "watching" Him. The Greek word is *parateroumenoi*. The prepositional prefix, *para*, intensifies the participle, meaning they were "watching intently with a

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

sinister motive," or "watching Him like a hawk" hoping to find something in His behavior or teaching by which they might accuse Him as a "law-breaker."

These Pharisees were watching Jesus because they saw a man there with "dropsy" and they knew Jesus' reputation for healing—even on the sabbath. This man was not one of the invited guests, but one of the on-lookers. It was a custom of those days to allow the poor and curious to enter the courtyards of the rich and be spectators at formal dinners and feasts. The Greek word *hydropikos* is translated "dropsy" and is related to the Greek word *hydor* which means, "water." Dropsy, in modern medical language called edema, is a condition in which the tissues retain too much fluid. It may be caused by heart disease, kidney disease, or other infections, and may be fatal. In those days it was incurable. The Pharisees saw to it that this afflicted man was placed right in front of Jesus (Gr. *emprosthen*) so He would be forced into some choice. Would He ignore the man? That would contradict His reputation for compassion. Would He heal the man—on the sabbath? That would add to the accusations the Pharisees already had against Him. Perhaps the Pharisees doubted that Jesus could cure the man and they would have evidence once for all that He was an imposter.

14:3-6 Compassion: All their conniving was to no avail. Jesus destroyed any possibility that they could represent Him as a "lawbreaker" or an inconsiderate pretender. He knew exactly what they intended, so He put the onus on them by asking the question, "Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath, or not?" It is always "lawful" to do good on the sabbath (see comments Lk. 13:10-17). The Greek word *exestin* is an impersonal verb meaning, "it is permitted, or, it is possible." As we have pointed out in Luke 13:10-17, even their own traditions permitted care and the practice of medicine on the seriously ill on the sabbath. There is Jewish legend that Hillel (famous rabbi), before he became a rabbi, was found once half-frozen under masses of snow in the lecture room of certain teachers where he had hidden himself to profit by their great wisdom. He had to hide because he had been unable to earn the fee for entrance as a pupil. These teachers found him and rubbed and resuscitated him, even though it was the sabbath day. They are reported to have said that such a dedicated student was one for whose sake it was well worth while to break the sabbath.

His antagonists could not answer the righteousness of the question. They were silent because they knew if they denied the lawfulness of healing on the sabbath they would be exposed for the hypocrites they were and, of course, they did not want to say it was lawful to heal on the sabbath and contradict their own traditions. Jesus took hold of the man (Gr. *epilabomenos*), to demonstrate the power was from Him. After He had healed the man, Jesus dismissed him from the room (Gr. *apelusen*, "loosed him from") to

prevent the Pharisees from persecuting him as they sometimes did to those Jesus healed (cf. Jn. 9:1ff.). Then Jesus exposed their inhumanness with His reminder that when they had a son or an ox fall into a well they would go immediately, even on the sabbath, and pull him out. The ancient manuscripts are about equally divided over which is the proper wording—whether it should be “son” or “ass.” The Alexandrinus, Vaticanus, Bezae and other lesser manuscripts have the Greek *huios* or “son.” The Sinaiticus, Cyprius, Freerianus and others have the Greek *onos* or “ass.” Jesus is demanding that what ever the Pharisees permitted themselves to do on the sabbath for their own benefit, they must ethically and lawfully allow the Son of God to do for the benefit of others!

So here in the midst of the Lord's last three months of evangelism, the Pharisees give Him an opportunity to display unequivocally the way to please God. Jesus exposes the graphic contrast between the hypocrisy and inhumanity of the Pharisees (who considered themselves the only people pleasing to God) and His own compassion and truthfulness. Jesus made so plain the essence of God's will no one could contradict it. The true disciple will follow Jesus' teaching.

SECTION 2

Gracious (14:7-14)

7 Now he told a parable to those who were invited, when he marked how they chose the places of honor, saying to them, ⁸“When you are invited by any one to a marriage feast, do not sit down in a place of honor, lest a more eminent man than you be invited by him; ⁹and he who invited you both will come and say to you, ‘Give place to this man,’ and then you will begin with shame to take the lowest place. ¹⁰But when you are invited, go and sit in the lowest place, so that when your host comes he may say to you, ‘Friend, go up higher’; then you will be honored in the presence of all who sit at table with you. ¹¹For every one who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.”

12 He said also to the man who had invited him, “When you give a dinner or a banquet, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your kinsmen or rich neighbors, lest they also invite you in return, and you be repaid. ¹³But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind, ¹⁴and you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you. You will be repaid at the resurrection of the just.”

14:7-11 Humility: Luke uses the Greek word *epechon* to describe Jesus' observation of the men at this Pharisee's table choosing places of honor. The Greek word means literally, “to hold upon.” The Lord's attention

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

was riveted upon the ludicrous scene. They were probably pushing, shoving, elbowing and arguing about places to recline. The Jewish Talmud says that on a couch holding three persons, the middle place is considered the place of greatest honor. The place to the left is next in honor and the place to the right last. The Talmud also records just such an instance of ridiculous behavior. At a banquet of Alexander Jannaeus (Hasmonean king of the Jews 103-76 B.C.) rabbi Simeon ben Shetach, in spite of the presence of some great Persian rulers, had thrust himself between the king and the queen at the dinner table. He was publicly rebuked and shamed. He tried to defend his behavior by quoting the Jewish apocryphal writing, Ecclesiasticus 15:5 which says, "Exalt wisdom, and she . . . shall make thee sit among princes." The audacious, arrogant man who repeatedly and presumptuously puts himself forward ("chooses the place of honor") is always in danger of public humiliation because there is inevitably always someone present more deserving of being honored. And even if the host is not forced to ask the presumptuous man to step down, the guests are almost always aware of the egotist's real position. By contrast the truly humble man, not concerned to "show-off" or greedy for attention, who takes a "lower seat," will usually be asked to "go up higher."

There is a fine line between the proper self-worth and sinful pride. The Greek words translated pride in the New Testament are *huperephania* and *alazoneiais*. *Huperephania* is literally, "hyper-showing"; it is arrogance, haughtiness, disdain of others, making oneself to be pre-eminent (cf. Mk. 7:22). *Alazoneiais* is from *alazon* (a vagabond or wanderer) and came to be used in the sense of braggadocio, boastfulness, and being "puffed up," (cf. James 4:16). Not even disciples of Jesus are immune to the temptation (cf. Lk. 9:46; Mt. 20:20-28; Lk. 22:24-27). Pride is the "snare of the devil" (I Tim. 3:6) and God hates pride (Prov. 8:13). It was the fundamental temptation the devil trapped Eve and Adam with in the Garden of Eden (cf. Gen. 3:5). There are four attitudes that clearly reveal a proud heart: (a) self-sufficiency; (b) self-justification; (c) self-righteousness; (d) self-importance. Pride is put to practice when men measure themselves by those they feel are inferior, in order to justify feelings of superiority (cf. II Cor. 10:12-14). On the other hand, acknowledging that God our Creator has accounted us worth the sacrifice of His Perfect Son, is not pride but the necessary admission that motivates us to enter into His covenant of salvation.

Humility in the scriptures is from the Greek word *tapeinophrosune* and literally means, "lowliness of mind." Humility is based upon:

a. Truth:

1. Creator-creature relationship
2. Kingship and divine Saviorhood of Jesus Christ
3. Revelational nature of the Bible

b. Trust:

1. In the Fatherhood of God
2. In the Substitutionary-atonement of Christ

c. Obedience:

1. Service to others
2. Carrying out God's will

The only sure cure for pride is to compare oneself with God and with His Perfect Son, Jesus Christ, and then to acknowledge the scriptural truth that the kingdom of God is not a society in which there is competition for "position" but a fellowship where "each counts others better than self" (Rom. 12:3, 10), and where everyone has the "mind of Christ" (Phil. 2:5ff.). Real humility is always spontaneous and attractive. It is false humility when we pretend we do not have a capacity that we do have. If you can do something well humility does not require you to pretend that you cannot; it only requires you to remember that you did not create the talents you have yourself, and that therefore, gratitude fits better than pride. Real humility walks the fine line between self-criticism and self-acceptance.

These Pharisees, expositors of God's word, scholars and religious guides, were giving the distinct impression that they considered the end of learning to be self-exaltation. They were showing they believed the purpose of wisdom was to make them superior to all other men. The purpose of learning and scholarship is for service to others. It is in serving others that valuable character is formed—not in self-exaltation. It is in humble service that the true dignity of the human being is manifested. It is in giving of self to the edification of others that a person reflects the glory of God and His Son (cf. Jn. 13:1ff.). When a person humbles himself, God's image is reflected in him and he is exalted. When a person exalts himself, the image of the devil is reflected and he is abased in the evaluation of good and honest men.

Is it possible that such grabbing at false honor could go on among modern-day rabbis and clergymen? When was the last time you heard sermons from the scriptures warning the followers of Jesus about such immodest behavior? How many conventions for preachers and church workers ever seriously consider this? A great deal is preached about sexual sin and about doctrinal error, but Jesus focused His most scathing denunciation on the egotism of the religious leaders of His day!

14:12-14 Hospitality: But Jesus wasn't through with His host. He had another lesson to teach all present at the dinner—the lesson of true hospitality. The true disciple of Jesus does not entertain or feed anyone with a motive that expects repayment. The good man of God is hospitable and charitable without any thought of getting anything out of it. He does his good because someone needs help—because he loves.

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

The Greek word for hospitality is *philoxenia*, literally, "love of strangers or aliens." Jesus taught hospitality (cf. Lk. 10:30-37; Mt. 10:11-15; Lk. 10:5-12; Lk. 7:36-50). The N.T. writers exhort Christians to be hospitable (cf. I Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:8; I Pet. 4:9; Heb. 13:2). Philemon and John's epistles enjoin and exhibit hospitality. Jesus said, "When you give a dinner or a banquet, do not invite your friends . . . lest . . ." "Lest" emphasizes *danger*! There is danger in always giving dinners for friends and relatives! The danger is in asking to your feast someone who can (and will) repay you! The Lord's teaching here is revolutionary in light of modern-day practice! Obviously, Jesus is dealing mainly with motives. One's *motive* for inviting people to dinner is of supreme importance. This teaching of Jesus strikes hard at all of us. Which of us has ever had a banquet for the poor, maimed, lame and blind? What are our motives for giving dinners—pride? prestige? publicity? manipulation?

Clearly, there is nothing wrong with inviting your relatives or even your rich neighbors to dinner if your motives are pure. Matthew invited his fellow-publicans to dinner (Mt. 9:9-10). But, there are so many people who could use help, if we really followed this teaching we would have little time for feeding those who can take care of themselves. Hospitality and helping the needy will be a crucial issue at the judgment of mankind (cf. Mt. 25:35ff.; Mt. 10:40; Jn. 13:20).

God cares about the poor. He enjoins us to care about them (Ex. 22:25-27; 23:11; Lev. 19:9-15; 25:6-30; 25:39-42; 39:47-54; Deut. 14:28-29; 15:12-13; 16:11-14; 24:10-22; 26:12-13; Ruth 2:1-7; Neh. 8:10; Psa. 9:18; 12:5). The prophets championed the poor because rich people exploited them (Isa. 1:23; 10:1-2; Ezek. 34; Amos 2:6; 5:7; 8:6; Micah 2:1-2; Hab. 3:14; Mal. 3:5). Jesus always helped the poor when He had the opportunity to do so. The early church was made up of mostly poor people and slaves (cf. I Cor. 1:26-29; II Cor. 8:2-15; James 1:9-11; 2:1-13; 5:1-6). Paul and Barnabas were asked to remember the poor (Gal. 2:10). Opportunities are never lacking to give aid to the poor for they are always in the world (cf. Deut. 15:4-11; Jn. 12:8). The question is, shall those who have plenty avail themselves of these opportunities to help. Helping the poor will hardly ever be rewarded in this life. Jesus promises, however, that in the resurrection of the just, those who have shown compassion and mercy will be rewarded by the One who is able to give infinite compassion and mercy. It sounds illogical, and it is contrary to the world's values, but it is true that it is more blessed to give than to receive (Acts 20:35). It is only by faith that the follower of Jesus can put these admonitions into practice in his daily life. The world will say, if you want to get ahead, entertain the rich and powerful. And it even appears, in this life, those who do so "get ahead." But the follower of Jesus has his hope in the next world.

SECTION 3

Grateful (14:15-24)

15 When one of those who sat at table with him heard this, he said to him, "Blessed is he who shall eat bread in the kingdom of God!"¹⁶ But he said to him, "A man once gave a great banquet, and invited many; ¹⁷and at the time for the banquet he sent his servant to say to those who had been invited, 'Come; for all is now ready.'¹⁸ But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said to him, 'I have bought a field, and I must go out and see it; I pray you, have me excused.'¹⁹ And another said, 'I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to examine them; I pray you, have me excused.'²⁰ And another said, 'I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.'²¹ So the servant came and reported this to his master. Then the householder in anger said to his servant, 'Go out quickly to the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in the poor and maimed and blind and lame.'²² And the servant said, 'Sir, what you commanded has been done, and still there is room.'²³ And the master said to the servant, 'Go out to the highways and hedges, and compel people to come in, that my house may be filled.'²⁴ For I tell you, none of those men who were invited shall taste my banquet.'"

14:15-20 Indifference: Jesus had spoken about the ideal banquet situation where goodness, helpfulness, humility and hospitality are sincere. It was apparent that Jesus was talking about the messianic age. Describing the kingdom of God as a "banquet" was a favorite expression of the Old Testament prophets (cf. Isa. 25:6-12; 65:13-16, etc.). Jewish apocryphal writings also picture the messianic age in this manner. One of the dinner guests was moved to exclaim, "Blessed is he who shall eat bread in the kingdom of God!"

The guest had the right subject. Jesus was indeed talking about the kingdom of God—the messianic age. Nothing short of the rule of God in the hearts of men could produce such an ideal society. The guest at the Pharisee's table was excited about the beauty of such an ideal. Jesus pictured a social order where there was no self-serving pride; a society where humility was sincere and there was no competition or exploitation of one another for positions of honor. He talked about true hospitality where love and care is given to the needy with no thought of payment or reward. Such a society is the kingdom of God—the church (cf. Acts 2:43-47; 4:32-37; 6:1-6, etc.).

At first glance it would appear that Jesus tried to stifle the enthusiasm of the excited guest. Jesus told His parable of the indifferent guests directly to the man who had expressed such anticipation of the kingdom of God. The man who gave the great banquet in the parable is God the Father and

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

Christ the Son. The servant sent to invite guests is probably John the Baptist. The guests are the Jews. This parable had primary reference to the Jewish rejection of the Messiah and His kingdom. Its principle is relevant for all ages.

By this parable Jesus says, in effect, "Yes, you all admire the ideal but you are not prepared to act upon it. You think it is grand but you are too occupied with yourselves to take it seriously." The parable illustrates:

- a. the kingdom of God is a kingdom of grace—the banquet table is provided by Him.
- b. the privilege to participate is by answering the invitation of the king in the precise manner he has chosen to extend it.
- c. exclusion is due to a freely chosen refusal to answer the invitation—not to the king's discrimination.
- d. men choose to refuse because they value their own interests more precious than the king's banquet.

The guests of the parable were "one" (Gr. *mias*) in excusing themselves from the man's feast. The inference is that there was a united conspiracy to refuse to attend. The Greek word *paraitesthai* means literally, "beg off." They had no valid reasons they could not attend, they simply tried to find some "excuse" by which they might justify themselves for refusing to attend.

The first guest's excuse was that he had just bought a field and must go see it. What business man would buy a field *before* seeing it? This man was either a liar or a fool! Furthermore, how could it be more important to go and look at a piece of ground than it could be to attend a great man's banquet? It was a deliberate choice of interest in possessions over gratitude to one's benefactor. The rich young ruler (Lk. 18:18ff.) refused the invitation of King Jesus because he had much riches. The second guest begged-off saying he had just purchased five yoke (teams) of oxen and he had to test (Gr. *dokimasai*, "examine") them. Imagine a man buying oxen he has not tested or examined! Another man who was either a fool or a liar. The first man said, "I must go . . ." the second man said, "I am going . . ." There is the element of insolence in the second man's reply to the invitation. Work was more important to the second man than the feast. Many today consider the work they do more important than feasting on the Bread of Life. The third guest sent his reply back, "I have married a wife, and I cannot come." Someone has noted that this excuse has the least validity of all because wives like to go to social affairs! Surely the householder would have known of the recent marriage and have graciously invited the wife also. It is certainly true that the kingdom of God demands first loyalty over domestic ties (cf. Mt. 10:34-39).

Excuses, not reasons, are what these guests gave. Possessions, vocations and domestic ties are not valid reasons for refusing the invitation to participate in joyous feast of the Lord. In fact, there is no valid reason at all for refusing the invitation of God.

"Yes," Jesus said to the excited man, "you admire the ideal society I have been preaching and inviting you to, but you won't answer the invitation and your excuses are foolish, impertinent, rude and unacceptable."

14:21-24 Innovation: When the servant reported to his master the three refusals the master was very angry (Gr. *orgisthels*, the word from which we have the English word, *orgasm*). The host had gone to great expense to provide this feast (God gave His priceless Son). Those first invited (the Jewish rulers and rich men) scorned the invitation and sold their birthright for a "mess of pottage." The host sent his servant out to the highways and hedges (utmost parts of the world) to "compel" the poor, maimed, blind and lame (spiritually) to come (probably the Gentiles). This host wants to be a benefactor to all who will allow him to do so.

The Greek word *anagkason* is from a root word which means "necessity." It most often means "to constrain by persuasion," (cf. Mt. 14:22; Mk. 6:45; Acts 28:19). Plummer insists the word could only mean "persuasion" in this instance since "A single servant could not use force." Those who were first invited and refused were not dragged in which would have been the case had the host meant to compel attendance by force. Christ authorizes no use of force or deceit in inviting people to His feast. Persuasion (II Cor. 5:11), the compelling power of truth, is the only valid means of inviting people to God's great spiritual feast. The Christian life is a spiritual "feast" (cf. Rom. 14:17; I Cor. 5:6-8; 10:1-5; Heb. 12:22-23; Mt. 5:6; etc.). The invitation to this spiritual feast may be accepted by anyone who is thirsty and hungry for what God has to offer. It may also be rejected. Those who refuse will never taste (experience) what God has prepared (peace, joy, holiness, forgiveness, life).

Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles (cf. Acts 13:44-52), gives the theological amplification of this parable in his great epistle to the Romans (chapters 9, 10 and 11). There he explains that the rejection of the gospel invitation by the Jews brought about the innovation of the Gentiles into God's covenant. Paul warns the Gentiles (in Romans), to whom God turned with His invitation, they must not become scornful of it or they too will be excluded.

Jesus told another parable, in the last week of His ministry, similar to this one (cf. Mt. 22:1-14). That one He concluded by saying, "For many are called but few are chosen." Many are invited, but few accept. Few are chosen because only a few are really hungry for spiritual food and are grateful enough to make the effort necessary to accept the invitation.

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

SECTION 4

Grounded (14:25-35)

25 Now great multitudes accompanied him; and he turned and said to them, ²⁶“If any one comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple. ²⁷Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me, cannot be my disciple. ²⁸For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it? ²⁹Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation, and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, ³⁰saying, ‘This man began to build, and was not able to finish.’ ³¹Or what king, going to encounter another king in war, will not sit down first and take counsel whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand? ³²And if not, while the other is yet a great way off, he sends an embassy and asks terms of peace. ³³So therefore, whoever of you does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple.

34 “Salt is good; but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? ³⁵It is fit neither for the land nor for the dunghill; men throw it away. He who has ears to hear, let him hear.”

14:25-33 Farsighted: True discipleship to Jesus must be based upon or grounded in reasoned commitment, not on superficial emotionalism. The “Jesus movement” was gaining a superficial momentum toward that “triumphal entry” into Jerusalem some three months hence. As He preached throughout Perea, Christ saw through the facade of popularity and gave this stern, uncompromising lecture, illustrating that there is no place for unreasoning, sentimental enthusiasm in His followers. This admonition of the Lord is doubly pertinent for today’s would-be follower of Jesus! There is a vast difference between today’s religious sentimentality and the real discipleship outlined in the New Testament.

The verb *strapheis* (2nd aorist participle) indicates Jesus turned *suddenly*, and threw into their ears the gauntlet of total commitment. Looking out over that sea of faces, Jesus could find very few whose minds and lives were committed to Him. It was an impulsive crowd spread around Him—they were following on feelings. He wanted thinking, intelligent, logical followers; He wanted farsighted, judicious, sober soldiers in His army, so He used clear, candid language to “sift” the multitudes and blow the “chaff” away.

No earthly love must ever come into competition with love for Christ. Entire self-renunciation is the cost of real discipleship. The Greek word *misei* (“hate”) carries the idea of *choice* or *priority*. A man must choose

Christ *over* father, mother, wife, children, brethren and self. If Christ is not absolutely *first* in a person's life, he is no disciple (cf. Mt. 10:34-39). To the worldly mentality, these are shocking and severe words. To be a disciple of Jesus men must prepare themselves to choose Him over every one of life's dearest relationships! The world does not think like this. When a choice must be made between the church and one's family, most people choose family. The Bible strongly advocates love of family so the fact that Christ insists He must have first priority emphasizes the seriousness of this injunction. The terms of Christian discipleship are awesome. There can be no higher loyalty than that which Jesus requires. This statement of Jesus strikes at the very core of the excuse of the man who said, "I have married a wife . . ." If ever there is a conflict between the highest and dearest earthly love then we must deny that and follow Him.

Jesus associated discipleship with cross-bearing. The cross was the repulsive, terrifying, certain instrument of execution in the Roman world. When a person was given a cross to bear, it was certain he was on his way to death—excruciatingly painful death. Christian discipleship means certain death to ego-centricity. It means emptying one's life of everything that is selfish. It means choosing death to self and desiring Christ's life over ours (cf. Gal. 2:20-21; II Cor. 5:14-21; Phil. 3:4-11). Taking up the cross means total commitment. It is not easy to be a Christian—Jesus never promised it would be. It involves pain, struggle, surrender and death to self-rule. It is not *just* suffering—many people suffer and glorify themselves in it. Bearing the cross is not *just* giving up bad habits—it is sacrifice of self, surrender of all supposed rights to determine what one shall think and do. This was exemplified ultimately by Jesus (Phil. 2:5-11; Jn. 12:20-33).

If Christian discipleship involves the ultimate cost (death to self) then it is imperative that it not be entered into unadvisedly, hastily or flippantly. Christian discipleship involves decisions for eternity and demands, therefore, reasonableness, honesty, humility and faith. Jesus illustrates this with two short parables. He is requiring would-be disciples to count the cost by illustrating the momentous calling of discipleship. He is building an eternal temple (the church) and fighting a life-and-death battle against the strongest of foes. Christian discipleship is no place for the half-hearted. In recruiting, Jesus seeks the few good men. He is far too wise to pride Himself in mere numbers of converts. He is more concerned with quality than quantity. He always loathed the counterfeit, the double-minded and the superficial. Jesus always accentuated the severity and sacrifice of discipleship:

- a. "Foxes have holes . . . but the Son of man has nowhere . . ." (Mt. 8:20; Lk. 9:58)
- b. "Are you able to drink the cup . . . ?" (Mt. 20:22)

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

- c. "Go sell all that you have . . ." (Mt. 19:16-22; Mk. 10:17-22; Lk. 18:18-23).

Some tend to cover up the severity of discipleship to Christ. They make out like the Christian life is easy. They try to play down everything unpleasant about it. They do deceitful and indulgent things to lure prospects. Jesus, on the other hand, went out of His way to *sift* disciples! He was brutally frank and searching in challenging would-be followers. Is it not self-defeating to continually emphasize the difficulties of following the Lord? Should we simply say nothing about the "strait and narrow" way so we may reach more? Would it not be better to get as many enlisted as possible without worrying about their commitment? Not if we are to take Jesus as our guide. It is better never to enlist a single disciple than to enlist a half-hearted one! Jesus will not have reckless, carefree, spur-of-the-moment enlistments. Christ *discouraged* half-hearted kingdom enlistments. He was *negative* about superficiality. Lukewarmness makes Christ vomit! (Rev. 3:16).

The illustration of the man desiring to build a tower would be a familiar figure for that day. The Herod family was noted for its penchant for erecting magnificent public and private buildings. Many men probably tried to imitate them and found they did not have the will nor the funds to finish. There were probably scores of unfinished "towers" scattered throughout the land. These unfinished buildings served only as monuments to the hasty, near-sighted, half-hearted efforts of foolish and emotional men.

The picture of the wise king who takes counsel of his strength before he goes to battle is also taken from the history of the times. Herod Antipas' illicit relations with Herodias caused his first wife, the daughter of Aretas, to divorce him. Aretas, a powerful Arabian king, declared war on Herod and the result was disaster for Herod. Josephus declares that Herod's entry into this war was the commencement of all his subsequent misfortunes. Any commander of troops would be the laughingstock of all his contemporaries if he entered into a battle carelessly, flippantly and expecting to retreat.

Christ wants no shallow, half-hearted builders in His kingdom leaving "unfinished towers" for the world to mock. No one has any business in His army without the will to fight and finish. The Lord's terms for discipleship are severe:

1. He is engaged in building and fighting.
2. He wants followers who will stand by Him until He is done.
3. He wants quality more than quantity.
4. Discipleship must not be undertaken in a moment of emotional sentimentality or rashly. If it is, there will be disaster.
5. No would-be follower of Jesus should "put his hand to the plow" if he is planning to look back (cf. Lk. 9:62; II Pet. 2:21-22).
6. The Christian must fight, but not as "one that beateth the air . . ." (I Cor. 9:26).

7. The Christian must "run with perseverance the race that is set before him . . ." (Heb. 12:1).

Jesus said, "So, therefore, whoever of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple." One ancient Christian wrote, "We must live in this world as though the soul was already in heaven and the body mouldering in the grave" (St. Francis de Sales). To renounce what we have does not mean to indiscriminately throw away those things over which God has placed us as stewards. It means that not one of those things or all those things put together are to have first priority in our lives. These "things" include families and friends as well as properties. Any person not willing to pay that price cannot be Christ's disciple.

14:34-35 Functional: The true disciple of Jesus is not merely a follower—he is a functioning follower. Salt that does not function is worthless. Salt is absolutely essential to life. Medical science knows that a patient continually given liquids without salt-content soon has all the salt flushed out of his body and is in danger of death by water-poisoning! Salt seasons and preserves. Disciples who have no "tang" and no "bite" and who give the world no preserving functions are worthless. What good is a mountain of granules if they are saltless? What good is a mountain of disciples if they do not function? No wonder Jesus sought quality rather than quantity. True evangelism sifts out the chaff from the wheat! It is the very nature of the gospel to sift, so do not be discouraged when few decide to enlist. You must have willing ears to hear this.

STUDY STIMULATORS:

1. Jesus accepted an invitation to dine in a Pharisee's house—would you be sociable to a hypocrite? What if one tried to trap you into a religious mistake?
2. If it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath, is it all right to work on Sunday if your job demands it?
3. If there is an opportunity to help a neighbor who is in true need could one miss church services to help?
4. Do you see any room for growth in the area of humility among Christian leaders today? Can you name some leaders who are humble?
5. Is pride really dangerous?
6. When was the last time you gave a dinner and invited the poor, lame, blind and maimed?
7. Have you ever heard excuses similar to those of the guests invited to the great feast? What were your answers to the excuses?
8. If many are invited to the feast of God, why are only a few chosen?
9. Do you know any "builders" who have left "unfinished towers"?
10. Why doesn't the church spend more time emphasizing the cost of discipleship?

CONDUCT WORTHY OF THE GOSPEL

(Philippians 1:27-30)

By Paul T. Butler — OBC Chapel, 10-23-80

INTRODUCTION

I. THE PHILIPPIAN CHRISTIANS

A. Lived in a city that had an illustrious history and a great heritage of citizenship—first in the Greek empire and later in the Roman empire.

1. About 100 years previous to Paul's letter, Mark Antony and Octavian (Augustus) fought for control of the Rome empire there.

2. Philippi had been given Roman citizenship and was proud of it.

3. Roman colonies were little bits of Rome planted throughout the world. In Roman colonies the Roman citizens never forgot that they were Romans. They spoke the Latin language, wore the Latin dress, called their magistrates by the Latin names, insisted on being stubbornly Roman, however for they might be from Rome. . . . Barclay

4. Tenney states that many retired Roman army officers lived in Philippi.

5. There was a school of medicine there. Many think Luke was a native of Philippi. There seems to be a touch of native pride when Luke calls Philippi "a city of Macedonia, the first of the district" (Acts 16:12).

6. They knew about the idea of pride in citizenship.

B. Were members of the *first* European church Paul had founded

1. This church had to endure persecution from the very beginning.

2. Paul and the Christians there were accused of subversive actions.

3. They were attacked by a mob, ordered to be beaten with many blows after which they were imprisoned and placed in stocks.

4. It was here Paul insisted on his rights as a Roman citizen and made the magistrates who imprisoned him illegally come and release him and apologize.

5. There was a very intimate relationship built up between Paul and this congregation of believers.

They supported his work financially and in prayer, often.

II. LET YOUR MANNER OF LIFE. . . .

A. The Greek word translated "conduct" or "manner of life" or "conversation" is *polietuesthe*.

1. It is a unique use of the word for Paul. He usually exhorts Christians to "walk" worthily and uses the Greek word *peripatein* which means "to walk about."

2. *Polietuesthe* is the same word from which we get the English words, politics, politicize, metropolis. It means "to be a citizen."

CONDUCT WORTHY OF THE GOSPEL

3. This terminology would ring a bell with the Philippians.
 4. Paul wants them and us to understand that Christians are citizens of a heavenly kingdom—the kingdom of God.
 5. Sometimes Christians get the feeling of being disfranchised. They cannot feel at home in this world—everything they think is opposed to it, nothing in it satisfies them, they know it is going to be destroyed. BUT THEY MUST REMEMBER THEY ARE "CITIZENS" THEY DO HAVE A CITIZENSHIP . . . THEY DO HAVE A KING.
- B. The Greek verb is in the imperative—it is a command from Paul.
1. Conduct yourself!
 2. It will not happen automatically. It takes determination, decision, and action.
 3. It is something the Christian has to consciously do.
 4. It ought to be passionate, like patriotism. Patriotism is not automatic. It is not something one just talks about—it is something demonstrated—something done.

III. BE WORTHY. . . .

- A. The Greek word is *axios*.
- B. It is the word from which we get the English word, *axiom*, *axiology*.
- C. It means literally, "value, acceptable, a standard of values."
- D. That which the Christian, the citizen of the kingdom of God, is to walk worthy of is THE GOSPEL.
1. The gospel is a heritage. It is not a religion—it is not something we attach to our worldly lives.
 2. The gospel is a life—it is a citizenship. We *belong* to it.
 3. The Pioneer of our faith, Jesus, came to earth as the Perfect Man and struggled, fought the enemy, gave Himself up to humiliation and death, but victoriously won for us the New Beulah Land. THIS IS OUR HERITAGE . . . struggle, fight, self-sacrifice and victory.
- E. Being worthy means being loyal; it means being a person of integrity, a person of conviction. It means one's conduct measures up to this heritage of the gospel.

The classic illustration of this for me is the military service. There is a great pride (or was, anyway) among America's military men in their calling. This is true of both officers and enlisted men. The oldest of the military academies, West Point and Annapolis, have tried and true traditions and codes of honor by which all cadets conduct themselves.

Those codes of honor have their power, however, in the great heritage of the academies which have produced men who have struggled, fought, died and won victories for the principles of human freedom and dignity.

I'll never forget the pride that swelled up in me as I put on my first set of dress blues in the Navy and marched to some of the stirring John Philip

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

Sousa's marches. I thought about the Yorktown, the Enterprise, Halsey, Nimitz. I was willing to give my life in that uniform, for that flag.

I challenge you this morning, that we must have an even more intense and passionate patriotism for the heritage of the Gospel. Let loyalty to your Christian citizenship swell up in you here and now and regret that you have but one life to give to Christ. Remember John the Baptist, Peter the fisherman, Paul the tentmaker; remember Gethsemane, remember Calvary, remember the empty tomb; remember Jesus!

Our text will tell us how to conduct ourselves worthy of the gospel because patriotism is something *you* do, something *I* do.

DISCUSSION

I. STAND FIRM

- A. The Greek word is *stekete*. It is present and imperative. It means to be immovable.
- B. Christians will not be moved from their citizenship in the Kingdom of God by anything, nor anyone.
 - 1. They will not be moved by circumstances.
 - 2. They will not be moved by fads or fashions or social pressures.
 - 3. They will not be moved by feelings or fleshly urges and desires.
 - 4. They will not be swayed by expediency, ease or comfort.
 - 5. They will not be moved by persecution, ridicule or slander.
- C. This does *not* mean the Christian will not grow, that he stays on one level of spiritual development all his life.
 - 1. It means he takes an immovable, unflinching, absolute stand for truth and goodness.
 - 2. Wherever he finds truth and goodness he appropriates it and makes it his—he stands for it.
 - 3. Wherever he finds evil, falsehood and wrong, he stands against it.

The early 1940's were the darkest days the citizens of England would ever know. Hitler controlled all of Europe from the borders of Russia to the coast of France. He was sending his V2 rockets (buzz-bombs) indiscriminately into English cities, killing hundreds. Britain's army had suffered the decimating defeat at Dunkirk. There was rumor that the powerful and ruthless German armies were poised to invade England.

Winston Churchill rallied his people: "We shall go on to the end . . . we shall defend our Island whatever the cost may be, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills; we shall never surrender. . . ."

Long dark months of trials and tribulations lie before us. Not only great dangers, but many more misfortunes, many shortcomings, many mistakes, many disappointments will surely be our lot. Death and sorrow will be the companions of our journey; hardship our garment; constancy and valor

CONDUCT WORTHY OF THE GOSPEL

our only shield. We must be united, we must be *undaunted*, we must be *inflexible*. . . .”

- D. The trouble with many of you—and you—I’m talking about you here, in this building, on this campus—IS THAT YOU HAVE NEVER TAKEN A STAND, INFLEXIBLY, FOR THE GOSPEL.
1. You look around you and it looks like everybody else is indulging themselves in worldliness and you don’t have the grit and courage to swim against the stream—to brace yourselves against the winds of fad and fashion.
 2. It is easier, more comfortable, more popular to vacillate . . . to drift with the majority.
- E. Why would you let someone you care for very much talk you into taking liberties with your body when you know it is wrong?
- Why would you let a “buddy” or “friend” talk you into destroying school property (really God’s property) by senseless pranks, when you know it is wrong?
- Why would you skip the chapel worship service or sleep in on Sunday morning, or waste money on trivialities and not pay your school debt?

WHY? BECAUSE YOU HAVE NOT TAKEN AN INFLEXIBLE, UNBENDING, UNYIELDING STAND FOR THE TRUTH . . . FOR WHAT IS RIGHT . . . FOR THE GOSPEL!

- F. And why haven’t we taken an unyielding stand for what is right? BECAUSE WE VALUE POPULARITY OR OUR OWN COMFORT MORE WORTHY THAN OUR SPIRITUAL HERITAGE . . . OUR HEAVENLY CITIZENSHIP.

Some of you have been lulled into complacency thinking that because you came from a Christian family and are now in Bible College your being a Christian is inevitable. DON’T BELIEVE IT!

YOU MUST TAKE A STAND ALL BY YOURSELF. IT IS YOUR FIGHT, YOUR STRUGGLE, YOUR PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY.

Being a Christian doesn’t just happen to you.

Albert Barnes (of Barnes Commentaries) wrote: “A man who has been redeemed by the Blood of the Son of God should be pure. He who is attended by celestial beings, and is soon—he knows not how soon—to be translated into Heaven, should be holy. Are angels my attendants? Then I should walk worthy of my companions. Am I soon to go and dwell with angels? Then I should be pure. Are these feet soon to tread the courts of Heaven? Is my tongue soon to unite with holy beings in praising God? Are these eyes soon to look on the throne of eternal glory, and the ascended Redeemer? Then these feet and eyes and lips should be pure and holy, and I should be dead to the world and live for Heaven.”

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

It is said that when Napoleon's army was invading Russia his soldiers came to a village from which all the inhabitants had fled except one man. He was a Russian peasant, a woodsman, and still carried his ax in his leather belt. When the French captain saw him he ordered that he be shot immediately. The French soldiers leveled their guns at his head but he did not flinch. The captain was frustrated by this old man's courage.

Telling his soldiers to lower their guns, he said, "We will spare his life, but we will put a mark on him—we will brand him." So his soldiers brought a branding iron, got it red hot, and placed it on his hand. The man saw and felt his own flesh burn, but still he did not flinch. When the branding iron was removed the peasant saw the letter "N" branded on his palm. "What is that?" he asked. "This is the letter 'N' and it stands for Napoleon; you belong to Napoleon now," replied the captain.

For a moment the old man did not know what to do or say. His pain was intense, but his loyalty and patriotism was even more passionate, so he placed his burned hand on something solid, and as the soldiers were laughing and jeering at him, he took his ax from his belt with his other hand and brought it swiftly and forcefully down and severed his branded hand at the wrist.

"There," he said to the soldiers, "the hand may belong to Napoleon, but I am a Russian." "If I must die, I will die a Russian."

NOW THAT IS PRETTY SEVERE, YOU SAY. THAT'S A GOOD ILLUSTRATION, BUT WOULD JESUS ASK US TO DO ANYTHING LIKE THAT?

"If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and throw it away. . . . And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away; it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body go into hell" (Mt. 5:29-30). WHO DO YOU THINK SAID THAT? TO WHOM DID HE SAY IT?

JESUS IS SERIOUS ABOUT THIS MATTER OF TAKING A STAND . . . INFLEXIBLE, UNYIELDING STAND.

Paul wrote to the Christians at Colossae that they were reconciled to God by Christ's death, "provided they continued in the faith, *stable* and *steadfast*, not shifting from the hope of the gospel which they had heard . . ." (Col. 1:22-23).

STAND . . . STAND FOR THE GOSPEL . . . DON'T BEND, DON'T YIELD, DON'T BE MOVED. DO IT TODAY! DO IT EVERY DAY! IT MUST BE DONE EVERY DAY. THERE ARE NO VACATIONS FROM STANDING . . . NO "R & R" . . . IT DOESN'T GET EASIER AS YOU GET OLDER! NOW IS THE TIME TO SAY, "I AM DETERMINED, I'VE MADE UP MY MIND. . . ." EVERY TIME YOU HEDGE, EVERY TIME YOU COMPROMISE, EVERY TIME YOU BEND IT BECOMES EASIER TO DO SO! STABILITY AND STEADFASTNESS ARE THE MARKS OF TRUE SPIRITUALITY!

CONDUCT WORTHY OF THE GOSPEL

II. STRIVING SIDE BY SIDE

A. The Greek word is *sunathlountes*. From it we get the English word, *athletics*, *athlete*. It was used of those who contended in the Greek olympic games.

B. Striving in athletic contests demands:

1. Self discipline, forcing oneself to give up any hindrance to the contest.
2. Training, practice, repetition, until excellence is achieved (which is never).
3. Expending energy, working, sweating.
4. Concentration of the mind, thinking, alertness.
5. The will to win.

C. You all know that. We don't really have trouble around here getting people to play games—to strive in contests of physical prowess; they run, jump, kick, tackle, throw things, hit things, shoot things, yell, shout and scream.

THEY DO IT IN AN ORGANIZED WAY, UNORGANIZED WAYS AND AND UNGODLY WAYS.

THEY DO IT FOR CLOTH LETTERS, METAL TROPHIES, AND THE UNGODLY ATHLETICS OR ANTICS ARE ENGAGED IN FOR THE FALSE JOY OF SELF-INDULGENCE AND REBELLION.

D. Paul wanted the Christians at Philippi to strive together for their spiritual prize, their spiritual heritage with the same intensity athletes strive for the glory of their country in the Olympics, or for the glory of their college alma mater.

1. That is what Christ wants for you here too.

2. When you are assigned a research paper, do you strive or sluff-off? Do you force yourselves to do hours of research in the library, to write and rewrite until excellence is achieved, concentrate, sweat, think, work?

WHY NOT? YOU DO WHEN YOU PLAY BALL, WHEN YOU ROUGH-HOUSE WHERE YOU SHOULDN'T!

3. When someone asks you to help at missions emphasis, or ambassadors or survey calling or rest-home visiting, do you force yourself, give up comforts, work, run, jump, yell and shout? WHY NOT?

JUST HOW MUCH IS THE GOSPEL WORTH TO YOU? HOW MUCH DOES IT MEAN TO YOU TO STRIVE FOR YOUR HEAVENLY COUNTRY. . . . TO WIN FOR YOUR KING?

E. Paul probably meant striving to face the enemies of the Philippians who were without.

1. But the enemy (the devil) without has a willing tool that is within us, SELF.

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

2. We've got to strive with the enemy within us mightily—SELF MUST BE FOUGHT, SELF MUST BE BROUGHT UNDER THE SOVEREIGNTY OF CHRIST'S SPIRIT.
3. Have you ever been to boot-camp in the Marines or the Navy? A lot of you need it! Talk about striving, side by side. Reville at 5:30 a.m.; each person has 5 minutes to shower shave and get dressed; march in formation to breakfast; return to the barracks in formation; 5 minutes to get inside, get your pack and piece and fall out in formation; then it is close-order drill, rifle range, obstacle course, close-order drill, etc., etc. until you fall exhausted in your bunk and lights out at 10.

Why such agony, such torture, such striving? Because SELF must be whipped, self-control is an absolute must. Because when a marine is on the front lines, facing the enemy without, there is no way he can win if he has not striven with and conquered the enemy within!

- F. The Christian life and the Christian ministry is no pleasure cruise. We are not here sailing along on the Love Boat—this is not Fantasy Island.

1. There is no place in the Christian struggle for the flippant and the blase!
2. There was nothing blase about Paul's struggle!
3. Listen to this:
 - a. 5 times 40 lashes
 - b. 3 times beaten with rods
 - c. once stoned
 - d. 3 times shipwrecked; a night and a day adrift at sea
 - e. danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from his own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brethren
 - f. in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night
 - g. in hunger and thirst, often without food
 - h. in cold and exposure
 - i. daily pressure and anxiety for all the churches

PAUL HAD NO OCCASION TO BE BLASE . . . HE WAS CONSTANTLY STRIVING WITH THE ENEMY WITHIN . . . He fought and fought, conquered, and then strained more, Phil. 3:7-16.

- G. What is your citizenship in the kingdom of God worth? Have you any sense of honor about being called into the army of Christ?
1. Is it worth striving against the profane, irreligious and immoral worldliness of a brother?
 2. Is it worth going against a father when he is wrong?
 3. Is it worth having to flee from your home?
 4. Is it worth suffering exploitation and injustice and ridicule?

CONDUCT WORTHY OF THE GOSPEL

5. Is it worth working hard and honestly for?
6. Is it worth being a "pilgrim" in this world?
7. Is it worth going to a foreign country and dying there?

THAT IS WHAT IT WAS WORTH TO JACOB. God said: "Your name shall no more be called Jacob, but Israel (prince of God) for you have striven with God and with men, and have prevailed" (Gen. 32:28).

WE HAVE TOO MANY DON QUIXOTES IN THE KINGDOM, PLAY-PRE-TENDING, JOUSTING WITH WINDMILLS. They never get down to the hard realities of everyday striving with the real battles of lust, dishonesty, laziness, rebelliousness, greed, envy. They're out knocking down the imaginary enemies.

- H. Who are we to think we can enter into that rest without striving when it was our Master who, for the joy that was set before Him, endured the cross, who with loud crying and tears experienced obedience through the things He suffered. Nothing blase about Gethsemane!

This same Paul, in prison later (after this), facing the end of his race, wrote to his young Timothy, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved his appearing . . ." (II Tim. 4:6ff.).

SO I SAY TO YOU THIS MORNING, STRIVE, STRIVE WITH YOURSELF AND BRING SELF INTO SUBJECTION TO THE SPIRIT AND WORD OF CHRIST . . . STRIVE SIDE BY SIDE AGAINST THE ENEMY, THE DEVIL AND HIS TOOLS . . . AND WHEN YOUR RACE IS OVER, YOU TOO WILL RECEIVE YOUR CROWN!

III. NOT FRIGHTENED IN ANYTHING BY YOUR OPPONENTS

- A. The enemy cannot shame you or enslave you, or make you less than you are.

1. You are the citizen of an unshakable kingdom.

Babylon fell, the glory of Greece is gone, Rome remains only in legend and crumbling ruins. Someday the glory that is America will disappear.

BUT NOT SO WITH YOUR KINGDOM, YOUR CITIZENSHIP . . . IT IS FOREVER YOUR KING CONQUERED DEATH, HERE, IN HISTORY, TO PROVE IT!

2. You are exalted to joint-heirship with Christ. You are royalty. No matter that now you must wear the tatters and rags of finite flesh—some day you shall wear the star-studded, celestial robes fitted for you from the heavenly closets!
3. One of the great temptations that has caused so much desertion among the ranks of God's soldiers (ministers of the gospel) today is male mid-life crisis.

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

- a. There is an interesting parallel to this in a story I once read in *Readers Digest*, August 1978, "Portrait of a Traitor."
 - b. Brig. Gen. Jean-Louis Jeanmaire, a man who had outwardly personified the honor of Switzerland and the devotion of its citizen army, was arrested and discovered to be the worst traitor in the history of Switzerland.
 - c. His treason is traced in the article mainly to the fact that in his later years he had been transferred from the infantry to the civil-defense forces. His self-image suffered. He always envisioned himself as a combat officer who would lead his men against invading hordes. Now he felt that his career was floundering and the possibility of fulfilling his boyhood dreams was fading.
 4. Your opponents, the devil and his ambassadors, will try to ridicule, slander, and deceive you and destroy your Christian honor.
 - a. This is what the Viet Cong tried to do to our POWs. Read again that Book Section of *Reader's Digest*, June 1976, on the POW.

The way the POWs survived was to hold fast to their belief in who they were and the truth of what they had been fighting for.
 - b. The devil attacked Adam and Eve at this vulnerable point—self-image. If you will take the forbidden fruit you will be gods for as a believer you are less than you can be! A LIE!
 - c. The devil attacked Jesus at this point—self-image, If you are the Son of God. . . .
 5. Remember who you are. You are royalty. You are beautiful in God's eyes. You are eternally young and alive in God's eyes. WHY DO YOU HAVE TO LISTEN TO THE DEVIL AND HIS HENCHMEN SEDUCING YOU INTO BELIEVING YOU HAVE TO SIN TO RETAIN YOUR BEAUTY OR YOUR LIFE! AS A BELIEVER YOU ARE EVERYTHING GOD MADE YOU TO BE!
- B. The enemy cannot rob you of your heavenly inheritance.
1. Moth and rust cannot consume it.
 2. Thieves cannot break through and steal it.
 3. You have an inheritance which is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept for you in heaven. . . . and you are guarded through faith until you receive it (I Pet. 1:4).
 4. Think of the tragic compromises some have made because they have let the enemy frighten them into thinking the only riches, or the only pleasures, or the only fame is IN THIS WORLD!
 5. Esau despised the spiritual birthright which was unseen, for a bowl of bean soup which he could have right then.

CONDUCT WORTHY OF THE GOSPEL

6. This slight momentary affliction of having to stand and strive and be courageous is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison . . . (II Cor. 4:17).

THINK OF THAT . . . BEYOND ALL COMPARISON. THERE IS NOTHING IN THIS WORLD OF RICHES, ROYALTY, PLEASURE, HONOR, SATISFACTION WITH WHICH TO COMPARE YOUR INHERITANCE!

Don't let the enemy scare you into believing there is!

7. The enemy says, "If God has such great things for you, why doesn't He give them to you now . . . because He doesn't have them for you. . . . You'd better get what you can of riches, pleasure and power now. . . ." You only go around once!
8. But God, if He did not spare His own Son for you, will certainly come through on the promise of your inheritance (Rom. 8:31ff.).
9. God has already given you a down payment on your inheritance in the Holy Spirit dwelling in your heart, guiding you into the joys of spirituality through His Word, the Bible.

C. The enemy cannot destroy you.

1. In II Kings 6:11ff. the king of Syria sent his army to surround the city where Elisha was and take the prophet captive. When the Syrian army surrounded the city the servant of the prophet arose early in the morning and began to be afraid.

Elisha said, "Fear not, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them." And the Lord opened the servant's eyes and he saw the mountain full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha from the Lord.

2. In Revelation 13 people of the Roman empire worshiped the "beast" (Roman emperor), saying, "Who is like the beast, and who can fight against it?" THE BEAST IS INVINCIBLE, THEY SAID.

But John wrote, ". . . the beast . . . is human . . . its number is 666." THE BEAST IS NOT INVINCIBLE. ROME FELL, AND THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST LIVED ON!

3. The enemy, using the fear of death, kept most of the world of mankind in slavish bondage to sin, but Jesus came and destroyed that power.

The enemy tried to destroy Jesus, but Jesus rose victorious, having defeated the worst the enemy could do.

4. The enemy has tried to obliterate the written word of God and cannot even do that, because it is in the hearts of believers generation after generation and will always be.

The enemy has tried to kill the church but he cannot do that. It has survived every stratagem, persecution, false doctrine, materialism.

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

5. John's vision in Revelation saw the church Rome tried to destroy as an innumerable multitude of individuals out of every tribe and tongue and nation, alive, worshipping God around His throne.

The great Admiral Nelson of the long-ago British Fleet was about to engage the enemy at the battle of Trafalgar. He dressed himself in his full uniform and placed all the medals and orders that he had won upon his breast.

His officers remonstrated with him, saying he should take off his decorations, or at least cover them with a handkerchief, as otherwise he would become a prime target for the enemy's musketry.

But the gallant Admiral would have none of their advice: "I won these distinctions in the face of the enemy," he said, "and I shall wear them in the face of the enemy."

YOU HAVE PUT ON CHRIST, YOU ARE A PRIME TARGET OF THE ENEMY. BUT DO NOT BE FRIGHTENED IN ANYTHING BY HIM AND HIS MINIONS. . . . SO LONG AS YOU WEAR THE CHRISTIAN ARMOR, HE CANNOT HARM YOU, MAKE YOU LESS THAN YOU ARE, ROB YOU OR DESTROY YOU!

CONCLUSION

I would like to discuss the rest of this text in this sermon, but time does not permit.

I close with this story: May 12, 1962, a great old American soldier is speaking some of the last words he will say to an Academy filled with young men preparing to become officers and future leaders of the Army of the USA:

"Duty—Honor—Country. Those three hallowed words reverently dictate what you ought to be, what you can be, what you will be. . . . The unbelievers will say they are but words, but a slogan, but a flamboyant phrase. . . . But these are some of the things they do. They build your basic character; . . . they make you strong enough to know when you are weak, and brave enough to face yourself when you are afraid. They teach you to be proud and unbending in honest failure, but humble and gentle in success, not to substitute words for actions, not to seek the path of comfort, but to face the stress and spur of difficulty and challenge; to learn to stand up in the storm but to have compassion on those who fail; to master yourself before you seek to master others; to have a heart that is clean, a goal that is high; to learn to laugh yet never forget how to weep; to reach into the future yet never neglect the past; to be serious yet never to take yourself too seriously; to be modest so that you will remember the simplicity of true greatness, the open mind of true wisdom, the meekness of true strength.

CONDUCT WORTHY OF THE GOSPEL

The shadows are lengthening for me. The twilight is here. My days of old have vanished tone and tint; they have gone glimmering through the dreams of things that were. Their memory is one of wondrous beauty, watered by tears, and coaxed and caressed by the smiles of yesterday. . . . But in the evening of my memory, always I come back to West Point. Always there echoes and re-echoes in my ears—Duty—Honor—Country. . . .”

Douglas MacArthur, at his last roll call at the Point. He died two years later.

If we filled the stage this morning with old soldiers of the gospel, they would say to you:

Down through the years of your ministry may your memory always come back to God's Word and may this truth echo and re-echo in your heart. . . . Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ. . . . **STAND FIRM. . . . STRIVE SIDE BY SIDE. . . . AND DO NOT BE FRIGHTENED IN ANYTHING BY YOUR OPPONENTS. . . .**

Chapter Fifteen (15:1-32)

THE SON OF MAN SEEKING THE LOST

IDEAS TO INVESTIGATE:

1. If Jesus received sinners, should the church (15:1-2)?
2. How can heaven rejoice over one sinner more than over ninety-nine who need no repentance (15:7)?
3. Why do angels, who have never known what it is to be lost, rejoice over saved sinners (15:10)?
4. How could a man "come to himself" (15:17)?
5. Why did the father say his prodigal son was "dead" (15:24)?
6. Why would the elder son refuse to go in and enjoy the return of his brother (15:28)?
7. Had the elder son *never* disobeyed the father's commands (15:29)?

SECTION 1

Lost Sheep (15:1-7)

15 Now the tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to hear him. ²And the Pharisees and the scribes murmured, saying, "This man receives sinners and eats with them."

³ So he told them this parable: "What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness, and go after the one which is lost, until he finds it? ⁴And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. ⁵And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbors, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost.' ⁶Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance."

15:1-4 Rescue: Jesus had left the home of the Pharisees where He had been a guest at dinner (Lk. 14:1-24) and journeyed on through Perea. Great multitudes accompanied him (Lk. 14:25). Many publicans and "sinners" joined the crowds to hear Him teach about the kingdom of God. His words were so different from those of most religious teachers of that day. He

taught that God was gracious and forgiving to those who would repent and believe His word. The compassion Jesus exhibited in His deeds was electrifying in comparison with the hypocrisy and unloving attitudes of the Pharisees and rulers of the Jews.

We do not know exactly where the following parables were spoken nor exactly when, but He was somewhere in Perea and it was sometime in the winter (probably February) of A.D. 30. After these parables of chapter 15, He went on to teach more parables to the same crowds and in the same general area. His trip to Bethany and Ephraim (Jn. 11) should be inserted immediately between Luke 17:10 and 17:11. No doubt the multitudes were dwindling as a result of the stern and severe admonitions about the cost of discipleship. But His glorious descriptions of the ideal society where everyone is humble, loving and committed to God attracted those whom the self-righteous and proud had declared "outcasts." Jesus offered a kingdom where penitent publicans and sinners would be welcomed as citizens with all other penitents on an equal basis.

Jesus had long ago established Himself as a friend of publicans and sinners (cf. Lk. 7:29, 34, 37). He had even called a publican to be one of His apostles (Mt. 9:9-13; Mk. 2:14-17; Lk. 5:27-32). These Pharisees contemptuously refused to use Jesus' name when they said, "This fellow (Gr. *hoti houtos*) receives sinners and eats with publicans." The Greek word *prosdechetai* is translated "receives" but means, more emphatically, "allows them access to Himself—gives them welcome." He not only welcomed them, He ate with them. He accepted formal invitations from Levi and Zacchaeus and took His meals with other "sinners" when He was teaching out of doors. These Pharisees were correct in their statement but they were saying this to destroy Jesus' reputation and His ministry. They were insinuating that because He received sinners and ate with them He was a sinner also.

To stop their slanderous and malicious cavilling Jesus told three simple stories in one parable which contained irrefutable truth and logic. Each story is an illustration of the main subject of the one parable—God sent His Son to seek and save the lost. Actually, there are four parables in one. The "Elder Son" is a parable in its own right. All these stories answer the accusation that Jesus "receives sinners" with a passionate and resounding, "Yes!" The theme of the entire parabolic discourse is The Grace of God. The grace of God is what the publicans and sinners were seeking. The grace of Christ is what the Pharisees criticized and rejected. Publicans and sinners know they are lost; Pharisees are too proud and self-righteous to acknowledge they are lost. The Greek word *apollumi* in the active voice means, "to destroy, to kill," (Mt. 10:28; Mk. 1:24; 9:22); in the middle voice it means, "to perish," (Mt. 8:25; Jn. 3:16). Someone has said, "A man is lost when

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

he cannot define his present or plan his future." Millions of human beings are lost today in the black night of guilt, fear and anxiety or in the jungles of passion, hatred and vengeance. These gracious words of Jesus are as relevant for today's sinners lost in the vast confusion of our age as they were for sinners of the first century.

The Lord's first parable is of the lost sheep. The figure of "lost sheep" was a familiar figure to Jewish people. The Old Testament is replete with such usage (cf. *Psa.* 119:176; 23:1ff.; *Ezek.* 34:1ff.; *Zech.* 11:16-17; *Isa.* 40:11). There is much quoted passage from Isaiah "All we like sheep have gone astray . . ." (*Isa.* 53:6). Sheep are rather dumb and helpless animals. They "nibble" themselves lost. Drawn by first one clump of grass, and then another, the animal just keeps on following the grass without looking up. Finally when he does look up, he finds himself in a canyon far away from the shepherd and with night coming on. The sheep is *lost*! He just kept on "nibbling" unaware he was becoming lost. He didn't even realize he was straying from the shepherd. What happens to sheep, happens to people. Few sheep or men ever start out to get lost. Becoming lost is usually something that happens almost imperceptively. Getting lost is almost always the result of "nibbling" farther and farther away from the shepherd and the flock. One little morsel of sin, then another, and another, until suddenly it is night and man is lost in the canyons of guilt, fear, rebellion and wastedness.

"Lost" is not a word most people would use to describe their condition. Many men even prefer to think of themselves as sinners rather than lost. There is a certain glamour or levity to the term "sinner." But when men are told they are "lost" it means they are misdirected, wasted, useless and no one wants to own up to that! No man likes to confess he is *lost*. It is unmanly, humiliating, and a man will do almost anything to prove that he is not a poor lost child. Most men are like the Indian chief who says, "Indian not lost—*wigwam* lost!" But God knows, and so do we, we are lost. The young German soldier in "All's Quiet On The Western Front" turns away from the chaos and carnage of the battlefield, so symbolic of the confusion of his generation, and says, "I . . . I think we are lost!"

The logic of Jesus' presentation is undeniable. Everyone in His audience would admit they would leave ninety-nine and go after one lost sheep until they find it. Everyone leaves everything to look for so little a thing as a pin, or a key. Now what would you do if you were a father and one of your children was lost? What could be more expected than for God to look for lost men who look for lost pins and keys? It is tragic but true that while men will look for lost pins and keys, they often will not look for lost men. But God is not like men—He took upon Himself the servant-robe-of-flesh and descended into this dark and dangerous canyon of wickedness to find His lost men and women. God cares and will not quit as long as there is opportunity to rescue the lost.

15:5-7 Rejoicing: God is not satisfied with just ninety-nine—He wants every one. God is not willing that any should perish, but wants all people to come to repentance and salvation (II Pet. 3:9). Love cannot rest until that last one is at least searched for, and, hopefully safe. The great heart of God would have sent His Son to this world if there had been only one to be saved (cf. Jonah 4:11; Acts 17:30; 18:10).

When the shepherd found the lost sheep he did not berate the sheep for getting lost; he did not kick or strike the sheep. He gave it a seat of honor—a ride of glory—he put it on his shoulders and helped it back to the flock. Henceforth the shepherd would use his rod and staff to protect, to chasten and guide the errant sheep from straying again.

The shepherd was overcome with joy at finding his lost sheep. He rejoices all the way home and upon arriving there calls all his neighbors and friends to celebrate with him. This is the way men are. They feel compelled to share joys. It is human nature that the finding of something lost gives much more joy than the possession of things that are safe. Men rejoice more in recovery from sickness than they do in daily health. How much more intense and infinite is the joy of Heaven's King over the recovery of the lost!

The ninety-nine "righteous persons who need no repentance" probably refers to the self-righteous Pharisees or others who *thought* they needed no repentance. There are no human beings without the need of repentance! Barnes thinks the ninety-nine are angels: "They know of how much value is an immortal soul. They see what is meant by eternal death; and they do not feel too much, or have too much anxiety about the soul (angel's) that can never die." We believe Jesus meant the Pharisees for they were the ones who murmured against the Lord's associations with "publicans and sinners." Jesus places in sharp contrast the value Pharisees place on publicans and sinners and that of God!

SECTION 2

Lost Silver (15:8-10)

8 "Or what woman, having ten silver coins, if she loses one coin, does not light a lamp and sweep the house and seek diligently until she finds it? ⁹And when she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbors, saying, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin which I had lost.' ¹⁰Just so, I tell you, there is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents."

15:8-9a Rescue: The coins the woman had were, in Greek, *drachmas*. They are, in the LXX, equivalent to the Hebrew *bega'* or "half-shekel." The half-shekel was equivalent to the Roman "denarius." The coin was worth about 16 cents American today—but then worth a day's wages.

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

Hebrew women usually wore coin "frontlets," called *semedi*, as part of their dowry and thus a sign they were married. These coins were a daughter's "inheritance" from her father to take and share with her husband as they formed a new family unit. These coins had sentimental, financial and status-symbol value.

This parable pictures the *intensity* of God's interest in finding the lost. The woman is totally absorbed in finding the lost coin. All other pursuits become secondary to finding it. Searching for it cannot wait until morning—she lights a lamp and makes the dust fly until she finds it. A casual, superficial one-time search will not do. No distraction is strong enough to divert her. Diligently, doggedly, passionately she searches everywhere! Will God give up any one of His children for lost with any less determination and feeling? Shall we?

All three of the parables in this chapter cry out—ONE! We decide ourselves into thinking that size, more and bigger is always better. We are constantly bombarded with the propaganda that God will be impressed with mass—with sheer numbers. We cannot get a god-of-quantity out of our heads. Of course, God loves all men and wants all men to be saved. We tend to think of God more as the Creator of the millions of constellations and universe and generations upon generations of men and forget that He cares as intensely for "little ol' me" as the woman did for her one coin. Our God is infinitely careful for each snowflake—making each one different. God is personally, passionately and emotionally searching for one lost person at a time—no matter how unknown or how long they have been lost. The church must turn the world upside down searching for each lost person.

15:9b-10 Rejoice: These parables show us a God quite different from that of the philosophers and theologians. The God of these parables is a God who hurts when one of His is lost and knows how to be happy when one of His is recovered. Men are thrilled when they find a lost coin, but imagine how ecstatically happy God is when one of His, for whom He made this whole creation, for whom His Son died, is found and returned to His society of precious ones. When we see God we shall see Him as He is—these parables state unequivocally that we shall see Him expressing His joy. When one lost sinner is recovered the news flashes across Heaven and anthems of praise and joy are shouted. This is the only news Heaven is interested in. When men and women are baptized into Christ, Heaven does not say, "Ho hum" but "Hallelujah!" Heaven is soul-centered. Evangelism is the business which occupies and satisfies all who love God.

SECTION 3

Lost Prodigal Son (15:11-24)

11 And he said, "There was a man who had two sons; ¹²and the younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of property

that falls to me.' And he divided his living between them. ¹³Not many days later, the younger son gathered all he had and took his journey into a far country, and there he squandered his property in loose living. ¹⁴And when he had spent everything, a great famine arose in that country, and he began to be in want. ¹⁵So he went and joined himself to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed swine. ¹⁶And he would gladly have fed on the pods that the swine ate; and no one gave him anything. ¹⁷But when he came to himself he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have bread enough and to spare, but I perish here with hunger! ¹⁸I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; ¹⁹I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me as one of your hired servants."' ²⁰And he arose and came to his father. But while he was yet at a distance, his father saw him and had compassion and ran and embraced him and kissed him. ²¹And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' ²²But the father said to his servants, 'Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet; ²³and bring the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and make merry; ²⁴for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.' And they began to make merry.

15:11-16 Roaming: This parable has never lost its grandeur or poignancy in two thousand years of reading and telling. It is still as relevant as the day it was told. It is still provoking, puzzling and its ending as shocking and unbelievably wonderful as it was to those who heard it in the beginning. One commentator said, "It is the most divinely tender and most humanly touching story ever told on earth." Charles Dickens said: "It is the finest short story ever written." In 21 action packed verses the reader learns the profound secret of the kingdom of God—*grace*! Of all the things Jesus said, this parable alone gives the clearest insight into the very heart of God. Most often it is called, "The Parable of the Prodigal Son"; sometimes it is called "The Parable of the Perfect Father." As a matter of fact, the "Father" (God) is the hero of the story. "A certain man" (God) and his response to his two sons is what the parable is all about. The primary lesson of the parable is to show the difference between God's attitude toward sinners and that of the Pharisees (the elder brother).

It is undoubtedly intentional that Jesus said this "certain man" had only two sons. Two sons—prodigal ("sinner") and petulant (Pharisee)—that is all the sons God has (except His Perfect Son). All mankind falls into one category or the other—those who openly rebel and admit they are sinners, and those who try to pretend they are not. You and I were either prodigal or Pharisee—there is no other breed of man outside the grace of God.

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

The younger son had been daydreaming, probably, of all the excitement and happiness he could have if only he could take what his father would pass on to him and spend it in some far off, exotic land. So he went to his father and demanded, "Give me . . ." The Greek word *dos* is (2 pers. sing. aor. 2) imperative for *didomi*, which means literally, an order or a command, "Give me . . ." Impertinent, impatient and impudent he orders his father, "Gimme . . ." According to Deut. 21:17, the eldest son was to get two-thirds of a man's estate and the younger son one-third when the man decided it was time to divide his property among his heirs. This son did not ask, did not suggest, did not beg—he did not seek his father's wishes at all. The prodigal-minded son was so obsessed with his own independence and craving for excitement he did not even think to ask what he might give his father. He was not concerned at all about his father's feelings and desires. "Give me . . ." to do with as I please are the impertinent theme words of every prodigal, fallen son of man.

It is important to note in v. 12 the father divided his livelihood (Gr. *bios*) between *them*—the elder son got his share too (later he will complain he was discriminated against). God feeds and clothes all His sons; He makes His rain to fall on the just and unjust alike; He gives rain and fruitful seasons from heaven on believer and pagan alike. It is what each does with his Father's benevolence that matters.

The father graciously and wisely let the son have his freedom. He undoubtedly knew what the lad intended to do. The father knew he could not force the boy to be a son. A son in rebellion, forced against his will, is a son in rebellion still! God knew from the very start, in Eden, He could not force Adam to be a son. He knew He must take the risk of giving man his free will if He was to have a son at all. The father could have made him stay home, say "Yes" to everything and the father could have smothered the son—possessed him body and soul—but that would have robbed the boy of his personhood. The Father gave the boy his freedom to be wrong in order that the boy might be able to be right some day, independently and lovingly—not slavishly.

The younger son gathered (Gr. *sunagón*) or collected all his father gave him. If he had been given flocks or grain he sold them and converted them into money. He then departed and traveled to a "far country." There is a certain pseudo sense of power in breaking loose from parental supervision and provision. Boys become intoxicated with the idea of independence. Many of them lose all sense of propriety and reality when they first taste it. This lad, going far, went too far. He scattered (Gr. *dieskorpisen*, see the same word translated "scatters" in Mt. 12:30) his property in riotous living. The Greek word *asotos* is translated "riotous" but literally means, "without saving." He literally *squandered* all he had. He spent everything he had. He had left nothing behind at home because he had no plans to return there.

He believed he was sufficient unto himself. Without guidance, and undisciplined himself, he fell in with a crowd of profligate parasites. His life became a whirl of self-indulgence, careless wastefulness, and perversion of every good thing passed on to him by his father.

A great famine arose in that "far off country." In a society so decadent as one where few take thought for saving anything and where harlotry is rampant (cf. v. 30), famine may naturally be the consequence of such luxury, indolence and dissipation. The lad had "frittered" away every coin he had. He apparently had many "friends" so long as he had money to spend. But then one day he was destitute—and alone. His parasitic fellow-sinners left him "in want."

"Going, he glued himself to one of the citizens . . ." That is the way the Greek reads. He did not, could not, wait around for a job-offer. He went out to find some way to live. He latched on (Gr. *ekollethe*, "glued") to one of the locals. The citizen gave him a job of feeding swine—but he was given hardly anything at all fit to eat. To tend hogs was an abomination to a Jew and Jesus paints the most degraded condition possible here. To be compelled to do so was even more humiliating to a young man who had just recently been feeling so powerful and self-sufficient in his freedom from home. The "good times" were gone, but he probably kept telling himself at first how much better it was than being under a father's thumb. Very soon, however, he began to realize how bad things really were. He would gladly have fed on the pods that the swine ate, but he was not allowed to do so. The Greek word *keration* is mistranslated "husks" in some versions. Actually the word means, "little horn" and is describing carob-pods, the fruit of a tree called *carob* or *kharub*, common in Asia Minor and Syria. These pods are somewhat like the common garden-variety green-bean—not nearly as wholesome or tasty. They are still used in the Middle East as food for swine. What this boy had to eat was so scarce and so unpleasant, he wanted to eat what he was feeding the hogs but he was not at liberty to do so.

In his bull-headed attempt to get away from what he thought was a prison at home, he took himself prisoner. His "friends" turned out to be his enemies. Starving, degraded and depraved, he was still crying out, "Gimme . . ." but he could no longer have what he wanted. Now he must take what others wish to give him—which is really nothing at all.

15:17-20a Repentance: The need for repentance and its definition—a change of mind—was discussed in chapter 13. The parable of the prodigal son is a classic illustration of repentance in action.

The prodigal "came to himself." The Greek literally reads, "But to himself coming. . . ." The emphasis is on "himself." He had not only been away from his father, he had been away from himself. He had not been his right self. In sin, no man is in his right mind. All sin is a form of insanity (cf. I Cor. 15:34, RSV, "Come to your right mind and sin no more . . .").

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

God did not make man for sin. Man is not for himself when he is sinning—man is choosing against himself and some personality other than his right one when he rebels against God. The prodigal's realization did not come like a bolt out of the blue. Note, “. . . *coming* to himself . . .” indicates it took a while for him to wake up. It takes a while for most men to repent—some never do.

He remembered what he knew of fellowship with the father and compared that with what he was then experiencing in rebellion and decided the father's house was to be desired no matter what sacrifices he might have to make. Coming “to the end of his rope” was his salvation. Suffering the consequences of his rebellion was the necessary prelude to his repentance. If God did not allow us to “suffer in our persons the due penalty of our errors” (Rom. 1:27), many more of us would go to hell. One writer has said: “Heaven builds its hopes on the defeat of man's ego.” No man can be saved until he admits he is lost. No man can be saved until he admits no one else can help him but God.

The prodigal decided to get up and go to his father and confess his sin. He did not say, “It was my father's fault—he should not have been so strict—if he will come to me I will go back with him.” The lad did not blame his downfall on his father, on his elder brother or on evil companions. He honestly accepted the responsibility himself. Many people regret the consequences of their sin and are sorry they have to suffer them, but they are not honest enough to admit they are responsible. Most people have a tendency to blame the consequences of their sin on someone else. Most people feel they must retain their own pride and dignity even at the cost of self-honesty. But this rebellious child knew what he was, admitted what he was and decided he could honestly blame no one else or claim any goodness of his own at all. He knew he could make no claim of relationship as son to the father at all. He will beg only for a hired servant's lot. He knew his father well enough to know that even a servant's lot with him was paradise compared to the hog-pen of the far country. So we see the subjective elements of repentance: (a) deep inner struggle with oneself; (b) rational evaluation of the consequences of one's sins compared with what one knows about God; (c) honest, humble admission of responsibility for sinful choices and actions; (d) confidence that the father will forgive and accept repentance; (e) poverty of spirit that will claim no merit or goodness of his own.

One last thing remains—to get up and go! “And he arose and came to his father.” Driven by his need and drawn by his hope that the father will receive him, he exercises his will and his body to perform the overt action of returning to the father's house. Repentance is a change of mind and attitude which must result in action. The penitent son took with him words of confession and a heart of obedience (cf. Hosea 14:1-9). He returned, willing to obey the father even as a servant would obey. There may be tears

of regret and remorse but without obedience to the Father's (God's) will, there is no repentance.

Repentance is voluntary. The father did not force the son to return against his will. The father did not send servants to hypnotize, emotionalize or pressure the son into returning. If the son had returned under any other circumstances than a completely rational and voluntary surrender of his will, he would have been a son still in rebellion. The mission of the church is to speak the truth in love and with rational persuasiveness and then let the prodigal son voluntarily come to himself and to the Father. The church is *not* commissioned to seduce anyone into coming to the Father against his will. The church will do well to constantly review her purpose and methodology.

15:20b-24 Regeneration: "When he was a great way off . . ." The father had been mourning his lost son; he had been lovingly and longingly looking down the road each day hoping the prodigal would return. God is not willing that any should perish (II Pet. 3:9). When the father saw the son returning, he ran to meet the prodigal. The father did not wait to see if the son had cleaned himself up, or if the son had any means of reimbursement for all the heartache he had caused. The son had not run home—he had probably returned in a half-halting, hesitant manner, anticipating the humiliation he would have to endure and the scolding he would get. But the father saw the son first and ran to meet him and fell on the son's neck (embraced him) and wrapped him in love's arms. Eager to receive his son back no matter how destitute, the father kissed him before he could even finish his confession. The son was looking for, "I told you so . . ." but he received an excited embrace and profuse kisses (Gr. *katephilesen*). Instead of a lecture and punishment (which the son was anticipating), the father was moved with emotional feeling (Gr. *esplagchnisthe*, "compassion") and ordered his servants, "Bring quickly . . ." (Gr. *tachu exenegkate*) robe, ring and sandals to put upon his son.

The robe was (Gr. *proten*; lit. "first") the best and signified honor; the ring signified authority; the sandals signified sonship since slaves went barefoot and only children of the house wore shoes. They were also ordered to bring the calf, the fattened one (Gr. *ton moschon ton siteuton*); there is only one such calf, reserved for some special occasion (cf. I Sam. 28:24). The father also invited the household to join the feast and merrymaking. The word "merry" does not precisely express the meaning of the Greek word *euphranthomen* for it is a combination of two words, *eu* and *phren*, which mean literally, "think well," or "be of a good mind." "Merriment" might infer frivolity whereas the Greek word allows for no superficiality but means deep, mental joy and happiness.

Why such a celebration? Because this father's son who was "dead" is "alive again"; the son, having been lost, was found. Because through the

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

son's repentance and the father's forgiveness, the son has been born again. Notice that the rebirth came as a result of action on both the part of the son and the father. The lost and dead son could not be found and reborn until he came to himself, got up and returned home. Only then could the father constitute him reborn. The son was not passive, but active in the event. This scene is the supreme moment in all literature! It is the greatest love story ever told. Jesus did not make up this story. It is true. Jesus Himself wrote this story indelibly in the blood of His cross. Our God is like that father! And the boy? He is you and me. This is our life's story, if we have been found.

SECTION 4

The Lost Pharisaical Son (15:25-32)

25 "Now his elder son was in the field; and as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. ²⁶And he called one of the servants and asked what this meant. ²⁷And he said to him, 'Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fatted calf, because he has received him safe and sound.' ²⁸But he was angry and refused to go in. His father came out and entreated him, ²⁹but he answered his father, 'Lo, these many years I have served you, and I never disobeyed your command; yet you never gave me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends. ³⁰But when this son of yours came, who has devoured your living with harlots, you killed for him the fatted calf!' ³¹And he said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. ³²It was fitting to make merry and be glad, for this your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found.' "

15:25-30 Resentment: The primary thrust of this parable is to illustrate in a real-life situation the attitude of the Pharisees toward publicans and sinners. All that has gone before in the prodigal's story illustrates how publicans and sinners repent and how mercifully God receives them. But the prodigal's story is primarily background for the story of the elder brother which now follows. This story will cast the attitude of the Pharisees in black contrast to that of Jesus' (and God's).

Enter the villain—the elder brother. Outwardly this elder brother had presented the picture of correct conduct. He was industrious (out working in the field), respectable (he had never caroused like the prodigal), outwardly respectful to his father but his heart was that of a resentful, petulant hireling. He was only working in anticipation of getting more than his prodigal brother. One day he was out working in the field and upon returning to the house he heard music and dancing as he drew near. He called one of the hired servants and asked what the meaning of the rejoicing was.

The servant told him "Your brother has come . . ." Note, *your* brother—but the elder brother later calls him, "This son of yours . . ." to his father. He will not acknowledge the prodigal as *his* brother. How like the Pharisees—both ancient and modern! The servant told the elder brother that his father had killed the one calf they had been fattening and was using it to celebrate the return of that boy who had long ago left the household and squandered his inheritance in profligacy. The elder son had probably been anticipating the day when that fatted calf would be used to celebrate *his* taking over the father's estate. The prodigal had not only come back (which the elder son resented), but the father *received* him as a son again!

Upon hearing this the elder son flew into a rage (Gr. *orgisthe*, from which we get the English words, *orgasm*, *orgy*, etc.). He was invited to enter the house and join the celebration, but he expressed that he had no desire to enter into the celebration. So the father came out of the house and begged (Gr. *parekalei*, literally, "call upon call; call after call") him to come in.

Now the elder son's true feeling toward the father manifests itself. He had stayed home and behaved—but for the wrong reason. The elder son was respectable, but only on the surface. Beneath the veneer of propriety is the self-righteous, jealous, hateful heart. His mask of hypocrisy has slipped off and he is exposed for what he really is. He is an ingrate. He should have been thankful his brother was home safe—even if only for his father's sake! He should have been grateful that a celebration was being made and have enjoyed himself participating. He should have been thankful that he was going to get any inheritance at all. After all, it was all to be inherited—it was not his, or his brother's, but *given* to both.

All this petulant, pouting, pretender can do is verbally attack his own father because his father was forgiving and gracious to the prodigal. The elder son rebukes his father, saying, "Lo, these many years I have served you, and I never disobeyed your command; *yet you never gave me* a kid, that I might make merry with my friends." He rebukes his father for not being aware of his obedient service; he rebukes his father for never rewarding him; he rebukes his father as being wrong for receiving the prodigal who had "devoured" his inheritance on "harlots." He even rebukes his father for thinking he should accept the prodigal as his "brother"—he will not recognize the prodigal as brother, only as the father's son.

One very perceptive writer asks, "Who is the prodigal after all? One came back—but one got lost at home. He locked himself out of the banquet—the key he lost was love."

The elder son: (a) wanted to be a son, but not a brother; (b) did not share his father's concern for the lost brother; (c) was envious of his brother and suspicious of his father; (d) was unable to enjoy what the father gave him because of his envy of the prodigal; (e) boasted of an obedience which he really did not have and revealed it by his attitude. The elder son was a classic Pharisee—unmerciful toward the prodigal whose sins were those of the

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

flesh, but he refused to admit the sins of pride, jealousy, hypocrisy and self-righteousness were worse sins. Jesus was hardest on hypocrisy. Doing the right thing for the wrong reason was not Jesus' idea of goodness (cf. the Sermon on the Mount). *Pride*, not prodigality, is the chief sin!

15:31-32 Rebuke: There is pathos in the father's "Son, . . ." The father was made happy when the prodigal returned. Now he is saddened at the elder son's loveless resentment. God wants to save Pharisees as well as publicans. So, firmly but gently the father rebukes the petulant son, reminding him, ". . . you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours." The elder son could always have what the father wanted to give him if only he was of the right spirit to receive it as a gift. So long as he remained self-righteous and hateful and uncooperative, he could never have it. What the father has to give, he gives to his *family*. It was "fitting" to receive back the lad who came in humble penitence, wishing now to be an obedient son and sharing brother. It is also "fitting" that the elder brother join in the reception and sharing—if not, he can no longer claim family status. Yes, our salvation depends as much on *brotherhood* as it does sonship (cf. I Jn. 3:14-18; 3:23; 4:7-12; 4:20-21; 5:1-2, etc.). If the father forgives a prodigal son, *brethren must also* forgive or they lose their own sonship.

The story ends here with no indication whether the elder brother changed his mind or not. The Pharisees kept on despising publicans and sinners. God, in His Son, kept on receiving them and saving those who repented. This, perhaps the greatest of all the parables, stands as a judgment on the Pharisaical self-righteousness which will not forgive a prodigal brother even when the Father has forgiven him. It also stands as a beacon of hope to those thousands of prodigals who have squandered their Father's inheritance in riotous living but come to themselves and want to be received back home.

STUDY STIMULATORS:

1. When you "eat with publicans and sinners" do you ever mention the will of God for their lives as Jesus did?
2. Have you ever been lost? Do you think all men not in covenant relationship with Christ today are *lost*?
3. Why are men like sheep in getting lost?
4. Do you think the church is as intense in finding the lost as the woman was in finding her lost coin?
5. How does your church react to baptismal services? "Ho-hum" or "Hallelujah!"
6. Did you find, while you were a "prodigal," that you were starving?
7. How would you tell another "prodigal" to "come to himself . . .?"
8. Do you recognize in the elder brother any of yourself?
9. Are you willing, and have you, forgiven every person God has forgiven? Who are those whom God has forgiven?
10. Is brotherhood with the forgiven as necessary to salvation as sonship?

LOVE IS A MANY SLENDORED THING

(Text: Heb. 12:5-11)

By Paul T. Butler — OBC Chapel, Spring 1973

INTRODUCTION

I. NOW THE WORLD HAS A SONG BY THAT TITLE

- A. But the popular song of a few years ago by that title failed utterly and miserably to really plumb the depths of love's splendor.
- B. Splendor means glory-sublimity-brilliance.
- C. Love is the most glorious, sublime capability any person has.
- D. Love is the most precious, the rarest jewel of all virtues.

II. BUT WHAT IS LOVE

- A. How many sermons I have heard over the years exhorting, "What we need is simply to love one another," or chastising, "If we don't get some love around here we're no better than the heathen."
- B. But how few sermons I have heard explaining what love is or how we are to love.
- C. Love is not self-defining. This is the supreme fallacy of situation ethics which says "do the most loving thing in every situation."
- D. No man has enough wisdom or experience to be guided only by his own instincts to do the most loving thing in every situation.
- E. We must go to the Word of God for precept and example.
- F. And I Corinthians 13 is not the only definition of love in the Bible.

III. SOME WILL INVARIABLY SAY, LOVE IS:

A. Concern

But how do you explain the many people who were hungry Jesus did not feed; the many lame He did not heal; the Greeks who came seeking him and He did not talk with; Herod who questioned Him about His teaching, to whom Jesus would not speak but called "fox." MUST A CONCERNED LOVE ALWAYS BE MANIFESTED THE THE WAY WE THINK?

B. Giving

But how do you explain Jesus' rebuke of Judas and the disciples when they suggested that the precious ointment Mary had poured upon Jesus could have been sold and given to the poor. MUST A GIVING LOVE ALWAYS BE MANIFESTED IN THE WAY THE WORLD THINKS?

C. Speaking Pleasantly

But how do you explain the words Jesus spoke to the Pharisees and sometimes to His disciples which were harsh, demanding and rebuking. How do you explain Paul's letters to the Corinthians;

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

how do you explain Peter's words to Simon concerning being in the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity. MUST LOVE ALWAYS BE COMMUNICATED TO PLEASE THE HEARER?

IV. LOVE IS MANY FACETED

- A. There is more to love than often meets the spiritual eye.
- B. I hope to present you three oft unseen facets of the brilliance of God-like love, agape love, this morning.
- C. LOVE IS: DISCERNING. . . . DEMANDING. . . . DELIBERATE
- D. "Those whom I love, I reprove and chasten; so be zealous and repent" (Rev. 3:19).

DISCUSSION

I. LOVE IS DISCERNING (discriminating; critical; judgmental; penetrating). All of those are words of love if the motives are right.

A. In Reality

1. Love is truth-oriented; truth-focused; truth-centered. Love is something done but always in a TRUTH frame-of-reference. Agape love makes every attempt to see things, issues, and persons as they are in reality for a purpose—a good purpose.
2. Agape love could never reject truth in favor of falsehood—it could never be satisfied with only half-truth about issues or persons.
3. "Little children, let us not love in word or speech but in deed and *in truth*" (I Jn. 3:18).
4. "The Christian loves truth (Eph. 4:15; II Thess. 2:10), but he never cruelly or unsympathetically uses the truth in order to hurt. . . . The Christian is never false to the truth, but he always remembers that love and truth must go hand in hand" Wm. Barclay, *More New Testament Words*, pg. 22, Harper & Row (article on Agape).
5. "Christian love does not shut its eyes to the faults of others. Love is not blind. It will use rebuke and discipline when these are needed. The love which shuts its eyes to all faults, and which evades the unpleasantness of all discipline, is not real love at all, for in the end it does nothing but harm to the loved one." *ibid.*
6. ". . . love . . . does not rejoice in wrong, but rejoices in the truth . . ." (I Cor. 13:6).
7. Would Jesus have loved Judas if He had concealed from Judas the truth about himself? Would God have loved the Hebrew

LOVE IS A MANY SPLENDORED THING

people if He had concealed from them the truth about themselves in the days of the prophets? Would Paul have loved the churches and people he wrote the epistles to had he concealed from them the truth about themselves?

8. In that penetrating, piercing confrontation between Jesus and the Jews in John 8, Jesus seemed almost astounded that they would seek to kill Him because He told them the truth about themselves (Jn. 8:39-47). He did it because He loved them.
9. Paul wrote the Christians in Galatia, "Have I then become your enemy by telling you the truth" (Gal. 4:16)?
10. All through the Old Testament there is example after example of God's dealing with men trying to get them to see themselves as they really are; with men dealing with other men in the same way (God ? David; Nathan & David; David & Saul; Moses and Miriam; Jethro & Moses, etc.).
11. Now when God's Word pierces our facade of sham and discerns us as we are and deals with us realistically—IT IS GOD'S LOVE.
12. When men or women, older and wiser, more experienced and learned than we, discern us and judge us according to truth, LET US EXPECT IT TO BE SOMETHING DONE IN LOVE!

B. In Relationships

1. Love is person-oriented; it deals with persons discerning, judging estimating what they ought to be and can be with the help of God and Christian brethren.
2. A person who, by experience and wisdom knows something that would benefit me, and keeps it from me, does not love me.
3. If I tell my children the truth about themselves but do not share with them some truth that will help them I do not love them.
4. Jesus' dealing with the Syrophenician woman would have been considered harsh, even cruel, by some (Mk. 7:25-30) but He dealt with her on the basis of what she could become.
5. Jesus' dealing with Peter when He said, "Get thee behind me, Satan," was discerning love in order to bring Peter to what he could be.
6. THERE ARE SOME OF YOU HERE THIS MORNING LIVING IN THE JOY OF BEING BETTER THAN YOU WERE BECAUSE ONE OF YOUR TEACHERS OR A GROUP OF TEACHERS HAVE DEALT WITH YOU ON THE BASIS OF THEIR JUDGMENT OF WHAT YOU COULD BECOME!

It seemed distasteful to you at first—you disliked us and accused us of putting you down at first—but now you know we judged that you could be better than you were and we insisted on it.

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

7. Love demands that those who have the advantage of experience and leadership relate to others on the basis of building up—
NOT LEAVING OTHERS TO GO BACKWARD . . . OR EVEN TO
REMAIN WHERE THEY ARE!

C. In Remedies

1. Love is always seeking that which is practical—helpful.
2. That which is the most helpful in a situation, may not always be the most glorious or win the most applause. It may not even be the most soothing.
3. But love is interested only in that which is helpful.
4. Love seeks the long-range remedy. Love is never satisfied with superficialities or stop-gap measures.
5. "Now obviously no chastening seems pleasant at the time: it is in fact most unpleasant. Yet when it is all over we can see that it has quietly produced the fruit of real goodness in the characters of those who have accepted it in the right spirit" (Heb. 12:11-12) J. B. Phillips, *The New Testament In Modern English*.
6. NOW THERE MAY BE SOME OF YOU WHO HAVE HAD REMEDIES PRESCRIBED TO YOU THAT MAY HAVE SEEMED LIKE BITTER MEDICINE. SO FAR AS I AM ABLE TO JUDGE THE MOTIVES OF THOSE DIRECTING THIS COLLEGE, I BELIEVE THEIR REMEDIAL PRESCRIPTIONS WERE MADE IN GOD-LIKE LOVE.
7. In their years of experience and saturating their mind with the mind of Christ as revealed in His Word, they have always sought the long-term, helpful, strengthening remedy.
8. Their motives are, as far as I am able to judge, pure and loving. The wisdom of their decisions, I think, will be proved over the long-haul.
9. I have more than 100 letters from former students proving that hind-sight is usually more perceptive than fore-sight.

In an old book given to me by Bro. Wilson, I found some ageless principles stated as well as I have ever seen them stated. One of those principles is: ". . . if the moral powers (of man) are not employed on right objects and directed to a right end, there is not only perversion but deterioration. The more active they are the more they deteriorate. If, therefore, we would do the highest good to men we must seek, not only to perfect their powers, but to perfect the moral powers by directing them rightly. Our object must be to produce a change not merely in the condition, but in the state of men; and not merely in their intellectual state involving acquisitions and capacity, but in their moral state which involves, or rather which is, character." *The Law of Love and Love as a Law*, by Mark Hopkins, 1881, pg. 199.

LOVING, DOING THE HIGHEST GOOD TO MEN, MEANS DISCERNMENT!

LOVE IS A MANY SPLENDORED THING

II. LOVE IS DEMANDING

A. It Restrains

1. "Our love to God is shown in the keeping of His commandments (Ex. 20:6; I Jn. 5:3; II Jn. 6). Love is more than a mere affection or sentiment; it is something that manifests itself, not only in obedience to known divine commands, but also in a protecting and defence of them, and a seeking to know more and more of the will of God in order to express love for God in further obedience (cf. Deut. 10:12). Those who love God will hate evil and all forms of worldliness, as expressed in the avoidance of the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh and the pride of life (Ps. 97:10; I Jn. 2:15-17). Whatever there may be in his surroundings that would draw the soul away from God and righteousness, that the child of God will avoid." *I.S.B.E.* Vol. 3, pg. 1933, art. "Love."
2. Love does not indulge. Dr. James Dobson, in his book, *Dare To Discipline*, says, "Perhaps the most common parental error during the past twenty-five years has been related to the widespread belief that 'love is enough' in raising children . . . *the greatest social disaster of this century is the belief that abundant love makes discipline unnecessary.*"
3. A New York psychologist, Peter Blos, is quoted in *Time*, Nov. 29, 1971; "... parents should set limits, affirm their personal values, deny the 'clamor for grown-up status,' and refuse to be intimidated by charges of authoritarianism."
4. In *Reader's Digest* (Feb. 1973), an article entitled "Why Some Women Respond Sexually and Others Don't," Seymour Fisher, a clinical psychologist, researching this over many years, states: "Highly responsive women tended to recall their fathers as having a definite set of values, being demanding and holding high expectations for them. . . . conversely, most low-responsive women remembered their fathers as being casual, overly permissive and short on definite values. . . . A demanding father, gives his daughter the feeling that he is concerned enough about her to devote time and energy to trying to guide her—even if she resents this discipline . . . this relationship, speculates Fisher, could even be the prime determinant of female sexual potential."
5. Permissiveness, or indulgence, is no sign of love! Permissiveness can be the most unloving thing one person ever does to another!
6. CAN YOU PICTURE JESUS INDULGING PEOPLE? He would not indulge Peter and the other disciples even in some actions that appeared correct (e.g. when they would forbid Him from going to Jerusalem and be killed, etc.). He would not indulge the rich

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

young ruler to keep the riches which were strangling his loyalties. He would not indulge His own mother in her motherly pride (at Cana marriage feast).

7. THOSE OF US WHO WATCH IN BEHALF OF YOUR SOULS ARE DETERMINED NOT TO INDULGE YOU BECAUSE WE LOVE YOU! WE ARE DETERMINED TO DEMAND OF YOU PERHAPS WHAT NO ONE EVER DEMANDED OF US, BECAUSE WE LOVE YOU!
8. If we should indulge you to your harm, we would never be able to forgive ourselves; your parents and your churches would never forgive us; and God might not ever forgive us—if our indulgence were born of deliberate cowardliness.
9. With as much love, we believe, as Paul the apostle manifested toward Timothy and Titus, his student-preachers, we want to demand of you as much as he did of them (read the letters he wrote to them).

B. It Refuses

1. It sometimes has to say No!
2. Wm. Barclay, *op. cit.*, pg. 16: "When we understand what agape means, it amply meets the objection that a society based on this love would be a paradise for criminals, and that it means simply letting the evil-doer have his own way. If we seek nothing but a man's highest good, we may well have to resist a man; we may well have to punish him; we may well have to do the hardest things to him—for the good of his immortal soul. . . . In other words, agape means treating men as God treats them—and that does not mean allowing them unchecked to do as they like."
3. Curtis Dickinson, in *Christian Standard*, Jan. 25, 1958, art. "Love's Constraining Power," wrote, "It is easy to camouflage weakness and conformity under the guise of love. . . . It is just because God loves you that He cannot overlook you. . . . It is precisely because we love our children that we cannot let them escape punishment. How ridiculous, if we said of a child, 'I love her so much that no matter what she does I will consider it all right.'"
4. God said No to the perfect man in Eden. BECAUSE HE LOVED ADAM!
5. God said No to perhaps the greatest saint of all, Paul, *three times* God said No to him. BECAUSE GOD LOVED PAUL.
6. For a good mental and moral exercise why don't you personally run through in your mind all the great men of the Old Testament to whom God said "No"!

LOVE IS A MANY SPLENDORED THING

7. Now list mentally all the churches and people to whom the apostles wrote letters stating many emphatic "Nos"! ADD THEM ALL TOGETHER!
 8. THOSE WHOM THE HOLY SPIRIT HATH MADE OVERSEERS OF THIS ARM OF THE LORD'S CHURCH ARE BOUND BY THEIR LOVE FOR THE LORD, FOR HIS CHURCH, AND FOR YOU, TO SAY NO! WHEN IT BECOMES THE LOVING THING TO DO!
 9. It is not something they take selfish, sadistic, prideful pleasure in—it is something for which they feel an obligation, and consider a privilege, because it gives them an opportunity to *love for real*.
 10. The selfish thing to do would be to give everyone free reign to do as they please, go play golf, and when the situation became unbearable leave it to self-destruction and blame everyone else.
 11. God said No to Moses (not enter promised land); God said No to Jonah; God said No to David (cannot build my temple). These listened. God said No to Saul; God said No to Baalam. These did not listen.
 12. BE CAREFUL HOW YOU RESPOND TO GOD'S "NO!" IN HIS WORD . . . AND HOW YOU RESPOND TO THE "NO!" OF THE SHEPHERDS OF GOD'S FLOCK!
- C. It Reiterates; Reinforces
1. Love does not give up with the first discernment or demand.
 2. Love repeats and repeats and repeats (read *The Hound of Heaven*, by Francis Thompson). Love hounds, stalks, trails.
 3. The immature tend to classify discerning, demanding love as nagging or harping, nor nit-picking.
 4. Does the discerning, demanding love of God give us cause to accuse Him of nagging or harping?
 5. Were the Old Testament prophets nit-picking when they repeated and repeated and repeated God's message?
 6. CONTINUED REMINDERS TO KEEP YOUR DORM ROOM CLEAN AND ORDERLY, CONTINUED REMINDERS TO PAY YOUR ACCOUNTS, CONTINUED REMINDERS TO DRESS MODESTLY, CONTINUED REMINDERS TO DRIVE LIKE A CHRISTIAN, CONTINUED REMINDERS TO CONDUCT YOUR MAN-WOMAN RELATIONSHIP WITH DECORUM. . . . THESE ARE NOT NAGGING, NIT-PICKING. . . . THESE ARE FUNDAMENTAL ISSUES OF LIFE AND CHRISTIAN WITNESS . . . AND THE REMINDERS ARE REITERATIONS OF LOVE!
 7. It never ceases to amaze me that athletes, choir members, Impact members or others can so graciously and willingly condescend to take all the repetition of practices, take all the

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

demand that they dress alike . . . and then get all upset and accuse others of the college, who love them equally as much, of nagging and nit-picking when they reiterate and reinforce moral and spiritual values.

III. LOVE IS DELIBERATE

A. It is Real

1. Agape love is sincere, genuine. J. B. Phillips translates Romans 12:9: "Let us have no imitation Christian love. Let us have a genuine break with evil and a real devotion to good."
2. Agape love will not stand for sham, superficiality, or unstable emotionalism (note: I said *emotionalism*. Love is part emotion but not all emotion.).
3. Agape love is not the silly, selfish sentimentalism so often portrayed by the world.
4. Wm. Barclay, *op. cit.*, "This agape, this Christian love, is not merely an emotional experience which comes to us unbidden and unsought; it is a *deliberate* principle of the mind, and a deliberate conquest and achievement of the will. It is in fact the power to love the unlovable, to love people whom we do not like."

It is important to understand. . . . Agape has to do with the *mind*: it is not simply an emotion which sweeps over us at intervals when we are in the right mood. It is a principle by which we deliberately live, every day, no matter what *mood* we're in or how we *feel*. It is a conquest, a victory, an achievement. No one ever naturally loved his enemies.

5. Agape love demands the whole man; mind, will and heart.
6. There may be some of you students I know more intimately than others. This often is due to circumstances outside ourselves. BUT IT DOES NOT MEAN THAT MY AGAPE LOVE FOR ANY OF YOU IS ANY MORE OR LESS THAN THE OTHER. THAT IS WHY AGAPE LOVE IS THE HIGHEST FORM OF LOVE . . . IT DOES NOT DEPEND UPON CIRCUMSTANCES! IT IS A REAL LOVE!
7. Many is the time we have been *tempted* to love some of you only according to how we *feel*, on emotions alone, BUT THAT IS NOT REAL LOVE!

B. It is Reliable

1. Decisive, dependable, firm, stable, consistent
2. Dennis Vath wrote it *Christian Standard*, Nov. 5, 1966: "*Jesus loved consistently*. True agape love is consistent. It does not always compliment. It is not always manifested in a pat on the back, for this is not always in our best interests. Agape love does not always agree. Scripture tells us that the one God loves

LOVE IS A MANY SPLENDORED THING

is the one He chastens. Agape on the human level does not allow itself to be dominated or abused, because it is not in a person's best interests to allow him to take advantage of one."

3. One mark of love often overlooked is that characteristic of being able to make a decision, a consistent decision, a stabilizing decision and stand firm in that decision.
4. COULD YOU HONESTLY SAY YOU BELIEVED THE LEADERSHIP OF THIS COLLEGE LOVED YOU IF IT COULD NOT MAKE A DECISION, CONSISTENTLY, AND STAND FIRM!
5. A LEADERSHIP WHICH IS UNABLE TO MAKE A DECISION, CANNOT MAINTAIN CONSISTENCY, AND IS UNSTABLE, IMPRESSES ME AS A SELF-SEEKING LEADERSHIP!

C. It is Risky

1. Agape love will never let a man be selfishly-safe.
2. Agape love insists upon self-sacrifice.
3. Eugene Nida writes in *God's Word in Man's Language*: "The Conob Indians of northern Guatemala . . . describe love as 'my soul dies.' A man who loves God according to the Conob idiom would say, 'My soul dies for God.' This not only describes the powerful emotion felt by the one who loves, but it should imply a related truth—namely, that in true love there is no room for self. . . . True love is of all emotions the most unselfish, for it does not look out for self but for others. False love seeks to possess; true love seeks to be possessed. False love leads to cancerous jealousy; true love leads to a life-giving ministry."
4. The person who will not risk being hurt or thought badly of—the person who is afraid to do what is best for another because he is afraid of that person's displeasure with him—that person does not know how to love!
5. BELOVED, IT MAY SEEM TO YOU THAT WE DELIBERATELY SET OUT AT TIMES TO COURT YOUR DISPLEASURE WITH US! *WE DO!* BECAUSE WE WANT TO LOVE YOU WITH A REAL LOVE, WE ARE NOT PRIMARILY CONCERNED WITH WHAT YOU FEEL TOWARD US AT FIRST BECAUSE WE KNOW THAT ALMOST ALWAYS YOU WILL SOMEDAY UNDERSTAND THE LOVE BEHIND OUR COUNSEL AND LOVE US IN RETURN!
6. Any parent who is afraid to risk his child's temporary displeasure rather than enforce some genuine loving restraint, is not worthy to be a parent. AND THIS APPLIES IN THE FAMILY OF GOD!

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

CONCLUSION

I. LOVE IS A MANY SPLENDORED THING

- A. Splendor means: glorious, sublime, superb, brilliance.
- B. Love is like a many-faceted jewel; there are many sides to it and they all reflect the glory of God.
- C. I hope I have caught your spiritual eye with three of the more dazzling facets of love this morning.

II. OUR LOVE FOR YOU IS AN ATTEMPT TO REPRODUCE IN YOU THIS SPLENDORED THING

- A. We are going to love you discerningly, demandingly, deliberately.
- B. We are going to love you with our mind and our will as well as our emotions.
- C. You may not be pleased with us always, but we are not going to let our love be directed by that.

C. S. Lewis writes in *The Four Loves*: "To love at all is to be vulnerable. Love anything and your heart will certainly be wrung and possibly be broken. If you want to make sure of keeping it intact, you must give your heart to no one. . . . Wrap it carefully round with hobbies and little luxuries; avoid all entanglements; lock it up safe in the casket of your selfishness. But in that casket—safe, dark, motionless, airless—it will change. It will not be broken; it will become unbreakable, impenetrable, irredeemable."

III. TO YOU, MY BELOVED BROTHER OR SISTER, I AM VULNERABLE

- A. I cannot lock myself up . . . break my heart if you will, I will still love you discerningly, demandingly, deliberately.
- B. To appropriate a phrase from Isaiah, "Behold, I have graven you on palms of my hands; your walls are continually before me."

Chapter Sixteen

(16:1-31)

THE SON OF MAN ADVISING ABOUT MONEY

IDEAS TO INVESTIGATE:

1. What is a "stewardship" (16:1-2)?
2. Is it more acceptable to God to be prudent than to be honest (16:8)?
3. How can Jesus tell Christians to buy friends with their money (16:9)?
4. Did the coming of John the Baptist abrogate the law (16:16)?
5. Why is it "adultery" to marry a divorced woman (16:18)?
6. Where is "Hades" (16:23)?
7. Why is the "great chasm" fixed so that none may cross (16:26)?

SECTION 1

Be Shrewd (16:1-13)

16 He also said to the disciples, "There was a rich man who had a steward, and charges were brought to him that this man was wasting his goods. ²And he called him and said to him, 'What is this that I hear about you? Turn in the account of your stewardship for you can no longer be steward.' ³And the steward said to himself, 'What shall I do, since my master is taking the stewardship away from me? I am not strong enough to dig, and I am ashamed to beg. ⁴I have decided what to do, so that people may receive me into their houses when I am put out of the stewardship.' ⁵So, summoning his master's debtors one by one, he said to the first, 'How much do you owe my master?' ⁶He said, 'A hundred measures of oil.' And he said to him, 'Take your bill, and sit down quickly and write fifty.' ⁷Then he said to another, 'And how much do you owe?' He said, 'A hundred measures of wheat.' He said to him, 'Take your bill, and write eighty.' ⁸The master commended the dishonest steward for his shrewdness; for the sons of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own generation than the sons of light. ⁹And I tell you, make friends for yourselves by means of unrighteous mammon, so that when it fails they may receive you into the eternal habitations.

¹⁰ "He who is faithful in a very little is faithful also in much; and he who is dishonest in a very little is dishonest also in much. ¹¹If then you have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will entrust to you the true riches? ¹²And if you have not been faithful in that which is another's, who will give you that which is your own? ¹³No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon."

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

16:1-3 Wastefulness: Someone has wisely pointed out that money is merely a medium of exchange for a man's life. Man spends his time, talent and energy at a vocation and receives in exchange some medium—usually money. By spending that money a man exchanges his life for whatever he considers worthy of his life. If a man hoards his money or spends it all indulging himself it manifests a selfish, uncaring heart.

Jesus spoke the two stories of this chapter to His disciples but mainly for the benefit of the Pharisees who were lovers of money. The parables of the Lost Sheep, Lost Coin and Lost Sons struck a smarting blow to their selfishness and uncaring hearts. The two stories of this chapter continue to strike at this careless attitude the Pharisees had toward their fellowmen. The scoffing reaction of the Pharisees (16:14) shows clearly that Jesus had hit His target.

These stories were spoken in Perea, beyond the Jordan River, during the climax of Jesus' last year of public ministry. He was engaged in a great evangelistic campaign teaching the nature of the kingdom of God and discipleship, calling on all who would to become citizens of God's kingdom. It is significant that Jesus made citizenship in God's kingdom relevant to even such an everyday affair as what a man does with his money. The first story shows "how to" use your money to get to heaven or to send it on ahead in a different form; the second story shows "how to" use your money to get to hell!

A certain rich man (Gr. *plousios*, "plutocrat") had a steward (Gr. *oikonomon*, lit. "house-ruler, house-manager") who had been accused of wasting (Gr. *diaskorpizon*, squandering, same word used for Prodigal Son) his master's possessions. He could not get away with his sin—someone told on him. The master of the house called the accused steward before him and demanded an accounting. The steward was guilty and the master dismissed him from his job. This steward was: (a) extravagant—wasteful; (b) lazy—he wouldn't dig; (c) proud—he would not beg; (d) dishonest—he cheated his master when later taking only partial payment for his master's debts. Apparently, before the steward left the employ of this master he would have occasion to settle outstanding accounts owed. He devised a scheme by which he could use his stewardship to make friends! A steward was a trusted care-taker of a rich man's household (cf. Gen. 43:19; Mt. 20:8; Lk. 8:3; 12:42). He was an employee-of-sorts (sometimes a slave) who often became almost like one of the family (cf. Gen. 15:1-3). But a steward was never an owner—he was always simply using his master's goods for the benefit of the master. He was held accountable to the master for the way he used whatever was temporarily put under his administration.

16:4-9 Wisdom: Jesus is not condoning dishonesty! He is simply holding the steward's sagacity up for emulation. There are character traits worth imitating in the worst of men and the wise will see them and copy them.

God never condoned the faults of Abraham but He holds the man up in His Word for emulation as "the father of the faithful." Jesus wants His followers to be both honest and prudent. The one good thing in this steward's nature was his shrewdness—this is the only lesson Jesus wishes to teach in this story. Jesus is not holding this man up as a believer—He is simply saying that worldly people (like this steward) are farsighted and astute in their endeavors for material ends. The Lord desires forethought, preparation and wisdom of His followers for spiritual ends. This steward was wiser than most church members (sons-of-light). There is a great lack of common sense in spiritual matters in the kingdom of God today. Some Christians do not have the courage of their convictions—they are afraid to give the self-discipline and sacrifice necessary to attain the spiritual profits promised by Christ. This parable is like a sharp thunder-clap, rousing us from our spiritual dozing. God will not let us get by with stupidity in our stewardship. He expects us to invest *everything* in our charge (money, time, talents) to produce spiritual gain as intelligently as most worldly-minded people invest their holdings to make material gain.

One of the first things we notice in this parable is the sharp division of humanity. Christ divides all humanity into "sons of this world" and "sons of light." There are only two classes of humanity in all the Bible—believers and unbelievers, obedient and disobedient, gatherers and scatterers, saved and lost, wise and foolish. Men make multiple categories of goodness and evil, but for Jesus, when the final test comes, every man gives allegiance to either Him or the devil. If you are not a son of light, you are a son of this world. There are only two destinies—heaven or hell; only two repositories for your "unrighteous mammon"—heaven or rust and destruction, and only two roads—the narrow and difficult that leads to salvation, or the broad and easy that leads to death.

The sons of this world are *not* wiser in *what* they choose! They choose what is temporal. This world and all its substance is doomed to destruction. Every dollar, every monument to fame, every work of art, every "thing" will perish. None of this world can be transferred as it is to heaven—not even the human body. "Things" must be exchanged for a different kind of "currency"—that "currency" is *people*, (I Thess. 2:19-20) transformed into the image of God's dear Son. The sons of this world choose what is vain. "Things" of the world—of the flesh—cannot satisfy the deepest and ultimate needs of the spiritual man. Men need grace, truth, forgiveness, hope, peace, love and identity. These cannot be obtained by the accumulation of things. Spiritual satisfaction comes from self-giving. Sons of this world also choose what forever must remain the Creator's. A man who is worth only the worldly goods he seems to have accumulated is poor indeed! None of these worldly goods really belong to him—they belong to God. True wealth is the spiritual investments a man has made.

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

What Jesus is emphasizing is that the sons of this world may be wiser than most children of the light in *how* they conduct their business! Notice how candid this steward was in facing the facts about his situation. He did not lie to himself or fantasize—he did not hide his head in the sand like an ostrich. Business people know they must be brutally honest with themselves about their profit-loss ledgers. They must not lie to themselves about whether business is good or bad. They either learn to be realists or they “go under.” Christians are too prone to construct a “fool’s paradise” for themselves in the business of stewardship. They fantasize that their spiritual life must be good if they have an abundance of worldly possessions. They are prone to forget that not one “thing” in their charge belongs to them. Their worst fantasy is that as long as they dedicate ten percent to the Master, they may do as they please with the other ninety percent in their charge. This steward of the parable faced the reality that these things were not his; that he had them only for a short time to use; that he could use them to show mercy on people and make friends. He did not day-dream or procrastinate about the future and he did not pout about the past—he made the most of the present.

This worldly-minded steward was keen in the way he planned. He did not allow his emotions to take away his reason. He did not run away with his master’s money and waste it like the Prodigal did. He didn’t stash it away like the foolish farmer (Lk. 12). He didn’t throw up his hands in despair and mental paralysis. He logically and deliberately reasoned out a plan. He decided to invest what was in his charge in helping people in order to help himself. Shakespeare said: “All life is a preparation for death.” Jesus urges His followers to make all this life a preparation for the next life. Cold, lifeless money can be turned into a warm handshake, a smile of gratitude or a cheerful word from someone helped for Jesus’ sake. Of course, friendship cannot be bought with crass mercenarism. Money genuinely used to help others will be rewarded, if not in this life then in the next. But fair-minded people are able soon enough to discern whether an offering of help is genuine or not. If Christians only dared to believe Jesus when He says, “Inasmuch as you have done it unto the least of these, my brethren, you have done it unto me” (Mt. 25:40), they might be wiser in the use of their stewardship.

The steward of this parable was shrewd in the execution of his plan. He made straight for his goal. He allowed no obstacle to hinder him. He accepted no compromise, no alternatives. He demonstrated self-control and dedication. This steward had to sacrifice time, effort, pride and money. He paid the price without hesitation. Tragically, even athletes exhibit more dedication than most Christians! This worldly-minded house-manager evaluated worldly things as supreme and let no sacrifice stand in his way. Christians say heavenly things are most important—but too many let everything else stand in their way.

16:10-13 Warning: It is an incontrovertible axiom of the business world that the man who can be trusted in small things can be promoted to large responsibilities. The man who will be dishonest and steals small amounts will almost inevitably embezzle large amounts. Jesus is using the parable to illustrate this startling warning: "If you have not been faithful (wise and prudent) in the unrighteous mammon, who will entrust to you the true riches?" If Christians cannot use money and earthly possessions wisely (to prepare for the next life), how shall God entrust to them the true riches of the next life? In other words, what the Christian does here on earth as a steward, determines whether he shall ever get to be a steward in the next life or not!

No steward can obey two bosses. No man can live a life filled with contradictions. It is logically and psychologically impossible. It is unacceptable to the Lord and impossible for the Christian to endure such a dichotomy. "No soldier on service gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to satisfy the one who enlisted him" (II Tim. 2:4). Men who do not believe God keep on trying to serve the world, the flesh and the devil while also professing to serve the Creator. That is why the Christian's responsibility toward God in money matters is not completed with giving ten percent of his wages. The Christian is accountable to God for every cent. That does not mean every cent must be given into the treasury of a local congregation for disbursement. It does mean that whatever the Christian uses his money for it must in some ultimate way serve God (through providing for his family, helping those in need, assisting in personal witnessing, supporting civic governments and institutions which are promoting social order and welfare, etc.). The important point is that God must be our Master, and not Money. Our money must be *used* to serve God.

SECTION 2

Be Sanctified (16:14-18)

14 The Pharisees, who were lovers of money, heard all this, and they scoffed at him. ¹⁵But he said to them, "You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts; for what is exalted among men is an abomination in the sight of God."

16 "The law and the prophets were until John; since then the good news of the kingdom of God is preached, and every one enters it violently. ¹⁷But it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away, than for one dot of the law to become void."

18 "Every one who divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery, and he who marries a woman divorced from her husband commits adultery."

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

16:14-15 Knowledge of God: Faithfulness to God is more important than money. The Pharisees who were lovers of money (Gr. *philarguroi*, lit. "lovers of silver") scoffed at Jesus when they heard His penetrating warning about selfishness and dishonesty in stewardship to God. The Greek word is *exemukterizon* and is from *ek*, "from" and, *mukter*, "nose" and literally means, "turned up their noses," or, "snorted." They made a haughty face toward Him and derided Him because they were servants of money. Their actions proved exactly what Jesus had just said: no man can serve both God and mammon. They pretended to serve God, but they really served worldliness, so they "hated" anyone who stood for God. The Pharisees made themselves appear just and right publicly, but God knew their hearts. God knows all men's hearts. It will do us no good to put on public demonstrations of "godliness" if in our hearts we are secretly trusting in financial success. Financial success does not equal approval of God—especially if such success becomes one's master. In fact, it is an abomination to God! The world has a twisted sense of values. The world justifies sexual immorality, dishonesty, cruelty and a multitude of other sins so long as a man has attained financial success. Multi-millionaires are almost always looked up to as good and wise in the areas of civic leadership. But what is exalted among men is an abomination to God! The world is all wrong! Few, very few, rich men are ever members of the kingdom of God (cf. Mt. 19:23-30; I Tim. 6:6-10; I Tim. 6:17-19). Disciples of Jesus must sanctify their worldly possessions in stewardship to God who knows even the heart of man. God wants men to set apart their heart's devotion to Him because He knows that stewardship of possessions will inevitably follow (cf. II Cor. 8:5).

16:16-17 Kingdom of God: Some think Jesus interjected two disconnected teachings (entering the kingdom and divorce, 16:16-18) into His discourse on the use of money. But they are not really disconnected: they are very relevant to the whole subject of stewardship and especially money. The phrase "... the law and the prophets were until John; since then the good news of the kingdom of God is preached ..." does not mean that the Old Testament was abrogated when John the Baptist appeared on the scene. Nor does it mean that the kingdom of God (the church) was instituted, in fact, with the preaching of John the Baptist. It is plain from the Scriptures that the church was not instituted as a New Dispensation or Testament until the Day of Pentecost, A.D. 34, Acts 2:1ff. Jesus spoke of His church in the future (Mt. 16:18) during His ministry, after the death of John. What Jesus is emphasizing about John's appearance on the scene is the anticipatory nearness of the long-awaited kingdom of God. What these money-mad Pharisees had hypocritically expounded on so glowingly (the kingdom of God—the coming of the Messiah) was being heralded in their ears by John the Baptist and the Messiah Himself. It was in their very midst in the person

of the King (cf. Lk. 17:21), but it was not officially established and opened to all the world until the Day of Pentecost. The Pharisees could not, or would not, see the kingdom, even though it was so very near to establishment because they were serving mammon. The coming of John the Baptist was in fulfillment of their own prophets in the Old Testament (Isaiah 40:3-6; Malachi 3:1-2; 4:5-6) which many people were acknowledging. John's ministry did not establish the church (Lk. 7:28); it did not abrogate the law of Moses. Jesus advised those to whom He preached to keep the law of Moses until it be fulfilled (Mt. 8:4; Mk. 1:44; Lk. 5:14; Lk. 18:20, etc.). But John's ministry did prepare for the coming of the kingdom (cf. Lk. 1:76-79; 3:3-17; 7:29-30), and the Pharisees were not preparing themselves to receive the kingdom because they were not submitting to the "violence" necessary to enter it. The kingdom of God preached by Jesus (and John the Baptist) could be entered only when men "violently" trample down their human values and accept God's values. What is exalted among men is an abomination in the sight of God. Jesus is *not* saying that men were forcing their way into the kingdom of God—no one will ever be able to enter the kingdom by force. The "violence" Jesus is talking about is the spiritual "death" to self that must take place. To enter the kingdom and remain a citizen, a man must cut off his right hand or pluck out his right eye if it offends or causes him to sin (Mt. 5:29-30). Men must "violently" tear themselves away from subservience to money and fleshly indulgence if they are to enter the kingdom. It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom. Men must lay aside the sin which so easily besets them and run the race with patience and endurance if they are to be kingdom citizens. We enter the kingdom through much tribulation (cf. Acts 14:22). Kingdom citizenship requires a daily, agonizing, traumatic, "violent" struggle or war between the flesh and the spirit (cf. Rom. 7:15-25; I Cor. 9:27; Gal. 5:17). We enter by death! There must be a crucifixion of self (Gal. 2:20-21; Rom. 6:1-23) if we are to enter. The Pharisees "scoffed" at the revolutionary idea of using one's money to help the unfortunate (as Jesus had just taught in His parable). They scoffed at the idea that God would call them to account as stupid stewards. They scoffed at the idea that they could not serve both God and mammon. But Jesus' warning is that these ideas were in the law of God from the beginning and not one dot of the law of God could be made void by all their scoffing. Divine ownership and human stewardship is taught throughout the Old Testament (both the law and the prophets). Helping the less fortunate is the essence of the law; love for God and for one's neighbor are the two principle commandments of the law! So these Pharisees who boasted they were protecting the law of God are found to be in direct opposition to it. Their opposition will not keep it from being vindicated. It would be easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for any man to

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

be able to get away with disobedience to God's law. God is serious about a man and his money!

16:18 Keeping God's Commandments: The subject of divorce is also connected to the subject of a man's money—as almost all married people will acknowledge. More marital discord ensues from troubled money matters than from almost any other problem. If financial difficulties (brought on by selfishness or poor management, usually) are not the number one agitation leading to divorce, they are a close second! In fact, in Jesus' day, marriages, divorces and remarriages were often entered into for very mercenary reasons. People even in those days tried to "marry well" in the matter of money. Men often divorced their wives and married those who had more money. Divorce laws were very liberal among many Jewish theologians in Jesus' day. A man might, according to some, divorce his wife if she "did not please him."

This statement of Jesus must be interpreted in the light of all New Testament teaching on divorce (cf. Mt. 5:31-32; 19:1-9; Mk. 10:11-12; Rom. 7:1-3; I Cor. 7:1-40). There must also be the consideration that all the New Testament teaching on marriage, divorce and remarriage focuses on the ideal. What the N.T. teaches is intended for the citizen of the kingdom and is the highest spiritual expectation of God for Christians. We cannot, therefore, expect unbelievers to share in the absolute ethical ideals of marriage presented in the New Testament.

The whole Bible is unequivocal in its teaching that divorce is a sin against God and against man. There appears to be one or two exceptions where divorce may be acceptable as a last resort (Mt. 5:32; 19:9). First, when there is sexual unfaithfulness by one member of a marriage. Second, where one member of the marriage is an unbeliever and "puts asunder" the marriage by desertion (cf. I Cor. 7:15) (see notes in Special Study on I Corinthians 7). Divorce over trivial matters, such as money, is a serious sin according to Jesus here. Jesus plainly says here that the man who divorces his wife (the exception already stated in Mt. 5:32; 19:9) and marries another commits adultery. He also says whoever marries a woman divorced from her husband commits adultery. There must be allowance, of course, for the man who marries a woman divorced from her husband because her husband was unfaithful. The Christian will not divorce a spouse except for the cause of fornication. The Christian will not marry a person divorced unless the divorced person was a victim of an unfaithful spouse.

We shall not here discuss the statement of Jesus in Mt. 5:32 that everyone who divorces his wife, except for the cause of fornication, *makes* her an adulteress. For an excellent discussion of this matter see *The Gospel of Matthew* by Harold Fowler, College Press, pgs. 272-286, and *Learning From Jesus* by Seth Wilson, College Press, pgs. 370-380. Since there are many questions about marriage, divorce and remarriage not specifically

dealt with by Jesus, especially as they would apply to Christians who had already involved themselves in marital problems before becoming Christians; it seemed good to this author to include a special study of I Corinthians, chapter 7. We accept the writings of the apostles as Holy Spirit inspired amplifications and commentaries on the general principles taught by Jesus as recorded in the Gospels. One thing is certain: the sexual union of one man to one woman for the purpose of mutual spiritual edification and procreation of the human race is the first institution ordained of God from creation. God wishes that union to continue in mutual faithfulness until death and forbids any man (person) from putting the union "asunder." Divorce is sin. Sin is rectified by substitutionary atonement accepted by faith and repentance.

"PROBLEMS THAT PLAGUE THE SAINTS"
CELIBACY, MARRIAGE, DIVORCE, REMARRIAGE
I Corinthians, Chapter 7

INTRODUCTION

Paul was not married when he wrote I Corinthians. Some people have difficulty accepting advice on marriage from a bachelor.

It is possible that Paul had previously been married. If he was a member of the Sanhedrin it is doubtful that he could have been a member unmarried. Also, this chapter does seem to be written by someone who knew by experience what marriage was all about. He might have been a widower.

No one has ever glorified marriage more than the apostle Paul (cf. Eph. 5:22-23); Paul's great tribute to Timothy's home background (II Tim. 1:5) shows something of the esteem with which he looked upon home ties.

But whether he was married or not makes no difference. What he teaches is as the apostle of Christ and therefore to be believed and obeyed.

DISCUSSION

I. THE PURITY OF MARRIAGE, 7:1-9

A. Reason for this admonition

1. Apparently the Corinthians had written previously asking questions about marriage.
 - a. Some groups were already saying that the more "spiritual" people were the ascetics who abstained from marriage and they taught that even those Christians who were married should take a brother-sister vow and live in a platonic relationship.

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

- b. Paul warned Timothy that such "denials" of the faith and demonic doctrines would appear in the church (I Tim. 4:1-5).
- 2. On the other hand, Jewish Christians in Corinth would say there was no room in the church for celibacy.
 - a. The idea of not marrying was so foreign to the Jewish mentality that the O.T. does not even have a word for "bachelor."
 - b. A godly life for the Jew meant not only marriage, but children.
- 3. The loose morals of the Corinthian culture surrounding the church there with the Greek and Roman religions advocating fornication.
- B. Celibacy and marriage are both pure in the Christian community, v. 1-2
 - 1. Celibacy is good, but so is marriage. If a person does not have a special gift for celibacy, he is much better off to marry than to be tempted to immorality or to "burn" with unfulfilled passion (7:9).
 - 2. Marriage is honorable (Heb. 13:4); celibacy is honorable (Mt. 19:10-12; I Cor. 7:7-9).
 - 3. The unmarried state is not superior in any moral sense to the married, nor vice-versa.
 - 4. It is wrong to consider celibacy as morally superior to marriage; it may have its advantages—but then, so does marriage.
- C. Marriage is primarily for the exercise of human sexual powers.
 - 1. It is in marriage men and women are granted this privilege.
 - 2. Marriage isn't all privilege—it has its responsibilities.
 - a. Both husband and wife, in marriage, give up exclusive rights to their own bodies, agreeing to share them fully with their partner (7:4).
 - b. The happiest marriages are those characterized by complete liberty, few inhibitions, and absence of any guilt complex.
 - c. The cause of so much marital trouble today is *selfishness* not only, but certainly foremost, in the areas of sexuality.
 - 3. There is an exception to sexual and marital responsibilities . . . for a *limited* time one of the married partners may give full time to religious duties.
 - a. These are definite instructions that there may come times when a *personal* time for seeking the Lord comes before the dearest on earth—BUT ONLY FOR A LIMITED TIME.
 - b. Church work cannot be used as an excuse for neglecting one's marital responsibilities; what is accomplished in serving the Lord if one's marriage partner is tempted and lost?
- D. Celibacy is a *special* gift (a *charismatic* gift).
 - 1. Paul will deal with this more specifically in 7:17-40.

2. When God made man, He saw "that it was not good for man to dwell alone" so He made a helper "fit for him" (Gen. 2:18).
3. Jesus said, "not all men can receive this . . . but only those to whom it is given . . ." (Mt. 19:11).

II. THE PERMANENCE OF MARRIAGE, 7:10-16

- A. Apparently in Corinth, new converts were leaving their partners and breaking up their marriages.
 1. The ideal situation is that both partners in a marriage be Christians.
 2. Young people can and should choose Christian partners before marriage. Love is not something one "falls into" it is something he wills, decides and does, and does constantly in spite of emotions or circumstances!
 3. But this ideal is impossible in a world of unbelief. Sometimes in a marriage of two unbelievers, one is converted after the fact. What to do? Remain married to the unbeliever if at all possible!
- B. When it comes right down to it, there is no essential difference between a Christian marriage in a church and a pagan marriage in the living room of a justice of the peace.
 1. God's will is that marriage should be permanent, no matter who is involved.
 2. Marriage as an institution predates all other institutions. It was sanctioned by God before the Law of Moses or the Christian dispensation.
 3. Marriage is not "a sacrament of the church" performed exclusively by the church. It is for the maintenance of human social structures.
 4. It is a human institution, decreed by God, to be practiced by the entire human race.
 5. When two people sincerely agree to live with each other, and obey the social and civil norms for marriage in their community, they are husband and wife regardless of their religion!
- C. While it is possible for a marriage bond to be broken by unfaithfulness (Mt. 19:9), it is certainly not what God desires.
 2. Nor does He desire that the conversion of one of the partners precipitate the break up of a happy home.
 2. Divorce is not God's will for any marriage.
 3. There may be cases where one partner, not at all seeking to do God's will, may dissolve the marriage while the other partner may not be able to stop the dissolution.
- D. What about remarriage?
 1. Paul has already admitted the reality that there is a possibility of the dissolution of marriages even where one party does not want it to be so.

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

2. The question is: Does the N.T. absolutely and unequivocally forbid remarriage after divorce? (cf. Mt. 5:31-32; 19:1-12; Mk. 10:2-12; Lk. 16:18; I Cor. 7:15, 39; Rom. 7:3-4).
3. We should also ask: Does the N.T. absolutely and unequivocally permit remarriage after divorce? The O.T. didn't (Deut. 24:1-4)! Actually, there are no absolute or unequivocal directions in this matter. What each of us believe or practice, we do so by our inferences or deductions from certain principles.
4. The following are my personal conclusions or deductions:
 - a. God made marriage for the whole human race.
 - b. Very few men or women have the "gift" to remain celibate.
 - c. Divorce is a sin; Marriage is *not* a sin.
 - d. No one can be *made* to be an adulterer or adulteress against their will simply by divorcing them. They may be stigmatized unjustly as an adulterer and whoever marries the stigmatized one may also suffer such stigma.
 - e. When there is a divorce there is no longer a marriage, neither in God's eyes nor in man's eyes—THERE IS A SIN IN GOD'S EYES FOR WHICH SOMEONE MUST REPENT (preferably remarriage to the same partner).
 But unless there is a reconciliation of those two persons, the marriage is over. They are no longer married to the other person.
 - f. There are two circumstances which I believe God considers one partner of a marriage innocent in divorce (unfaithfulness; desertion) and the "brother or sister is not bound." Therefore, my opinion is that they are free to remarry—to be guided by their knowledge of the will of God for marriage and their own consciences.
5. I believe God and Christ are interested in producing the highest good in every person's life and in society in general and that is the spirit behind any O.T. Law or N.T. Principle (e.g. the "Sabbath" was made for man, not man for the sabbath, principle).
 - a. What practical or ultimate good is going to be served by forcing (by law, where there really is no such law) those once divorced to remain celibate the rest of their lives?
 Of course, Christians should live by the highest law—Love and never need to divorce; but some "Christians" do fall! What about non-Christians? Should a minister of the gospel not also seek the highest good in every *fallen* person's life?
 - b. Many divorces involve small children. What if a husband is left with small children to rear? What if a wife is? Who shall support them financially? Are they better served to be reared without a father or without a mother?

- c. Would enforced celibacy heal the results of divorce? Will the church be able to support both materially and psychologically all broken homes? Will the taxpayers and the State?
- d. Would enforced celibacy heal the problems of temptation and incontinence (I Cor. 7:2, 5, 9, 36)?

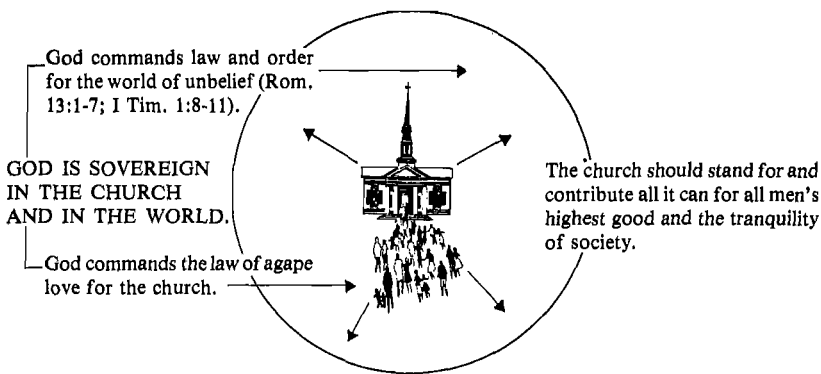
If we might paraphrase Jesus, "Is it lawful to do good through the institution of marriage or to tempt to promiscuity through enforced celibacy? Marriage was made for man, not man for marriage." Enforced celibacy in prisons intensifies sexual crime.

- e. In no sense of the word do I condone divorce. I do not even condone loveless marriages whether they remain legally and outwardly married until they die. Both are certainly less than God's ideal.
- f. But, neither do I think a minister of the gospel (since he is authorized by the civil authorities to do so) is "partaking of the sin of divorce by performing marriage vows for couples who are both unbelievers or one a believer and another an unbeliever or those who have been previously divorced.

God does not approve of divorce; I do not approve of divorce. God *does* approve of marriage—I approve of marriage. I had nothing to do with their divorce; but I can have something to do with their marriage.

And last, but not least, in every marriage I perform I may, in a positive way, be able to instruct and exemplify the Christian gospel—and in a negative sense I may not give anyone an opportunity to criticize the church for lack of compassion and understanding.

I am also standing for law and order in the lives of unbelievers who will not be controlled by the law of love.



THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

III. THE POWER OF MARRIAGE, 7:12-16

- A. Paul's instruction to the Corinthian Christian married to an unbeliever is that the believer should "sanctify" the marriage by trying to win the unbeliever.
1. The unbeliever is in a "set apart" circumstance (at least that much set apart from the world) by being married to a believer.
 2. The marriage relationship is a powerful tool in the hands of God for salvation.
 - a. When a man is converted, as head of the house he should lead his family to find the Lord (the Philippian jailer and Cornelius).
 - b. When a woman is converted, she has to be content with a slower process. Peter says that wives should submit themselves to their husbands; the husbands will more readily be won to Christ this way than through their wives' nagging, "preaching" or arguing, I Peter 3:1-2.
- B. Children who have one or two Christian parents are at a great advantage over those reared in non-Christian homes. They also are "set apart" that much from complete worldliness.
1. Paul does not mean that any unbeliever or child is automatically saved by being married to a Christian or being born of Christian parents.
 2. But they will undoubtedly hear the gospel or see it being lived out more clearly and often there than anywhere else.
- C. When the unbelieving partner in a marriage has a heart so hardened by sin he/she "puts asunder" (Gr. *choridzo*, the same word used in Mt. 19:6; Mk. 10:9, and means more than "separation.") or divorces the believing partner, then the believing partner is "not bound."
1. I believe the way to remarriage is opened up, not only to the believer, but to the unbeliever.
 2. Dependent, of course, upon circumstances, needs, conscience, penitence and civil law.
 3. The unbeliever who has caused divorce has sinned. He/she must become a believer and be immersed in repentance in order to be forgiven.
 4. But, for the benefit of society, if the unbeliever cannot be controlled from promiscuous sexual intercourse by self-control, he/she should be married according to the laws of the society in order to maintain some level of human responsibility and keep human society from degenerating into an animalistic level.
 4. The civil law is for the non-Christian (I Tim. 1:8-11; Rom. 13:1-7).

IV. THE PRIVILEGE OF CELIBACY, 7:17-40

- A. Paul by guidance of the Holy Spirit, says that under certain circumstances it would be better to remain single.

1. That is quite startling in these days when apparently the unmarried condition is to be avoided at any cost.
2. Marriage and a family is the normal state of affairs for Christians and non-Christians alike.

But some people have been given the ability (charisma) to remain unmarried.

3. Some people tend to feel that there is something wrong with the Christian who is a "spinster" or a "bachelor"—Paul is not in agreement.
- B. Paul's advise, "seek not."
1. Consider how dangerous it would be to marry, just for the sake of appearances, someone whose idea of loyalty to Christ is not your own.
 2. God did not create us for marriage AT ANY PRICE!
 3. Paul gives 3 advantages of celibacy:
 - a. Relief from anxiety about the things of the world which must be concentrated on by a "bread winner."
 - b. Freed from distractions in order to serve the Lord more fully and intensely.
 - c. Freed from troubles due to distressing times.

Now of course these may be achieved whether married or unmarried—but with less difficulty and more time for the Lord when unmarried, if the circumstances are such as to disrupt peaceful family life (like persecution, economic distress, etc.).

God forbade Jeremiah to marry (Jer. 16:1-4) because of terrible times.

- C. If it is marriage out of the will of God, then it is better to remain single.
 1. To step into any relationship outside the will of God is not only to involve oneself in tragedy, but perhaps to bring sorrow into the lives of a generation yet to be born.
 2. Entry into a marriage out of the will of God which brings children into the world may cause their whole lives to know unhappiness, misery and unbelief.

Only the very strong, who by the grace of God having emotions and drives under control, with the special gift, are able to do this. All others should marry. And the married life is the norm—in no way inferior spiritually to celibacy.

SOME OBSERVATIONS OR CONCLUSIONS: (especially for Christians)

1. If you have the gift of celibacy, do not seek to be married but rather use your gift as a single person for God's glory.

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

2. If you do not have the gift of celibacy, plan to marry. If you don't marry, you will most likely get into trouble. It is better to marry than to burn.
3. If you are getting married, be sure your husband or wife is a Christian.
4. If you are already married to an unbeliever, go to any extreme to preserve the marriage. You might well win your husband or wife to the Lord in conducting yourself in the Spirit of Christ in marriage.
5. If you want a happy marriage, do not neglect to afford your partner all the physical satisfaction desired, along with the love and spiritual aspects of marriage. The wife owns her husband's body, and the husband owns his wife's body.
6. If divorce comes in the marriages of believers or unbelievers, Christians must be involved in finding and guiding the fallen to the highest possible good for the person and for society. This will most likely involve re-marriage.
7. Most certainly, the church must emphasize in the minds of its membership (at the youngest level possible) God's will for marriage. The church must also emphasize *agape love* (love of choice, love of will-power, love of decision—not emotion only; a love for the unlovable; a love that is commanded by God) as the only security for marriage.

SECTION 3

Be Sharing (16:19-31)

19 "There was a rich man, who was clothed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day. ²⁰And at his gate lay a poor man named Lazarus, full of sores, ²¹who desired to be fed with what fell from the rich man's table; moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. ²²The poor man died and was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom. The rich man also died and was buried; ²³and in Hades, being in torment, he lifted up his eyes, and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus in his bosom. ²⁴And he called out, 'Father Abraham, have mercy upon me, and send Lazarus to dip the end of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am in anguish in this flame.' ²⁵But Abraham said, 'Son, remember that you in your lifetime received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner evil things; but now he is comforted here, and you are in anguish. ²⁶And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, in order that those who would pass from here to you may not be able, and none may cross from there to us.' ²⁷And he said, 'Then I beg you, father, to send him to my father's house, ²⁸for I have five brothers, so that he may warn them, lest they also come into this place of torment.' ²⁹But Abraham said, 'They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.' ³⁰And he said, 'No, father Abraham;

but if some one goes to them from the dead, they will repent.' ³¹He said to him, 'If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be convinced if some one should rise from the dead.' "

16:19-21 Selfishness: Jesus told about a rich man who used his riches selfishly to illustrate what happens to such people after they die. Some have called this a parable—but Jesus does not call it a parable. Jesus even gives the name of the beggar. We believe it was an event that literally happened and is true to the facts in every detail. There was such a rich man; there was such a beggar; there is such a place as Hades. Even if it was a parable Jesus would not "make up" a fantasy which had no basis in fact about such a serious matter as life after death. He would not concoct a fable which was untrue just to scare someone. Besides, what He teaches here about life after death for the impenitent is substantiated by the rest of the New Testament.

Note the contrasts between the two men:

The rich man

1. dressed in a purple robe
(Gr. *porphuran*) and fine linen
(Gr. *bussan*); sign of luxury.
2. rich (Gr. *plousios*)
3. feasted sumptuously every day
(Gr. *euphrainomenos lampros*,
lit. "made merry flamboy-
antly") show of ostentation; he
flaunted his riches.

The beggar

1. covered with open, festering
sores (Gr. *eilkomenos*) licked
by the dogs; destitution
2. poor (Gr. *ptochos*)
3. wished to be fed with crumbs
from rich man's table (Gr.
*epithumon chortasthenai apo
ton piptonton apo tes trapezes*,
lit. "desiring to be satisfied
from the table . . .") shows
humility.

The beggar, Lazarus, lay every day at the gate of the rich man. The implication is that the rich man had to be aware of the beggar's destitution. Apparently the beggar expressed his "desire" to be fed crumbs from the rich man's table but nothing was offered him. This side of the grave the scoffing Pharisees and most of the world today would have contempt for the poor beggar—if not contempt then inactive pity (if there is such a thing). The avaricious Pharisees and most of the world today would envy the rich man. That is how it is in this world—but what about after this life is over?

16:22-25 Suffering: Here are two men at opposite ends of the economic and social spectrum—the very rich and the utterly destitute. Both of them died, of course, for every man does! Neither riches nor poverty can circumvent death. One had a funeral (the rich man was "buried") and the body of the other was probably cast into Gehenna (Jerusalem's city-dump). The beggar was carried by the angels to Abraham's "bosom." Abraham

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

died himself when he was 175 years old (Gen. 25:7) and he was "gathered to his people." Since none of his ancestors were buried in the cave of Machpelah (where he was buried) the phrase "gathered to his people" does not simply refer to Abraham's death and burial. Apparently the phrase refers to Abraham's existence after death with those who before him had died in faith (Heb. 11:1-16). This is why the location of the departed spirit of this beggar "son of Abraham" was actually called "Abraham's bosom." The rich man went to Hades and was in torment. Death comes to all but it does not end existence. The dead apparently go to some intermediate state where they are conscious, knowing and being known, as they wait the final judgment and eternal existence. This intermediate state is an actual place. Samuel was recognized by both the witch and Saul (I Sam. 28:13-19) and Samuel was conscious. There are beings in another existence all around us if we could "see" them. God adjusted the eyes of Elisha's servant to "see" the fiery chariots and horses (II Kings 6:16-17). The apostles saw Moses and Elijah and recognized them as they were transfigured with Jesus (Mt. 17:3; Mk. 9:4; Lk. 9:30-31).

There have been declarations that the Old Testament does not teach life after death. That is sheer nonsense. Job believed (Job 19:25-26); Daniel believed (Dan. 12:2ff.); David believed (II Sam. 12:23); Abraham believed (Heb. 11:19); many O.T. saints believed (Heb. 11:35); Martha believed (Jn. 11:24); many of the Pharisees believed (Acts 23:6-8). For an extensive study of the O.T. teaching on the Future Life, see *Isaiah, Vol. II* by Paul T. Butler, College Press, pgs. 287-299.

Hades (Gr. *Haidēs*) in Greek mythology was the god of the underworld, the son of Cronos and Rhea and the brother of Zeus; the word came to be used to denote the kingdom ruled over by Hades, or the abode of the dead. The Greek conception of Hades was that of a locality receiving into itself all the dead, but divided into two regions, one a place of torment, the other of blessedness. Almost without exception the Septuagint uses *hades* to translate the Hebrew word *Sheol* which is the O.T. name for the abode of the dead. Although the word itself in Greek had its origins in Greek mythology, the *concept* Jesus and the rest of the N.T. teach about the abode of the dead is from the O.T. revelation of God. Admittedly the O.T. is vague and dim about life after death, still, once one gathers all that is said and inferred about Sheol from the O.T. it appears clear there was belief in a continuity of consciousness after physical death; there was rest and blessedness for the believer and torment for the infidel (cf. Isa. 14:12ff. for example). The O.T. as well as the N.T. places emphasis on the final judgment and redemption and leaves many things connected with the intermediate state in darkness.

The clearest picture we have in all the Bible on the intermediate state of the dead is in Luke 16:19-31. The N.T. seems to teach that life *immediately* after death will be a state of:

- a. *Consciousness*: II Cor. 5:8; Phil. 1:23; Lk. 23:43; 16:24ff.; II Cor. 12:2-4; Rev. 14:13.
- b. *Disembodiment*: However, the spirit will be reunited with a new and appropriate body at the final resurrection; I Cor. 15:35ff.; Rev. 6:9.
- c. *Incompleteness*: No part of the church is complete without the whole fellowship of the saints; Eph. 3:18; Heb. 11:40.
- d. *Restfulness*: Rev. 7:13ff.; Rev. 14:13; Lk. 16:25; Jn. 11:11; I Thess. 4:13.
- e. *Presence with Christ*: II Cor. 5:8; Phil. 1:23.
- f. *Torment for Unbelievers*: Lk. 16:24; Rev. 14:9-11; 19:20.

What these passages appear to teach is that at the time of physical death, there is no break in memory, mentality or change in personality. What a man chooses to *be* in this world he apparently chooses to *be* in the next world. Of course, just like the rich man, many will cry out in anguish at the torment. But that has to do with a desire for relief from unpleasant circumstances, and has nothing to do with a willingness to repent and surrender to God's sovereign will.

The Bible seems to teach that there are four states of existence for man:

1. *The Innocent State*: Infants and young children are apparently in a state of moral innocence until they come to the point of mental and moral maturity where they clearly know the will of God and choose to disobey it; (cf. Mt. 18:1-6; 19:13-15). Only those who have the mental and moral maturity to repent are commanded to do so in the N.T. Should these innocents die before they have made an intelligent, free, moral choice to disobey God's will, they apparently go to be with Jesus (in the intermediate state; see II Sam. 12:23, etc.). There is no categorical determination in the Scriptures as to the age a person will be when he reaches moral accountability. The Hebrews arbitrarily declared young men to have reached that age at 12-13 when they were given their *Bar-Mitzva* ("Son of the commandment").
2. *The Choice, or Probationary (Proving) State*: All persons who remain alive in this world long enough to make an intelligent, free, moral choice to disobey God's will *do so!* All men sin (Rom. 3:23). But God is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance so He has declared His plan of redemption in a New and Final Testament. All who hear that and believe it by obedience to the terms become citizens of the Kingdom of Christ. Those who do not repent and obey are "sons of darkness" and servants of the devil. Every sinner is dead in sin—separated from God. Every sinner who believes the Gospel and obeys has been "resurrected" to a new life in Christ and is reconciled to God.

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

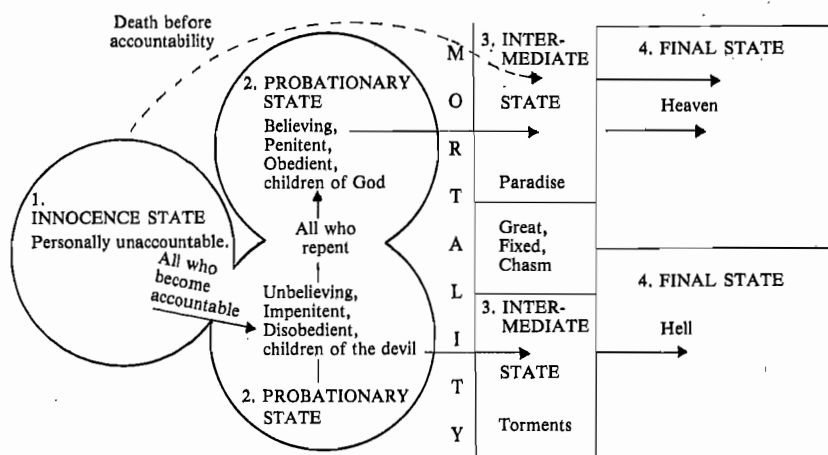
3. *The Intermediate State:* All persons die physically. All human beings must eventually be separated from this earthly body. When that occurs, the real person—the spirit of the person apparently goes to a disembodied, intermediate state of conscious existence. In the intermediate state there are two existences—Paradise (Lk. 23:43) for the saved and Torments (Lk. 16:23) for the unsaved. There is a “great gulf”³¹ or chasm separating the two realms over which mankind cannot pass (Lk. 16:26). There, all mankind awaits the Final State which will be realized at the Second Advent of Jesus Christ (I Thess. 4:13-18, etc.).
4. *The Final State:* At the Second Advent of Jesus Christ the Great White Throne Judgment and Him who sits upon it will judge all mankind (Rev. 20:11ff.). Eternal existence will be determined on the basis of what is written in the “books”—some will go to eternal blessedness and some will go to eternal separation from God in Hell (cf. Rev. 21:1—22:21). Those who by faith and obedience to the Gospel have taken part in the “first resurrection” (Romans 6:1-11; Jn. 5:24-29; Rev. 20:1-6) will be forever in the fellowship of God and will not suffer the “second death.”

Critics of the Bible have always felt rather smug about attacking this account of Jesus at the point in the story where the rich man is said to be “in anguish in this flame.” Their contention is that the Bible states an impossibility since flame consumes and it is a logical impossibility for something to be eternally consumed. We must remember, however, the Bible is written in human language, describing unseen, spiritual and supernatural things in natural terms. God must communicate to man in terms of man’s experience, so He likens eternal *torment* unto eternal *flames*. It is altogether possible, of course, for God to create a literal, eternal lake of fire and brimstone (Rev. 14:9-11; 19:20; 20:14-15; 21:8) and create a body for the impenitent spirit that will never be consumed but burned in flame forever. But the emphasis seems to be in this passage on the mental anguish and conscious moral suffering of the rich man in Hades. The Greek word *basanos* (“torment”) is sometimes translated “toil” and means primarily, “to rub on the touchstone, to put to the test, to examine by torture.” The word *odunomai* is translated “anguish” (RSV) and “tormented” (KJV) in 16:24; it is translated “pain” or “anguish” of the heart (Rom. 9:2; I Tim. 6:10). Mary uses the word of her mental anguish when she could not find the lad Jesus (Lk. 2:48) and Paul’s departure from the Ephesian elders brought deep sorrow to his heart (Acts 20:38). Every human being knows that mental and spiritual anguish is more severely tormenting than any physical torture. Men without faith in God have been able to endure excruciating physical tortures and survive—but without faith in God and His Word, mental anxiety or spiritual guilt is devastating. Unforgiven sin, unreconciled guilt and unpacified animosity forever and ever would

certainly qualify to be described as a "lake of fire and brimstone" of torment. An unrelenting, unappeased conscience burns and consumes like fire. Eternal torment consists of total and final confinement in cowardliness, untrustworthiness, pollution, murder, fornication, sorcery, idolatry, lying (Rev. 21:8; 22:15) forever and ever.

The beggar, in Abraham's bosom, is comforted (Gr. *parakaleitai*, "strengthened"). The eternal state of the comforted is described in Rev. 21:1-4; 21:22-27; 22:1-5.

THE FOUR STATES OF MAN



See pages 309 and 310 for scripture references and explanations.

16:26-31 Sentenced: The report on the rich man and Lazarus parts the veil on life after death and dispels many human heresies about it. First, there is no such thing as "second probation" (called by some, purgatory). The solemn reality taught by Jesus is that all who die in unbelief pass on to a lost eternity. There are no second chances. The great chasm (Gr. *chasma*, lit. "yawning") is impassable and immovable. The state of the wicked and righteous is fixed (Gr. *sterizo*, "established") after physical death. There are no scriptures anywhere in the Bible which teach a second chance. The passage in I Pet. 3:18-20 refers to the preaching of the Spirit of Christ who was in the prophet Noah (cf. I Pet. 1:10-11) when Noah preached to

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

the antediluvian sinners (I Pet. 3:20). The spirits of those disobedient were "in prison" when Peter was writing his epistle, *not* during the preaching of the Spirit of Christ, (see *Letters From Peter*, by Clinton Gill, College Press, pgs. 90-91). Second, there is no such thing as "soul sleep." The same soul that was alive and conscious on earth was alive and conscious after death. The essential characteristic of spirit is life. There can be no such thing as a non-living or unconcious spirit. Consciousness is that which is the essence of spirit. Death is not extinction—only separation. Physical death is the separation of spirit from mortal body; spiritual death is separation of the eternal spirit from its Creator. Some verses used by those who teach "soul-sleep" are: (Jn. 11:11-14; Mt. 9:24; Acts 7:60; I Cor. 15:51; I Thess. 4:13-14; Eccl. 9:5-6; 9:10; Psa. 13:3; 6:5; 115:17; 146:3-4; Dan. 12:2). But these simply describe the person only as he *appears* from the human viewpoint which is limited to seeing the visible, physical manifestations of life. Jesus plainly indicates that there is consciousness beyond death. Abraham and the rich man recognized one another. There was thinking and feeling (emotions, at least). Jesus knew what reality was beyond death (cf. Jn. 14:1ff.). He would not deceive His hearers about so imperative a concept.

Third, there is no such thing as spiritism. The spirits of dead men do not return (unless God permits a special case, like Samuel). Death causes a complete break with this world as far as communication is concerned (cf. Job 10:21; 7:9-10; II Sam. 12:23; II Cor. 5:8). The *attempt* to communicate with the dead is forbidden by the Bible (Deut. 18:9-12; Ex. 22:18; Lev. 20:6; Isa. 8:19-20; II Kings 1:3, etc.). What is thought to be spiritism today may be either human hoax or the *lying* signs of the devil (cf. II Thess. 2:9-12; Rev. 13:13-15). The famous magician Houdini wrote a book entitled, *A Magician Among The Spirits*—a well documented and thorough exposure of spiritism. In his book he said, "Mine has not been an investigation of a few days or weeks or months, but one that has extended over 30 years, and in that 30 years I have not found one (spiritist) that did not reek of fraud, one that could not be reproduced by earthly powers, . . . up to the present time everything that I have investigated has been fraud."

There are some extremely important lessons to be learned from this story. The right use of privilege and possessions in this life is significant for all eternity. The conditions beyond this life result from a godly, merciful use of money to help those in need (cf. Mt. 25:31-46). Life which is not affected by morality now will not be affected by the miraculous now or after this life! Neither a miraculous apparition or someone returning from the dead, nor a tragic story of the torture and suffering of the damned would effect the repentance of the rich man's brothers! Miracles are to establish the faithfulness of God's revealed Word—they do not in themselves bring people to repentance. Hardship, persecution, tragedy seldom produce

repentance (cf. Amos 4:6-13; Rev. 9:20-21; 16:10-11). It is the proclamation of the absolute faithfulness and mercifulness of God as demonstrated in the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ that is the power unto salvation. Miracles simply confirm that what God has said about atonement, forgiveness, salvation and heaven is to be trusted. Plenty of miracles were performed by God's messengers in Bible times. Man does not need any more miracles. God's word is sufficiently validated to engender trust in Him. Men who will not believe now would not be *convinced* (Gr. *peisthesontai*) if another miracle were wrought before their very eyes. Men did not believe or trust Jesus even when He brought a different Lazarus back from the dead (Jn. 11:45-57). Miracles which could not be denied did not produce discipleship in and of themselves (cf. Acts 4:15-22). The task of the disciple of Jesus is to communicate the word of God clearly, plainly, understandably and lovingly to the unbelieving world and then to let every hearer make his own decision. Every human being deserves the opportunity to hear the Word presented in an understandable and winsome way at least once. Disciples of Jesus are *not* responsible for the choice—only for the *communication*. This starkly realistic look at eternity should motivate every Christian for evangelism immediately!

STUDY STIMULATORS:

1. Why, if material possessions are only temporary, does God's word say so much about how men use or misuse these possessions?
2. Do you consider all you own yours? After all you earned it! Or is it all God's? Why?
3. What is the best investment for your money?
4. Do you think some Christians or Christian endeavors are meeting the demand of Christ to be as wise as "children of the world" in their use of money? Why?
5. Have you ever thought there must be some people about half way between being lost and saved? What do you think about Jesus' categories?
6. Why can't a man serve two masters? How did the Pharisees prove that?
7. Do you agree with the religious denomination that today says John the Baptist founded the church?
8. What connection does Jesus' teaching on entering the kingdom by violence have to do with the proper use of money?
9. How is the subject of divorce connected to misuse of money?
10. Is divorce a sin? Can it be forgiven? What should the Christian attitude be toward remarriage of those who have been divorced?
11. Is the account of the rich man and Lazarus a parable? If it is how can we accept it as an accurate description of life after death?

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

12. Where is Hades? What is it like?
13. Are the unsaved really going to burn forever in flames?
14. What are the four states of human existence?
15. Three religious heresies are disproved by the account of the rich man and Lazarus—what are they?
16. Why wouldn't sending a man back from the dead have convinced the brothers of the rich man?

HELL

(Mt. 10:28)

By Paul T. Butler — OBC Chapel, September 1975

INTRODUCTION

MY NAME IS NOT HARRY TRUMAN AND I'M NOT RUNNING FOR PRESIDENT. But I propose to give you a sermon on Hell this morning.

I. HELL MAKES THE NEWS OCCASIONALLY.

- A. In May, 1967, *Time* magazine ran an article on it. Some theologians interviewed had doubts about whether there is an afterlife, and others absolutely disavowed the existence of an eternal hell.
- B. A 30 year old preacher in one of our western communities suddenly became a popular sensation and a national figure because he publicly and proudly denied the existence of hell—and was so quoted in *Time*—he said, “Hell is a damnable doctrine—responsible for a large measure of this world’s hatred. According to this doctrine, God, who commands us to love our enemies, plays the hypocrite by damning his enemies. This in turn stimulates the hatred of God by people who abhor hypocrisy—and it gives sanction to our hatred of certain selected enemies.”
- C. Of the doctrine of the Second Coming and all mankind, except a few, being extinguished or tormented for ever, Nels F. S. Ferre says (*Sun and the Umbrella*, pg. 33), “It seems doubtful that Jesus ever taught such a doctrine.”

II. BUT THERE IS A RETICENCE, EVEN OF BIBLE BELIEVING PREACHERS, TO PREACH ON HELL.

- A. Billy Graham says, in one of his tracts,
 - 1. Hell “. . . is the most unpopular subject a minister can choose. . .”
 - 2. “In glancing through the books in my library I found that there have been few sermons written on this subject in the past 50 years.”
 - 3. “I have had a number of ministers tell me that they have never preached a sermon on hell and yet, as I read the New Testament, I am amazed at the number of direct references to this subject, especially by Christ.”
- B. In a tract from the “Back To God Hour” the results of a survey taken and indicated that 99% of the people in this country believe in God, but only 58% believe in hell (Tract #112).

III. FEAR OF HELL IS A BIBLICAL MOTIVATION FOR REPENTANCE AND CONVERSION.

- A. Halley’s Handbook, pg. 459, Jesus “talked much about the future life. He appealed to the hope of heaven and the fear of hell. . . .

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

It is a pity that the present day pulpit so generally deprecates the very motives that Jesus himself appealed to. Maybe that is one of the reasons the pulpit has lost so much of its power. One of the most powerful stimulants to good and deterrents from evil in this life is a profound conviction as to the reality of the future life, and that our estate there will depend on our behavior here. . . ."

C. S. Lewis, *Letters to Malcom*: "I have met no people who fully disbelieved in hell and also had a living and life-giving belief in heaven."

- B. C. S. Lewis, in *The Problem of Pain*, pg. 118: "There is no doctrine which I would more willingly remove from Christianity than this, if it lay in my power. But it has the full support of Scripture and, specially, of Our Lord's own words."
- C. Dwight L. Moody once said, "The word of God teaches us plainly that there is future retribution; if it does not teach that it does not teach anything. . . . Now some people say, 'Oh, you are just trying to scare us, you say such things just to alarm us.' I would consider myself an unfaithful servant if I did not so warn you. The blood of your soul would be required at my hands if I did not so warn you. . . . No one spoke of the judgment as Christ did; none knew it as well as he."
- D. Paul the apostle said, "Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men . . ." (II Cor. 5:11).
Peter wrote, "... pass the time of your sojourning here in fear . . ." (I Pet. 1:17).
- E. Donald F. Tweedie, Jr., *Eternity*, April 1965, said: "... I personally am not negative about fear as an inducement to a crisis which will culminate in a Christian conversion. Probably at least some element of fear is a necessary part of such a crisis experience. Certainly, if the dangers of lostness and hell are real, fear is a most appropriate emotion."

TO LET A LOST AND DOOMED WORLD OF MANKIND GO MERRILY, LAUGHING AND JOKING AND ENTERTAINING ITSELF WITH POSITIVE FEELINGS AND UNFOUNDED OPTIMISM TOWARD AN ETERNAL HELL IS LIKE LETTING A CHILD RUN MERRILY OUT INTO A BUSY STREET LAUGHING, THINKING HAPPY THOUGHTS ALL THE TIME AND NOT WARNING IT OF IMPENDING CATASTROPHE!

I am not contending that fear and hell and judgment is the most expedient way to motivate conversion. Trusting in the faithfulness, mercy, love and goodness of God is the most significant basis for a lasting and maturing conversion. But as easy as it is for any of us and all of us to fall into hypocrisy, presumptiveness upon the grace of God, or returning to a life

HELL

of self-indulgence, WE NEED TO REMIND OURSELVES FREQUENTLY OF THE DANGER OF ETERNAL HELL!

IV. ILLUSTRATION:

A number of years ago four men were fishing from a boat in the Niagara River some distance above the world-renowned falls. As the fish were not very hungry the fishers got into a controversy regarding future punishment. Three of the number contended that there was no such place as hell, whilst the fourth accepted the testimony of Scripture on the subject. The discussion became so heated they failed to observe that their boat was getting perilously near the sweep of the current. Perceiving their danger, they seized the oars, and rowed with all their might to a safe spot on the river. "If there is no such place as hell," said the believer in God's Word, "why were you so afraid to go over the falls?" One of them replied, "The 'No Hell' doctrine is good enough to go fishing with, but it is very poor to go over the falls with."

DISCUSSION

I. HELL IS A REAL PLACE.

A. There are four words translated Hell in the KJV.

1. *Sheol*: The Hebrew word which represents the locality or condition of the dead (*keber* means tomb; *shahkath* means corruption). *Sheol* is not as precise about endless, retributive character of the life beyond as New Testament. Still, wherever used, it does usually represent the place of future retribution (Deut. 32:22; II Sam. 22:6; Job 17:15; 21:13; 26:6; Ps. 9:17; 18:5; 89:48; 116:3; 139:8; Prov. 23:14; 15:11; Isa. 14:15; Ezek. 31:16, 17; Amos 9:2; Jonah 2:2).
2. *Tartarus*: II Pet. 2:4 — the place where God cast the angels who sinned and who are delivered into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment.
3. *Hades*: Most frequently used as antithetical to heaven. Mt. 11:23; 16:18; Lk. 10:15; 16:23; Rev. 1:18; 6:8; 20:13. Sometimes simply the place of departed dead.
4. *Gehenna*: or Valley of Hinnom; Mt. 5:22, 29, 30; 10:28; 18:9; 23:15, 33; Mk. 9:43, 45, 47; Lk. 12:5; Jas. 3:6. Most used word and most associated with judgment.

The words in themselves do not prove hell's existence. They merely describe in human language that which man has not yet fully experienced. The existence of hell is proven from three lines of evidence.

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

B. Natural Revelation (we shall equate judgment with hell).

1. "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and wickedness of men who by their wickedness suppress the truth. For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them . . . clearly perceived in the things that have been made . . . receiving in their own persons the due penalty for their error" (Rom. 1:18ff.).
2. The very fact that built into our universe and its moral structure there are penalties, judgments and executions of those judgments has indicated to the pagan world some place of future retribution.
3. Many would *like* to believe there is no such place and some even use the word hell to swear there is no such place, but God has not left Himself without witness to the whole world . . . so they shall be without excuse!
4. I've known some rounders in my day and every one of them except one believed there was a place of retribution—hell.

C. Man's Conscience

1. "When Gentiles who have not the law do by nature what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. They show that what the law requires is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness and their conflicting thoughts accuse or perhaps excuse them . . ." (Rom. 2:14ff.).
2. Alfred M. Rehwinkel has written a masterful book on *The Voice of Conscience*.

Conscience is absolute in its verdict. There is no bargaining or compromising. We may attempt to excuse ourselves, but conscience will prevail. The judgment of conscience is final. Conscience does not change its verdict unless the standard or law is changed or done away. This is the very essence of the Christian's "passing from death to life"—Jesus has taken away the law that stood against us. This is the only escape from conscience. Without the removal of the law, judgment and retribution are inevitable. Conscience is no respecter of persons. It pronounces its unimpeachable judgments regardless of the opposing authority by which it may be confronted.

3. Conscience is man himself speaking as a moral being to himself. God has placed this voice in man at his creation and man cannot rid himself of it, even if he would.

Men have cried out to die and have committed suicide attempting to escape from the horror of a tormenting conscience. In the torments of an aroused conscience, man experiences a foretaste of everlasting torture in hell.

HELL

D. On the Authority of Jesus Christ

1. Never were there words as solemn and as searching as those in which Jesus warned of hell and the judgment to come. In 12 out of 35 of his parables he depicts men as judged, condemned, and punished for their sins. In one, (Lazarus and the rich man) he draws back the veil on the conditions men in the hereafter . . . a chasm that is forever unbridgeable (Lk. 16:19-31).
2. More than the love of God is revealed at the cross. There we see, unsheathed, the implacable hostility of God's wrath against sin—past, present and future. It is a precursor of the last judgment.
3. The documents that make up our New Testament have been submitted to nearly 2,000 years of intense, scientific, archaeological, textual, investigation. They have been verified, authenticated, accredited as historically trustworthy. They have never, by any authentic evidence, been contradicted. They are a record of one Jesus of Nazareth who walked on the sea, healed the sick, cast out demons, raised the dead and was himself raised from the dead.

HE SAID THERE WAS A PLACE OF FINAL AND ETERNAL RETRIBUTION IN THE LIFE BEYOND THIS ONE. . . . I BELIEVE HIM! UNTIL SOMEONE COMES ALONG WITH BETTER CREDENTIALS THAN HIS, I WILL CONTINUE TO BELIEVE HIM!

Madalyn Murray O'Hair, speaking on the campus of Drake University, said, "There is absolutely no conclusive evidence that Jesus ever really existed. . . . These stories about him must be considered nothing more than folk tales. . . . But there is never going to be any way of verifying them one way or another. . . . I reject the idea of a life hereafter on the same grounds. Do you know anybody who has come back with a first-hand report on heaven? If you do, let me know. Until then you'll pardon me if I don't buy it. I agree with Mark Twain, who wrote about the hereafter, that there is no sex in it; you can't eat anything in it; there is absolutely nothing physical in it. You wouldn't have your brain, you wouldn't have any sensation, you wouldn't be able to enjoy anything—unless you were queer for hymn singing and harp playing. So who needs it? SPEAKING FOR MYSELF, I'D RATHER GO TO HELL."

II. HELL IS THE ETERNAL HOME OF THE IMPENITENT

A. It is described as:

1. the outer darkness (Mt. 8:12)
2. weeping and gnashing of teeth (Mt. 8:12)
3. the pit of the abyss (Rev. 9:2, 11)
4. eternal punishment (Mt. 25:46)

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

5. torment or anguish (Lk. 16:24; Rev. 14:10, 11)
 6. eternal sin (Mk. 3:29)
 7. second death (Rev. 21:8)
 8. eternal destruction from the face of the Lord and from the glory of his might (II Thess. 1:9)
- B. Hell is the penitentiary of the moral universe in which all impenitent are sentenced for eternity to share with the devil and rebellious angels.
1. Obviously its essential characteristic is lostness, separation from God and the fellowship of the godlike.
 2. It is eternal remorse, despair, hopelessness and guilt.
 3. C. C. Crawford, *Survey Course in Christian Doctrine*, Vol. II, "Hell has been prepared for the devil and his angels. Wicked men will eventually go to hell, not because God will cast them into it, but because their own consciences will drive them, instinctively, to their proper place (as in the case of Judas, Acts 2:23). As water seeks its own level, they who in this present life fit themselves only for the society of the rebellious, wicked, unbelieving, will instinctively seek that type of society in the next world. For, without a doubt, the devil and all his kind would be miserable in heaven."
- C. A place where sin and wickedness is rampant
1. Judging from the manner in which God deals with unrepentant sinners (Rom. 1), that is, allowing their sin to go unrestrained, it follows that man's destiny is the free expression of pride, selfishness and greed, hate, hurtfulness.
 2. God says: "You have lived for yourself, now you may have just that. . . . Man who was created a social being, is in the end cut off completely from God and goodness."
 3. When you were born into this world, you came to a place that had been prepared for you. Generations of blood and breeding and tradition . . . and, of course, the particular preparation of parents; etc. You were expected; you were prepared for; and so you arrived, not at just a place, but a prepared place. IN OTHER WORDS, YOU ARRIVED AT HOME. HELL IS PREPARED FOR THOSE WHO WANT IT!
- IT SHOULD NOT BE A STRANGE THOUGHT THAT, EVEN AS THERE WAS PREPARATION FOR MAN'S ARRIVAL INTO THIS WORLD, THERE IS ALSO PREPARATION FOR HIS ARRIVAL IN THE NEXT WORLD!
- D. A place of utter ruin and lostness and destruction of reality
1. C. S. Lewis in *The Problem of Pain* (p. 125-126), "To enter heaven is to become more human than you ever succeeded in

HELL

being in earth; to enter hell, is to be banished from humanity. What is cast (or casts itself) into hell is not a man: it is "remains." To be a complete man means to have the passions obedient to the will and the will offered to God: to *have been* a man would presumably mean to consist of a will utterly centered in itself and passions utterly uncontrolled by the will."

2. "By virtue of God's moral law, the sinner reaps as he has sown, and sooner or later is repaid by contempt, selfishness, hate, hurtfulness. Then the selfishness of one sinner is punished by the selfishness of another, the ambition of one by the ambition of another, the cruelty of one by the cruelty of another. The misery of the wicked hereafter will doubtless be due in part to the spirit of their companions. They dislike the good, whose presence and example is a continual reproof and reminder the height from which they have fallen, and they shut themselves out of their company. The Judgment will bring about a complete cessation of intercourse between the good and the bad" (Strong, *Systematic Theology*, p. 1035).
3. Uncle Screwtape, writing to Wormwood says:
"To us a human is primarily food; our aim is the absorption of its will into ours, the increase of our own areas of selfhood at its expense. . . . We want cattle who can finally become food; He (God) wants servants who can finally become sons. We want to suck in, He wants to give out. We are empty and would be filled; He is full and flows over. Our war aim is a world in which Our Father Below has drawn all other beings into himself. . . ."

HELL IS A PLACE OF TOTAL SELFISHNESS . . . WHERE EVERYONE DEVOURS, EXPLOITS, ABUSES, PERVERTS, DESTROYS, REBELLS.

Prisoners of hell enjoy forever the horrible freedom they have demanded and are therefore self-enslaved.

The blessed, forever submitting to obedience, become through all eternity more and more free.

What went on in Sodom and Gomorrah; what people did to people in the decadance of Rome; the hateful, hurtful tortures of the German Third Reich; the agonies and torments of the millions in Russian and Chinese concentration camps; the ruin, destruction, hopelessness, despair of thousands of American skid-rows, bars, brothels, and drug addicts. . . . MULTIPLY A MILLION TIMES A MILLION AND YOU STILL DO NOT KNOW THE HORROR OF HELL.

IT IS A PLACE WHERE ALL THE HORRIBLE CONSEQUENCES OF UNBELIEF AND REBELLION ARE ALLOWED TO RUN RAMPANT FOREVER AND EVER!

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

III. HOW TO GO TO HELL

A. Just want to!

1. God created all of us with the power of will and choice. He will not revoke that power. He will give us what we choose.
2. C. S. Lewis, *Problem of Pain*, p. 127, "I willingly believe that the damned are, in one sense, successful, rebels to the end; that the doors of hell are locked on the inside. . . . they (occupants of hell) do not will even the first preliminary stages of that self-abandonment through which alone the soul can reach any good."
3. Just want this world—want what the devil wants—not the globe, but worldliness or mind-of-the-world (rebellion, license, greed, exploitation).
4. "To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law, indeed it cannot; and those who are in the flesh cannot please God" (Rom. 8:6).
5. ". . . friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God" (James 4:4-5).
6. "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. . . . No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other. . . . You cannot serve God and mammon" (Mt. 6:21, 24).
7. DO NOT THINK YOU CAN PRETEND TO BE SOMETHING OR DESIRE SOMETHING OTHER THAN WHAT YOU REALLY WANT IN YOUR HEART AND MIND. JESUS' MOST SCATHING JUDGMENTS FELL UPON THE "GREAT PRETENDERS" THE PHARISEES, OF HIS DAY. WE MAY FOOL ONE ANOTHER, BUT WE CAN'T FOOL GOD ABOUT WHAT WE REALLY WANT.

It comes down to this: If you really *do not want to do the will of God*, God will grant you your choice and all eternity to make that choice and suffer the consequences.

B. Because, you become what you want

1. The Lord has the power to make us become what we want but He will not make us become something we do not want!
2. The people of the Old Testament wanted a king like the nations, worshiped gods like those of the nations, and became like the wicked people of the nations! (Hosea 9:10).
3. The Pharisees went over land and sea to make proselytes and by their hypocrisy *made* them two-fold more sons of hell than themselves (Mt. 23:15).

HELL

4. Those who worship and serve the beast in the book of Revelation are stamped with the beast's image and character just as certainly as God's people are stamped with His Holy Spirit (sealed).
 5. What do those who do not want to do the will of God become? ". . . filled with all manner of wickedness, evil, covetousness, malice. Full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malignity, they are gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless . . ." (Rom. 1:29-31). THEY NOT ONLY DO THEM BUT APPROVE THOSE WHO PRACTICE THEM.
 6. ". . . immoral, idolaters, adulterers, homosexuals, thieves, greedy, drunkards, revilers, robbers will not inherit the kingdom of God" (I Cor. 6:9-10).
 7. ". . . immorality, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, anger, selfishness, dissension, party spirit, envy, drunkenness, carousing and the like . . ." (Gal. 5:19-20).
 8. ". . . reject authority, revile whatever they do not understand, grumblers, malcontents, following their own passions, loud-mouthed boasters, flattering people to gain advantage, act like instinctive, irrational animals" (Jude).
- C. One may actually do *nothing*, and go to hell.
1. "To him that knoweth to do good and doeth it not, to him it is sin" (James 4:17).
 2. The tree that produced nothing was hewn down and cast into the fire (Lk. 13:6-9).
 3. The parables of the talents (Mt. 25:14-30) and the pounds (Lk. 19:11-27) indicates those who did nothing incurred the wrath of the master.

ANXIETY, LETHARGY, SLOTHFULNESS ARE ALL SIGNALS OF UNBELIEF. WHAT YOU WANT, YOU BECOME; WHAT YOU BECOME YOU DO OR REFUSE TO DO!

The safest road to Hell is the gradual one—the gentle slope, soft underfoot, without sudden turnings, without milestones, with signposts (*Screw-tape Letters*, C. S. Lewis).

CONCLUSION

I. HELL OR HEAVEN?

- A. These are the alternatives in the Word of God for the whole human race.

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

1. By its warnings, threats, invitations and commands, it urges men to recognize the decisiveness of this life.
 2. It permits no silly, superficial view of life or of death, or of destiny.
 3. Instead, it insists on the inevitable fact that a man shall have what he has chosen. . . . "Let the evil doer still do evil, and the filthy still be filthy, and the righteous still do right, and the holy still be holy" (Rev. 22:11).
- B. It further declares that "now is the acceptable time" and "now is the day of salvation" (II Cor. 6:2).
1. It is unthinkable that a follower of Christ should take an indifferent attitude toward the issues of life.
 2. If the apostle Paul sought to persuade men, prompted by the terror of the Lord, it is difficult to see how we can become unconcerned for the salvation of the lost.
- C. Today's generation needs to be told what the New Testament teaches about hell and the awful reality of eternal retribution.
1. It is not a congenial task—not popular, but it is necessary.
 2. It must not be done sadistically, but seriously.
- II. THE PLAIN FACT IS THAT WE ARE ALL CLOSER TO ETERNITY THAN WE MAY REALIZE!
- A. The judgment day is nearer than any of us think. In a very real sense it is here right now.
- B. The night is far spent; the day is at hand, right here, right now.
- C. The Day is here, pressing upon us all with the immediacy of the *constant* call of Christ for our personal surrender to Him.
- D. The call is to engage now in a battle in Christ's Name in all the areas of the devil's usurpation of the throne of our hearts and lives.
- E. As C. S. Lewis says, "In all discussions of hell we should keep steadily before our eyes the possible damnation, not of our enemies nor our friends . . . but of ourselves. This sermon is not about your wife or son, nor about Nero, Hitler or Judas Iscariot; it is about you and me."
- III. GOD IN HIS UNSEARCHABLE GRACE HAS PUNISHED OUR SINS IN HIS SON ON THE CROSS AND OFFERED US THE CHOICE OF LIFE IN HIS NAME.
- A. The offer is to all men everywhere.
- B. Christ Himself is the source and the manifestation of that Life.
- C. The Scriptures are the invitation and the covenant terms of that Life.

Chapter Seventeen (17:1-36)

THE SON OF MAN ON PREPARING FOR THE END OF THE WORLD

IDEAS TO INVESTIGATE:

1. What is a "temptation" and why is it inevitable in this world (17:1-2)?
2. Can a person really uproot trees if he has faith (17:5-6)?
3. Why is a servant "unworthy" when he has done his duty (17:10)?
4. Why speak of the leper being "cleansed" and then "healed" (17:14-15)?
5. What did Jesus mean, "the kingdom of God is in the midst of you" (17:21)?
6. What is Jesus warning the disciples about in 17:22-25?
7. What are we supposed to remember about Lot's wife (17:32)?

SECTION 1

Be Good (17:1-10)

17 And he said to his disciples, "Temptations to sin are sure to come; but woe to him by whom they come! ²It would be better for him if a millstone were hung round his neck and he were cast into the sea, than that he should cause one of these little ones to sin. ³Take heed to yourselves; if your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him; ⁴and if he sins against you seven times in the day, and turns to you seven times, and says, 'I repent,' you must forgive him."

⁵ The apostles said to the Lord, "Increase your faith!" ⁶And the Lord said, "If you had faith as a grain of mustard seed, you could say to this sycamine tree, 'Be rooted up, and be planted in the sea,' and it would obey you."

⁷ "Will any one of you, who has a servant plowing or keeping sheep, say to him when he has come in from the field, 'Come at once and sit down at the table'? ⁸Will he not rather say to him, 'Prepare supper for me, and gird yourself and serve me, till I eat and drink; and afterward you shall eat and drink'? ⁹Does he thank the servant because he did what was commanded? ¹⁰So you also, when you have done all that is commanded you, say, 'We are unworthy servants; we have only done what was our duty.'"

17:1-2 Forbearance: Jesus warns His disciples against the careless, intemperate lack of self-control that puts a stumbling-block in the way of someone else. The Greek word Luke uses here is *skandala*; it is the word from which we get the English word, *scandal* or *scandalize*. The Greek

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

word literally means, "a trap, or snare." The Greek word most often used in the New Testament for "temptation" is *perisamos*, which means to "test, try" and sometimes means "the subjective desire to sin and thus put God's warnings to the test." God sometimes sends or allows a *perisamos* ("temptation or test") to come (cf. Heb. 11:17; James 1:2-4; James 1:12). But God does not entice or lure anyone to break His commandments (James 1:13-15); enticement to sin is the work of Satan (Rev. 2:9; I Pet. 5:8-9; I Thess. 3:5; I Cor. 7:5; Mt. 4:1; Lk. 4:2; Mk. 1:13). The Lord is warning that men may allow themselves to become tools of Satan and put "stumbling-blocks" in the way of other men. Even disciples of Jesus are vulnerable; if they do not trust completely in His word, to enticing others to sin.

So long as there are people in rebellion against God's will stumbling-blocks are inevitable. Anything done contrary to the will of God is a potential enticement to sin for someone else. Age, social status, economic circumstances and educational level has no bearing on whether a disciple may or may not be instrumental in putting a stumbling-block in another's way. Temptation to entice someone else does not discriminate. It may come upon us in a rush, galloping boldly at us, trying to overpower us—or it may come seductively, discreetly, slithering through the brush—but it comes. It comes every day and in all circumstances! Temptation is almost always camouflaged. Evil artfully masquerades as good. Evil appropriates the highest levels of life (sex, food, possessiveness) even religion, as its vehicles of expression.

Temptation may distort reality. This is the way the devil worked on Eve; "... has God said. . . ." Satan distorted the nature of God, portraying Him as a bully or an egomaniac. Some distort the real nature of God by imagining Him to be an indulgent grandfather type. Distort the nature of God and the reality of sin gets distorted. Temptation is more intense when we are near that which entices us to rebel against God. The case of David with Bathsheba is a classic. This is so obvious but so seldom acknowledged by men. As one person puts it: "It is not wise for a dieter to hang around a bakery!" "Flee youthful lusts. . . ." (II Tim. 2:22) is exemplified in Joseph's refusal to be seduced by Potiphar's wife. Temptation may be more effective when we have no fellowship with other believers. We are dependent upon the other members of "the body" for proper function (I Cor. 12:14ff.). Temptation may come at a time of great spiritual experience or triumph. It was right after David's greatest victories that he was tempted with Bathsheba; Israel's deliverance from Egypt was just before they made their golden calves; Elijah's despondency came right after his victories over the prophets of Baal; Jesus' most intense temptations apparently came right after His baptism and God's approving voice. Temptation may be based on the assumption that God's word is subject to our judgment, (cf. Jer. 5:12; Amos 9:10). The Corinthians fell into the trap. This is

the temptation to read the Bible to prove our point of view rather than to honestly determine what the author actually intended to say! The more we contemplate that which tempts us, the more apt we are to fall to it. Sin is like a birth. First the temptation is "conceived" through the wish or desire (lust); then it "grows" as it is harbored or nursed; finally it is "born" as the sinful act itself. Just as a child is *alive* before birth, so sin is alive in the "conception" stage—it doesn't have to be an action to be a sin! Repentance from sin necessitates a change of mind, a change or renunciation of the desire.

The subject of stumbling-blocks is very serious. The apostles had a great deal to say about it. The possibility that any man might tempt another to sin is always there. "No man is an island. . . ." said the poet, but the Holy Spirit said it long before the poet when Paul wrote, "None of us lives to himself, and none of us dies to himself," (Rom. 14:7). Paul wrote this in a context dealing with stumbling-blocks (Rom. 14:1—15:13). Things innocent enough in themselves, engaged in without regard for another person's scruples, may become stumbling-blocks and therefore sins. If we cause another to stumble, even though the thing we have done may not be against our own conscience, we have sinned against Christ (cf. I Cor. 8:11-13). There are four main chapters in the New Testament which amplify and elucidate Christ's warnings here—they are Romans 14, I Corinthians 8, 9, and 10. The reader must study these chapters in connection with the Lord's imperative warning in Luke 17:1-2.

To be trapped by a stumbling-block is sin. The man who succumbs to a temptation is guilty. But Jesus goes even further behind the sin to search out the one who put the temptation there! The one who put the stumbling-block in the way of the sinner is even more guilty than the sinner. There are those who not only do sinful things "but also approve of others practicing them" (Rom. 1:32). Peter's refusal to accept the will of God for the crucifixion of the Messiah became a "stumbling-block" to Jesus (Mt. 16:23; Mk. 8:33). Now the Lord did *not* say that the punishment of such a one is that he should have a great millstone hanged about his neck and cast into the sea. He said it would be *better* for such a one if that happened to him! It would be better to cut off one's right hand than allow it to cause anyone to stumble (Mt. 5:29-30)! It would be better to starve to death than to cause someone to stumble (Rom. 14:13-21; I Cor. 8:13; I Cor. 9:12, etc.). No wonder Jesus said, ". . . woe to him by whom they (stumbling-blocks) come!"

The "little ones" are not necessarily children, but all "little" or weak or beginning ones in their relationship to God. The apostles discuss the "weak" brother in their writings on stumbling-blocks. Some, because of conscience or custom, see things and actions as contrary to God's will which others do not so see. The truly mature Christian will forbear and

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

even forego his own liberty in such areas rather than cause another to violate his conscience, and cause him to be enticed to sin. On the other hand the "weak" brother must not be guilty of a legalism which insists on binding his scruples (opinions) on the other who has been set free in Christ. Legalism may be equally as serious as carelessness. Legalism may in itself become a stumbling-block!

17:3-4 Forgiveness: What if the reverse should be true; suppose some one puts a stumbling-block in your way, sins against you or offends you. What is to be your attitude toward him? First, I am to *rebuke* him (Gr. *epitimeson*, lit. "charge him to do the honorable thing"). I am to point out to him that the thing he has done is wrong, dishonorable. Then, if he repents, I am to forgive him. Actually, we must have a willingness to forgive even if our enemy does not repent. If he does not repent, our willingness to forgive will not profit him but it will certainly profit us, for it will make us sons of our Father who is in heaven (Mt. 5:43-48). Christ died willingly forgiving all men their sins against God, but His forgiveness is of no avail to those who do not repent. One cannot forgive another unless he is willing, in some sense, to bear the consequences of the offense done to him. The only way Christ could forgive us was to bear our sins in His body on the tree. If we are unwilling to forgive until the humiliation, hurt or offense is transferred back to the offender, we really have not forgiven!

One of our greatest temptations is to be unforgiving. As a matter of fact, to be unforgiving casts a sure stumbling-block in the path of another. Forgiveness is not a virtue of the worldly-minded. The pagan philosophy is: Be kind to friends, take vengeance on enemies. Even in the Old Testament, man's forgiveness of man is seldom mentioned. Some Jews appealed to Deut. 23:6 and Ezra 9:12 to indicate that forgiveness of some was *not* necessary. Forgiveness is uniquely a Christian virtue. Forgiveness is a *must* for Christ's followers (Mt. 6:12). No limit can be set to the extent of forgiveness (Mt. 18:21-22). Even if a man says he repents, and offends you seven times in one day, and says he repents seven times, you are to forgive him seven times. Love does not keep records of the evil done against it (I Cor. 13:5). Better for your character to forgive seven times, even if the offender appear to you to be insincere, than by refusing to forgive and thus cast a stumbling-block in his way.

To forgive one another "as God in Christ forgives us . . ." (Eph. 4:32) demands humility and self-denial. It requires a realistic acknowledgement of sin and stumbling-blocks. It requires loving others as we love ourselves. The Christian's responsibility toward someone who has offended him is not created by the fact that he has been wronged, but by the fact that the sinner has sinned and harmed himself! That is how God forgives us. Forgiveness is a two-way street. It is one part of a relationship that must be mutual if both parties are to be profited. Repentance is the other part.

The desired effect of forgiveness is to restore a relationship of harmony and peace. But that effect cannot be accomplished without repentance by the one forgiven. Failure of the offender to repent does not release the offended from his obligation to extend forgiveness because an unforgiving heart is also an impenitent heart! The unforgiving heart is not prepared for the end of the world!

17:5-6 Fidelity: All the apostles were shocked. Jesus had spoken startling words. He had challenged them to a life on the level of heaven itself. He was preparing them for the end of this world and the coming of the next. When the initial shock had passed, they cried out, "Increase our faith!" What they were saying was, "Lord, if we are to live like that, to forgive like that, we must have more faith." Their appeal was an intelligent one. Faith is what it takes to live like that. Any man can live without concern for others. Any person can say selfishly, "What I do is my business, and if anyone is offended by it, that is their tough luck." Any person who thinks this world is all there is to life is sure to seek vengeance, hold grudges and be unforgiving. Only the person who believes God's word about atonement, judgment and the world to come has the power to live on the spiritual level Jesus described.

Jesus' reply is very much in contrast with the way men think of faith. Men say, "increase our faith. . . ." as if more or bigger is better. Jesus said, in essence, "It is not more faith you need, it is better faith." Faith is not quantitative, but qualitative. He did not even give them any formula by which they might "increase" the amount of faith. He said faith as a grain of mustard seed was what they needed. Note, He did not say faith "as big" or "as small" as a grain of mustard seed. Jesus used the mustard seed to illustrate a faith that has life in it—seed—like faith. Life that is in a grain of mustard seed is powerful enough to overcome obstacles which seem insurmountable and produce a plant. Put a mustard seed into fertile soil and it will grow. If a clod or a rock gets in the way it will grow around it and come forth. The answer of Jesus was a strong rebuke which underscored the fact of their own personal responsibility for the quality of their faith. Christ cannot do for them what they must willingly do for themselves. He never *gave* them faith. He performed some miracles to prove Who He was and that His every word could be believed. But they had to do the believing. He always left people (including the apostles) to wrestle with their problems themselves by applying whatever lived in their hearts. If faith in Him lived there, any obstacle could be overcome; if unbelief lived there, even the smallest obstacle spelled defeat. Jesus is not talking about miracles of faith—but *works* of faith. He did not mean that everyone who believes can go around uprooting trees and dropping them into the oceans, literally. After all, trees and mountains are not man's real obstacles anyway! The real mountains to men are temptation, sin, guilt,

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

death. Men can move mountains and trees with bulldozers—but not guilt. The most impossible things are possible and the absolutely unattainable things may belong to men who believe and follow the will of God. To keep from falling into temptation or from tempting someone else a person needs not miracles but a living, working faith. Jesus Himself overcame temptation, not by miracles, but by faith in God's word (cf. comments on Lk. 4:1-13). To forgive unlimitedly one needs not miracles, but a working trust in Christ's promises. We can live on heaven's plane if we believe. The kingdom of God on earth, the church, is supposed to be living on heaven's plane—it is in the world, but not of the world.

17:7-10 Fealty: Jesus told the parable of the "Unprofitable Servant" to warn all His disciples against thinking they can ever *merit* equal status with their Lord. God, by His grace through Jesus, may grant men joint heirship with Him, but they can never merit it. They may be called in at some time to sit down and eat, but they can never go in demanding it. Because they can never do more than they are obligated to do. The obligation of man is to believe and obey perfectly the Creator. Man is commanded to produce perfect service—he does not do so, therefore, he is an unprofitable servant. Until a servant has done *more* than is expected of him or that which is commanded of him he can expect no merit or reward. God owns us outright. We are His by right of creation. We are doubly His by redemptive grace. He does not owe us anything—we owe Him everything and *more*. This parable is aimed at erasing that kind of self-righteousness Jesus saw in the Pharisees and all who follow in their steps. The Pharisees arrogantly considered themselves to have done all they were commanded to do. They believed they had earned the right to *demand* from God a seat at the Master's table. This is no way to prepare for the end of the world. The way to prepare for being "called" in by the Master is to consider oneself an unprofitable servant, dependent totally upon the grace and goodness of God!

We must constantly remind ourselves that whatever God cares to give us is up to Him. There is nothing coming to us of good which we deserve! We can take no credit for our world, our wisdom, our opportunities. We are indebted to Him for everything. Even our expressions of thanks to Him add to our indebtedness to Him because even our thanks is borrowed. We would not even know how to say thanks as we should without his revealed Word. There are many things we would like to say to Him and should say to Him, but can't, which His Spirit says for us (cf. Rom. 8:26-27)! If we give Him our life we are only letting Him have what already belongs to Him. Only when we admit that we are born destitute (cf. I Tim. 6:6-7) of all merit and that we earn as we prepared to appreciate God. Only when we recognize He *gave* us our freedom to choose Him or not shall we be good servants. When we have this perspective, work in His vineyard is welcomed as a privilege and not as a necessary evil. Work

ceases to be work and become a way to express appreciation when we acknowledge that we are unprofitable servants.

To the non-Christian, "everything" must seem quite a price to pay for serving Jesus. But, in the light of God's "everything" it is nothing at all (cf. Rom. 8:31-39). It is the least we can do and live with our consciences—and not be depressed with unexpressed gratitude.

SECTION 2

Grateful (17:11-19)

11 On the way to Jerusalem he was passing along between Samaria and Galilee. ¹²And as he entered a village, he was met by ten lepers, who stood at a distance ¹³and lifted up their voices and said, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us." ¹⁴When he saw them he said to them, "Go and show yourselves to the priest." And as they went they were cleansed. ¹⁵Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, praising God with a loud voice; ¹⁶and he fell on his face at Jesus' feet, giving him thanks. Now he was a Samaritan. ¹⁷Then said Jesus, "Were not ten cleansed? Where are the nine?" ¹⁸Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?" ¹⁹And he said to him, "Rise and go your way; your faith has made you well."

17:11-14 Made Well: A harmonization of the gospel accounts indicates that between Luke 17:10 and 17:11, Jesus was called to Bethany where His friend Lazarus had died. Jesus went there and raised Lazarus from the tomb. The account of this is found in John 11:1-57. From Bethany (which was a suburb of Jerusalem) Jesus retired to a remote area of Judea for a brief rest because the fateful Passover week of His arrest and crucifixion was only a few days away. The crowds were already gathering and forming caravans in the north (Galilee). Jesus wanted one final opportunity to evangelize, so He went through Samaria into Galilee to join one of these caravans bound for Jerusalem and the Passover. The time was the spring of A.D. 30. Luke takes up the record of His ministry here.

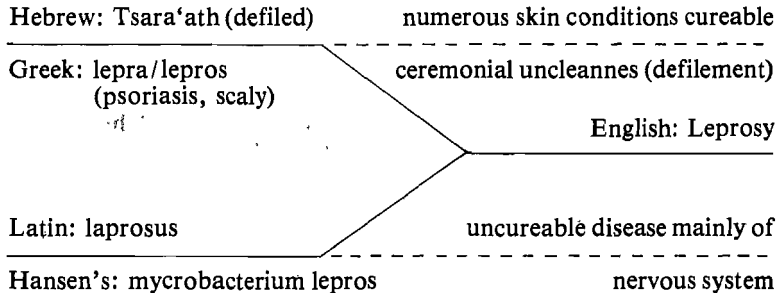
Before considering the incident of the ten lepers the student should refer to comments on Luke 5:12-26 concerning the information on Biblical leprosy:

- a. There is no mention of leprosy (defilement) after the death and resurrection of our Lord. Old Testament Law was nailed to the cross and fulfilled. When that was accomplished there was no such thing as ceremonial defilement for "psoriasis" or "scaly sores." The apostles healed the sick, cast out demons, raised the dead, caused the blind to see, the lame to walk, the deaf to hear, the dumb to speak, but *never cleansed a leper!* We therefore conclude that the significance of "psoriasis" in the Old Testament and in Jesus'

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

ministry ("leprosy") was the need to be ceremonially cleansed, not healed. Biblical leprosy was not Hansen's disease.

- b. Actually the English word, leprosy, is a misnomer for both the Old Testament *tzara'ath*, for the New Testament *lepra* or *lepros*, and for modern Hansen's disease!



- c. What these ten "lepers" had was not Hansen's disease and a rotting away of the flesh, but a scaly skin disease like psoriasis which by Old Testament law caused them to be declared "defiled" and in need primarily of being declared, "cleansed."

Ten lepers came to meet Jesus as He entered a village near the border of Galilee and Samaria. Lepers were religiously defiled and therefore banned from all associations with other people. They haunted the roads leading into cities and villages (they were not allowed to live within the walls of the towns). Frequently they lived in caves. Whenever healthy people came near them they were to cry out, "Ame, Ame!" ("Unclean, unclean"). These lepers stood "at a distance" and cried out to Jesus, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us." Jesus healed them of their disease. Nine of them looked and found themselves "cleansed" (healed, too, of course) which apparently emphasizes they were Jews and thus restored to ceremonial cleanness with their healing. All they needed to be permitted to worship again in the Temple and to be restored to society was official declaration from a priest. One of them, a Samaritan, was also "healed" but since he was not allowed in the Temple of the Jews anyway, there was no need to emphasize that he had been "cleansed." No doubt, even the Samaritans (because of their close adherence to the first five books of Moses) enjoined some social bans against lepers too, thus the only companionship this Samaritan could find was nine leprous Jews. It is a sad commentary on human nature, but true nevertheless, that human misery is the only condition that seems to draw people together *without* racial distinctions. Had these Jews and this Samaritan not been suffering the social ostracization of leprosy, they would probably never have associated with one another.

Some interesting observations about this healing:

- a. Jesus did not even touch the persons healed. He simply said a word and they were healed.
- b. Jesus did not pray for them to be healed, or to have faith.
- c. He sent them away before the miracle took place—to test their faith.
- d. He healed nine people whom He knew (by divine foreknowledge) would be ungrateful, hoping they would be grateful.
- e. He demanded no money, no praise, no testimonies—nothing—as a result of their healing.
- f. The one with the least privilege was thankful.
- g. The ingratitude of the nine apparently shocked and hurt Jesus.

17:15-19 Made Whole: Jesus addressed the Samaritan who returned to thank Him, “Rise and go your faith has made you well.” Actually Luke reports Jesus as saying, “. . . your faith has saved you,” using the Greek word *sodzo* which may be translated, “saved, preserved, made whole, delivered, set free, rescue.” It was the Samaritan’s attitude that “saved” him, or set him free, not the healing. Miracles do not save, attitudes do. The statement of Jesus implies that although the nine others were healed, they were not saved because they did not have the attitude of thanksgiving. Ingratitude is a symptom of disbelief. Ingratitude leads to futility and darkening of the mind in unbelief (cf. Romans 1:21). Nine of these lepers wanted to be cleansed (or healed), but that is all they wanted. They simply wanted to exploit the power of Jesus for their own selfish ends. They really did not wish any further commitment to Him. Ingratitude belies a condition of the heart making it impossible to receive grace. The ungrateful person refuses to acknowledge receipt of anything by grace. But it is only by grace that man can be saved. The man not willing to be saved totally by grace, really does not obey the will of Christ by faith—he obeys it hoping to merit salvation by self-righteousness.

SECTION 3

Guarded (17:20-37)

20 Being asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God was coming he answered them, “The kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed; ²¹nor will they say, ‘Lo, here it is!’ or ‘There!’ for behold, the kingdom of God is in the midst of you.”

22 And he said to the disciples, “The days are coming when you will desire to see one of the days of the Son of man, and you will not see it. ²³And they will say to you, ‘Lo there!’ or ‘Lo, here!’ Do not go, do not follow them. ²⁴For as the lightning flashes and lights up the sky from one side to the other, so will the Son of man be in his day. ²⁵But first he must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation. ²⁶As it was in the days of Noah, so will it be in the days of the

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

Son of man. ²⁷They ate, they drank, they married, they were given in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all. ²⁸Likewise as it was in the days of Lot—they ate, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they built, ²⁹but on the day when Lot went out from Sodom fire and sulphur rained from heaven and destroyed them all—³⁰so will it be on the day when the Son of man is revealed. ³¹On that day, let him who is on the housetop, with his goods in the house, not come down to take them away; and likewise let him who is in the field not turn back. ³²Remember Lot's wife. ³³Whoever seeks to gain his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life will preserve it. ³⁴I tell you, in that night there will be two in one bed; one will be taken and the other left. ³⁵There will be two women grinding together; one will be taken and the other left." ³⁷And they said to him, "Where, Lord?" He said to them, "Where the body is, there the eagles will be gathered together."

17:20-25 Missing the Kingdom: Jesus had said a great deal about the "kingdom" of God in His ministry. He had worked many miracles; He taught with great wisdom and grace. Many believed He was speaking as a prophet of God and that He had some divine information about it. Others, however, were antagonistic toward Him because His teachings about the "kingdom" did not fit their materialistic, militaristic views. Jesus said much about the kingdom, but so far as they could see, He had done nothing to bring about what the Jews expected of the golden age of the Messiah. The Jewish Apocrypha reveals two fundamental expectations in Jewish tradition about the Messianic Age (or, the Kingdom of God):

- a. Politics — the Messiah will be a warrior, he will conquer the enemies of the Jewish people, subdue them and rule over them in an earthly kingdom with the throne in Jerusalem. He will kill many of the Gentiles and reduce all the others to servanthood to Israel.
- b. Prosperity — There will be great material prosperity for Israel. Some of the prosperity will take on supernatural proportions in the golden age of the Messiah. All Jews would be blessed with an abundance of worldly wealth.

So, when Jesus proclaimed Himself as the "Anointed One" (the Messiah) the majority of the Jewish people expected Him to show signs according to their concept of the "kingdom."

Jesus informs these Pharisees that they are completely unprepared for the messianic age because they are not on guard spiritually. They are watching for a materialistic kingdom but the Messiah's kingdom is not "of" this world—it is spiritual. Luke uses an interesting word to report Jesus' answer. He uses the word *paratereseos* which is translated "signs to be observed." The word is most often used to mean "watching with hostility" (cf. Mk. 3:2; Lk. 6:7; 14:1; 20:20; Acts 9:24 and Gal. 4:10). What Jesus

is saying then is that the kingdom of God is not recognizable by those watching for it with views hostile to it. Those who are looking for it with a worldly-minded concept are unable to see it because it is a spiritual kingdom. Pilate could not see Jesus' kingdom (Jn. 18:33-38) because it was a spiritual kingdom. His kingdom is not provincial—not localizable—because it is not earthly. His kingdom is wherever the King is in body or Spirit. His kingdom was right then in the very midst of the Pharisees because the King was there. But they did not see it. His kingdom is not at Jerusalem or on Mt. Gerizim, but in spirit and in truth (cf. Jn. 4). His kingdom is His rule in the hearts of men and is therefore universal.

Even His own disciples will be tempted to want an earthly utopia in place of a spiritual kingdom. The King will have to leave His disciples for a while and go back to heaven. The absence of the King will especially pressure His citizens to want Him to come back and set up an earthly Eden. Men will try to seduce the King's subjects into thinking that His kingdom is an earthly one and that it has been set up "Here" or "There." But Jesus' disciples must not let down their spiritual guard. They must not be seduced into thinking the kingdom is worldly in nature or they shall not be prepared for the ultimate manifestation of His "other-worldly" kingdom.

17:26-37 Manifestation of the Kingdom: Some day the Son of man will come back, bodily, to destroy the world and give the consummate manifestation of His kingdom. When the King comes back there will be no doubt by anyone as to the true essence of His kingdom. It will be revealed in a flash of brilliance like the lightning lightens the sky. In the meantime, the kingdom does exist in the world. The Spirit of Christ is ruling in that kingdom as He rules in the hearts and lives of men and women. But the world goes blindly on in its way of materialism unable to see the kingdom because it is spiritual. Some will try to say, "Lo, there!" or, "Lo, here!" or, "He will be here when you see this sign or that sign. . . ." but do not go running off after them. But keep your spiritual guard up. God does not operate according to man's concepts or man's time-tables. Christ never really stated times or seasons for His return. As a matter of fact, He stated that He would return when the world's society was functioning normally! The ultimate, final manifestation of His kingdom will not be preceded by any abnormal, extra-ordinary "signs" pointing to a definite time. It will be just like the days preceding the flood in Noah's time. There were no extra-ordinary signs that God was going to destroy the world before the flood. The only warning was the promise of God through the preaching of Noah. In Noah's day life went on its normal path. People married, built, ate and drank. Suddenly the end came. Business as usual—and without a signal, the end was there. So will the coming of the Son of man be. "The Son of man is coming at an hour you do not expect" (Mt. 24:44). "Of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven nor

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

the Son, but the Father only" (Mt. 24:36; Mk. 10:32-33). If men cannot see the signs of His kingdom while it is here in the world, and surrender to it, they would not surrender to it in faith and obedience should spectacular signs be given to precede its final manifestation.

The final manifestation of the Son of man in His kingdom will be just like the days of Lot. There will be people still clinging to this world and its goods as if it were the only world. People who will not renounce all their worldly goods now for the kingdom will not be prepared to do so when the end comes. Remember Lot's wife! She had invested her life in Sodom, not in the spiritual heritage of her uncle Abraham. She could not give up this world.

The time to turn loose of this world's pull is now. When the Son of man reveals His kingdom for the final time it will be too late. And since no one knows when He will reveal His kingdom for the final time, since it could be the very moment you are reading this sentence, it is imperative that you and I lose our lives for His sake every day, every hour. If you are a disciple of Jesus you must be prepared every moment to leave all your worldly possessions behind. You must also be prepared to be separated from all your friends and relatives who are hostile to the kingdom. Because when the Son of man comes the great judgment of separation will take place. "One will be taken and one left." This is not to be taken literally, of course, that out of every bed one will be taken and the other left. In some beds and in some kitchens ("grinding at the stone") perhaps all will be taken, or all will be left. The idea is that those who have seen the spiritual kingdom and become members of it by faith and obedience will be taken—while those who have not seen it and are clinging to this world will be left to be destroyed with it. Would Jesus sneak up on the world? Yes! He is coming "as a thief in the night" (Mt. 24:27-51; 25:1-13; I Thess. 5:2-3; II Pet. 3:8-10). Thieves do not announce their coming ahead of time. If He came tonight would you go with Him? Is there anything or anyone you couldn't leave behind in order to go with Him? If there is, you aren't ready—you've let your spiritual guard down.

All this eschatological imagery excited the disciples so they eagerly asked Jesus, "Where will all this take place Lord?" Jesus replied, "Where the body is, there the eagles will be gathered." Wherever the dead are is where the vultures gather. The most important thing about Biblical eschatology is its emphasis on the certainty of the end of this world and the judgment. Where (and when) the rotten comes needs dealing with, there the Lord will come and deal with it—which is, of course, all over! The Lord's return will be instantaneous and universal. Jesus never spoke of His final coming in terms of time or place (see comments on Lk. 21), but of condition. There is only one way to be certain Jesus is coming again—that is to take His word for it. He promised, and His promise is authenticated by His

resurrection from the dead (Acts 17:30-31). That is the only sign this evil world will be given (cf. Mt. 12:38-42; Lk. 11:29-32). It is spiritually recognized and spiritually anticipated and comes neither at the first nor finally with "signs" perceivable by carnally-minded people.

Obviously, Luke 17:26-37 indicates Jesus does not expect to find "the faith" universally triumphant on the earth when He returns (cf. Lk. 18:8 which is connected to this discussion). There will be some (perhaps the majority) who will be indifferent or who have lost heart. Only those who have prayed and endured and kept up their spiritual guard will be vindicated (declared to have been right all along) when He comes back. Only those are prepared for the end.

STUDY STIMULATORS:

1. Just how careful must we be in our conduct in not causing someone else to stumble?
2. Does the "weaker brother" have any responsibility in the area of scruples?
3. Can you forgive like Christ forgave—even when you know the offender will not accept it? What if you don't?
4. How much does the willingness to forgive demand of you?
5. Why does it take faith to forgive?
6. Why doesn't Jesus *give* faith? Do miracles produce faith? If we had more miracles, wouldn't we have more faith?
7. Do you ever catch yourself thinking you are a worthy servant? Are you?
8. Does the church today need to be on guard against misidentifying the kingdom? How?
9. Is it possible that there are religious teachers today showing "signs" that the kingdom will come physically or materially "here" and "there"? What should you do about that?
10. If Jesus came to the world at midnight tonight, could you leave *all* your worldly possessions, even some of your kinfolk, and go with Him? He won't force you to, you know!

Chapter Eighteen

(18:1-43)

THE SON OF MAN WARNING AGAINST WORLDLY-MINDEDNESS

IDEAS TO INVESTIGATE:

1. Will God, like the petulant judge of the parable, be worn down by our persistence and finally give in to our prayers?
2. What is wrong with being thankful that one is not an extortioner, unjust or an adulterer? Wouldn't God be pleased with that?
3. How could Jesus turn over the kingdom of God to children? Isn't that unwise?
4. Why would Jesus rebuke the rich young ruler for calling Him good?
5. Is Jesus' espousing the modern doctrine of "righteousness equals riches" in 18:29-30?
6. Who "hid" from the twelve the meaning of Jesus' prediction of His death?
7. Why did the crowd rebuke the blind beggar and tell him to quit crying out to Jesus? Were they so hardhearted they refused the man healing?

SECTION 1

Pessimism (18:1-8)

18 And he told them a parable, to the effect that they ought always to pray and not lose heart. ²He said, "In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor regarded man; ³and there was a widow in that city who kept coming to him and saying, 'Vindicate me against my adversary.' ⁴For a while he refused; but afterward he said to himself, 'Though I neither fear God nor regard man, ⁵yet because this widow bothers me, I will vindicate her, or she will wear me out by her continual coming.' " ⁶And the Lord said, "Hear what the unrighteous judge says. ⁷And will not God vindicate his elect, who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long over them? ⁸I tell you, he will vindicate them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of man comes, will he find faith on earth?"

18:1-5 Vigilance: Jesus had just told His disciples He would not always be with them in this world, physically, as He was then. They would have to stay behind in a world of self-indulgence, irreverence, confusion about the kingdom and downright wickedness comparable to that of Sodom and Gomorrah (Lk. 17:20ff.). It is going to be a rotten world, ready for the vultures. The question a disciple of Jesus would have is, "What am I to

do living in a society like Noah's or Lot's?" Jesus is coming back but no one knows when that will be. In the meantime, He is to be crucified, raised from the dead and ascended into heaven. And His disciples must live in an indifferent society. There will be people like this judge—indifferent, callous and impervious. The poor and powerless will despair of ever receiving justice or being vindicated. Their rights will be trampled, they will be exploited and no one will care enough to make things right for them. What are they to do? How can the powerless and poor go on without just giving up and becoming like the rest of the world?

Necessary to the survival of one's spiritual life in a society like that is persistent, unbending, unending prayer. Jesus taught this parable to the effect that they ought always to pray and not lose heart. One's trust that God will ultimately answer with vindication is the one imperative for spiritual survival. The Christian's relationship to God must be steadfast for better or for worse, for richer or poorer, in sickness and in health. The Christian must pray without ceasing. The Christian must be like the widow of this parable who would not capitulate to her adversary. She was clinging to the hope that the judge would eventually vindicate her. This judge was about as indifferent to the woman's plea as a human could possibly be. Finally, out of some selfish motive of his own to rid himself of an inconvenience, he gave in and did what he did not want to do at first. But our God is *not* like that! It is not by praying that we "wear God down"—it is by persistent faith we put ourselves in the right attitude to receive what God wants eagerly and speedily to give us. This parable is teaching the same lesson as the one in Luke 11:5-13 (see comments there).

But how can a person "always pray" or, "pray without ceasing?" Aren't there other things in life, even the Christian life, to do besides praying? We must understand what prayer is. Prayer is far more than uttering words in some public meeting, or even alone at one's bedside. Prayer is the "urge" or "bent" of one's life toward God. Prayer is the continual conscious and unconscious focusing of the mind on that which is above. Prayer is the communication of an attitude of faith, trust and love, whether that be communicated in words or deeds or both.

18:6-8 Vindication: Here is what this parable says: If an indifferent, self-serving, callous judge like that will finally give justice to a poor, defenseless widow because she did not give up, is not our gracious God eager and able to give complete justice to us! Shepard says Jesus' argument in this parable is *a fortiori* ("with stronger reason"). God will speedily vindicate His elect. He does not need persuading, He only needs people who are preparing themselves by unswerving faith to accept His way and His time schedule. Some are not willing to exercise the persistent faith to accept God's way of vindicating them. Some, thinking God ought to work as man works, are unable to accept delay. Many are impatient with God.

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

They will not accept the longsuffering of God so that all may have an opportunity to repent. It may appear to many that God delays for a long time. But we must understand the word "speedily" from God's perspective. God may have vindicated us immediately upon our asking and because we had no spiritual maturity we did not see it or understand it. He does not always vindicate in ways we would hope or expect or even comprehend. What we must have is faith in the absolute faithfulness of God to answer always, speedily, though the answer may be contrary to our expectations and understanding (cf. Isa. 55:6-11). Remember the faith of the patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac, Jacob) and remember that it took all the centuries until the first coming of Christ to vindicate their faith!

Jesus did not mean to suggest that He would find widespread wickedness and chaos when He said, ". . . when the Son of man comes, will he find faith on earth?" At least He did not mean to suggest that here; in this context. The Greek text has the definite article before the word faith and Jesus' statement should read, ". . . will he find *the* faith. . . .," the particular kind of dogged faith that produces persistent prayer in time of trouble. The Bible indicates there will be believers still alive on earth when Jesus returns (cf. I Cor. 15:51ff.; I Thess. 4:13ff.). So His question here is more in the form of a challenge. He asks, "Will there be any believers on earth praying with the persistence of this widow when I come back or will they have despaired and fainted and resigned themselves to the idea that God is not aware of their needs, or He doesn't care?" That is very near unbelief. That is pessimism. That is the way the world thinks. The disciple of Jesus must think differently.

SECTION 2

Proud (18:9-14)

9 He also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and despised others: ¹⁰"Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. ¹¹The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, 'God, I thank thee that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. ¹²I fast twice a week, I give tithes of all that I get.' ¹³But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me a sinner!' ¹⁴I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for every one who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted."

18:9-12 Haughtiness: Do not miss the purpose of this parable. Jesus told it to those who "trusted in *themselves* that they were righteous and

despised others.” He told it to all who think they have something they have earned to present to God as justification. It is a warning to everyone like Job, in the O.T., who audaciously bragged that if he just knew where to find God, he believed he could stand before Him and argue his case. Job found out (Job 38:1ff.) that he was totally incapable of arguing his case before the Lord after all!

Two men went up into the temple to pray. All the men of Israel could go into the “court of Israel” to pray at the appointed times of prayer (3 times daily, cf. Acts 3:1). The “court of Israel” contained the altar of burnt offering and the laver. Only priests could enter the temple proper. Women prayed in the “court of women,” the next court outside the “court of Israel.” One of the men was a Pharisee and the other a tax collector, a publican. The Pharisee stood—probably in a place he could be seen—and prayed unto himself. The Greek phrase, *pros heauton proseucheto*, indicates the Pharisee directed his prayer, not really to God, but to himself! Five times he uses the personal pronoun “I” in the *nominative* case! Even as he thanked God he was *scorning* the publican. That is something to thank God for—that you are able to scorn someone else! Rabbi Simeon ben Jochai said: “If there are only two righteous men in the world, I and my son are these two; if there is only one, I am he!”

Pride has reached epidemic proportions among men. Children boast about their toys or fight for the front seat in the car. Parents fight at Little League games. Corporations are saturated with ego-maniacs trying to outmaneuver others. Church brotherhoods have their “pecking orders.” Branches of the military services fight one another. As one man has put it, “Name just one person who is conscientiously working his way to the bottom of the heap!” Politicians like to say this country is the home of the common man—but who has ever met one?! When we research our family tree we look for kings and statesmen—not carpenters or cobblers.

Pride:

- a. is idolatrous self worship
- b. puts self in the place of sovereignty that belongs only to God
- c. is an attempt to appear in a superior light to what we are with an anxiety to gain applause
- d. is a consuming craving for appearance and reputation irrespective of reality
- e. is making oneself very good by the cheap method of making all others very bad.

Pride is extremely difficult to overcome because it takes root even in the essential virtues of life. We become proud of good works; we become proud of humility. It was good that the Pharisee was not an extortioner, unjust and an adulterer. But all his goodness was destroyed by his haughty

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

pride. He was good because God's law told him not to be bad and he was afraid of the penalty of disobedience. He probably would have committed adultery or some other vice if he thought he could have gotten away with it. That is absolutely the wrong attitude toward God's law. He would probably have killed the publican had he thought he could have escaped punishment—he hated the publican in his heart. Jesus dealt with that kind of legalism in the Sermon on the Mount (cf. Mt. 5:17-47). Pride is the mother of all vice. It is the monster that fouled Paradise when the serpent hissed: "Ye shall be as gods." Pride fills hell, drives men mad for more, causes men to say their opinion is the only one, sours friendships, strangles love, devours faith, blinds men to their real needs, and segregates men from their neighbors. A man was meant to be doubtful about himself—but undoubting about truth. We have very nearly reversed this. Humble and self-effacing we must be—but modest about the gospel—never!

The tax-collector stood afar off. He did not feel worthy to be near the "righteous" Pharisee. He did not feel worthy of lifting up his eyes to heaven. The Greek verb *etupteu* is an imperfect verb indicating the publican kept on "smiting" himself and kept on saying, "God be merciful to me a sinner." Over and over he confessed his unworthiness (cf. Dan. 9:18). The Pharisee confessed other men's sins; the publican confessed his own. The Pharisee evaluated himself as righteous; the publican evaluated himself as the worst of sinners. The Pharisee reminded God of what he had earned; the publican pleaded only for mercy. The Pharisee justified himself but was unjustified; the publican cried for mercy and was justified.

The publican exhibits classic humility. Jesus taught that true greatness is vindicated neither by great abilities and successes nor by the roar of popular applause but by service. "He that would be greatest among you let him be the servant of all." There is nothing "chicken" about humility. Looking God and His word in the face and believing what He says about you takes a man! No weakling can stand to know the whole truth about himself. Humility calls for that extra-ordinary courage to take it and step down from the throne of one's own heart in favor of God; pick up one's cross, and follow the humble Christ. Humility is not something with which one is born. It has to be learned, it has to be developed—and it comes by faith.

The Pharisee was not justified by God. How could he be? He did not think it was necessary for God to justify him. He believed he had justified himself by his outward righteousness. He would not have accepted God's justification if God had offered it to him (which God had already done in type and prophecy). But the publican knew there was no possible way he could be justified if God did not do it. To "justify" is to pronounce free of guilt, to make one qualified, to declare pure and true. The tax-collector realized that in light of God's requirement of absolute holiness, he was

lost and the only thing he could do was plead for mercy so that God might find some way to pronounce him free of guilt. That was the only way he believed he could ever be cleansed of guilt. We had better believe that too! God had found a way—through the atoning death of His Son. That was and is still available to anyone who will believe it and enter into it through the covenant terms specified in the New Testament. That involves first of all a humbling of oneself to accept as a gift the forgiveness of God. Next it requires a humble surrender to God's sovereign command to be immersed in water for the forgiveness of sins (cf. Acts 2:38, et al). Then it requires a lifetime of humble discipleship and service to Jesus Christ as He has outlined it in the Gospels and the Epistles. Whoever humbles himself will be exalted, declared not guilty, and given an inheritance in the heavens, uncorruptible and undefiled that will not fade away.

SECTION 3

Pushy (18:15-17)

15 Now they were bringing even infants to him that he might touch them; and when the disciples saw it, they rebuked them. 16 But Jesus called them to him, saying, "Let the children come to me, and do not hinder them; for to such belongs the kingdom of God. 17 Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it."

18:15 Contempt: Apparently the discourse on marriage, divorce and celibacy (Mt. 19:1-12; Mk. 10:1-12) took place between the parable of the Pharisee and the publican and the bringing of the children to Jesus. The reason for thinking so is the parallel treatment of this incident in Matthew and Mark *after* that discourse.

It was customary for Hebrew parents to present their babies to a rabbi for rabbinical blessing. Jesus was a very popular "rabbi" at this moment. But why would the disciples, of all people, rebuke the parents for bringing children to Jesus? Most probably it was a selfish reason. Like most of us when we are listening to something that interests us we do not wish to be interrupted. The disciples were enraptured in the teaching Jesus had just done on the law concerning marriage and divorce and celibacy. They were hanging on every word, and suddenly an interruption by precocious parents and crying, laughing babies. So the disciples "rebuked" the parents. One commentator has suggested the disciples had gotten a false view of Jesus' purity from His discourse on celibacy. They thought anyone like Jesus was too holy, too transcendent to be bothered with children. Perhaps their motives were somewhat true and they simply wanted Him to have some

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

rest. He was on the road to Jerusalem and the cross and the strain of the coming ordeal was already showing. He had had an extremely exhausting ministry just recently in Perea and Judea and He must have looked tired. One thing is certain: they did not know the heart of Jesus concerning children, nor did they comprehend the relationship of childlikeness to the kingdom of God.

18:16-17 Correction: The parallels to Luke's account are in Matthew 19:13-15; and Mark 10:13-16. It is important to read them in connection with Jesus' correction of the disciple's attitude toward children. Mark records that Jesus was "indignant" (Gr. *eganaktesen*, angry) with the disciples and said, "Permit the children to come to me." The three accounts together picture Jesus taking the children in His arms, blessing them, and laying His hands on them as He prayed. He embraced them and prayed for them. *Touching* and *talking* with children is essential to their being. It is really so with adults also. Even adults long to be given a friendly hand-shake or hug—there is nothing like it to say, "I care." Reading of this incident we should be reminded that Jesus was angry only two or three times in all the records of His life—this issue of forbidding the children to come to Him is a *very serious* matter to Him! It is central to the very life of the church that this issue be noted and understood! Children, even child-like adults, will want to come to Jesus almost the moment they are introduced to Him. Get a child into the presence of Jesus or tell a child who Jesus is and a child will almost always go straight to Him. For this reason it is significant that Jesus did *not* say, "Bring them to me . . .," but, "Forbid them not to come to Me." If a child is not almost immediately drawn to Jesus after he has heard of Him it is because some adult has put a stumbling-block in the child's way. How many thousands of "little ones" have been forbidden to come to Jesus because of either deliberate or unconscious adult barriers? Children are the very life of the church on earth. The church dare not be superficial and hasty about selecting those who will introduce the children to Jesus. There is no business of the church more important than its ministry to children. Jesus teaches here that *nothing* should come before allowing children to come to Him. The best way the church can perform this primary ministry to children is to *focus* its overall ministry on families. The church must train its *families to be* "the church" apart from the corporate worship activities. Even in the congregational activities the constant emphasis should be on family.

Why was Jesus so emphatic about this matter of children? Because the kingdom of God belongs to children. Unless any man become like a child, he cannot enter the kingdom. That does not mean, of course, an adult must regress to the infantile level of maturation mentally and physically. It means become child-like in nature. It means to strip oneself of all the sophistries and facades of adulthood and return to the uncomplicated, guileless simplicity of a child's pure faith. What is a child like?

- a. conscious of imperfection—always eager to be taught
- b. unprejudiced—receives peers without bias as to race, color, etc.
- c. malleable—will give in, bend and surrender to truth
- d. impressionable—trusting, receptive, vulnerable
- e. unhypocritical—honest, open, candid
- f. delights to make others pleased with him by giving love and affection.

Hobbs writes, “A child’s simple, ‘I love Jesus and want to live for Him,’ may express a profounder Christian experience than reams of theological debate and explanation.” Jesus was warning the disciples they had the whole thing backward. Instead of expecting an adult experience in the child, we should strive to bring about a childlike experience in the adult. Those who are scornful or contemptuous of the simplicity of a child have missed the very essence of right relationship to Jesus! Therefore, the thrust of all preaching and teaching of the gospel is to produce the character of childlikeness in people, old and young, or they will never be permitted to enter God’s kingdom.

SECTION 4

Parsimonious (18:18-30)

18 And a ruler asked him, “Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?” ¹⁹And Jesus said to him, “Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone. ²⁰You know the commandments: ‘Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Honor your father and mother.’” ²¹And he said, “All these I have observed from my youth.” ²²And when Jesus heard it, he said to him, “One thing you still lack. Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me.” ²³But when he heard this he became sad, for he was very rich. ²⁴Jesus looking at him said, “How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God! ²⁵For it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.” ²⁶Those who heard it said, “Then who can be saved?” ²⁷But he said, “What is impossible with men is possible with God.” ²⁸And Peter said, “Lo, we have left our homes and followed you.” ²⁹And he said to them, “Truly, I say to you, there is no man who has left house or wife or brothers or parents or children, for the sake of the kingdom of God, ³⁰who will not receive manifold more in this time, and in the age to come eternal life.”

18:18-19 Righteousness of God: There are crucial lessons for every believer in this confrontation between Jesus and the rich, young ruler.

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

The primary lesson is the one Jesus concluded with, "How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God!" (Lk. 18:24). Another very important lesson has to do with evangelism. Some have entitled this incident, "The big one that got away." Look at this prospect's potential:

- a. He was a rich, young, ruler.
- b. He was courteous (Mk. 10:17—He ran up to Jesus and kneeled before Him.).
- c. He had a deep interest in religion ("What must I do to inherit eternal life?"), he did not wait to be called on or found.
- d. He was enthusiastic in the pursuit of spiritual help.
- e. He was unafraid of public opinion (seeking help from Jesus, who was already in disfavor with most Jewish rulers).
- f. He was a man of moral action (He had kept more commandments of God than most men.).
- g. He had lived a life of purity.
- h. He was honest in business.
- i. He respected his parents.
- j. He was no liar or slanderer.
- k. He was successful in the world.
- l. He was a man of influence and authority.

He is the preacher's dream-prospect. Most preachers would have had him signing a "commitment card" immediately. What a great statistic he would make—he could get "celebrity" billing. But Jesus disappoints us by handling this prime prospect rather roughly. He begins with a rebuke to the ruler; then challenges him about his faithfulness to the commandments of God; demands that he make an immense financial sacrifice; and finally lets the prospect get away.

The young man knelt, flatteringly, before Jesus and said, flatteringly, "Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus did not answer his question, but began with a rebuke. Paraphrased, Jesus would say, "The goodness of any *man* (which you take me to be) is not worthy to be noticed. It is God alone who is essentially good!" Jesus began His attempt to redirect this man's mind from worldliness by solemnly fixing his attention on God's character—infinite holiness. This young ruler had traveled so long in the company of those who reveled in the flattery of one another (calling one another "Master," "Rabbi," "Ruler") (cf. Mt. 23:6-7) that he could no longer see himself or any other man in proper perspective. He needed to see that God alone should be praised. Men must see themselves in relationship to God's absolute holiness before they can see themselves as they really are (cf. Isa. 6:1ff.)—in need of grace. It is almost shocking to realize that Jesus' first concern here is not the young

ruler himself, but seeing that God is glorified. The glorification of God was Christ's first priority (cf. Isa. 48:9-11; Ezek. 20:9, 22, 44, etc.). That was Jesus' primary goal in every instance of His ministry (cf. Jn. 17:1ff.). The young ruler centered attention on his own need—Jesus insisted that glorifying God was of first priority. This is the foundation of all evangelism, of all conversion. Man's salvation depends upon this fundamental principle. Evangelism is preaching who God is! Converting people must be preceded by establishing the character and nature of God as manifested in Jesus Christ. Without knowing God the sinner does not know whom he has offended. Without knowing God's faithfulness the sinner is left to trust his own abilities to justify himself. The gospel is not what man must do, but what God has done! God is Creator. God is Holy and His law demands (necessitates) judgment upon sin. The Bible speaks more of God's holiness than it does of His love! That is probably because men are more prone to concentrate on that which makes them feel at ease than on that which threatens or humiliates them. Much evangelism today is based in an insipid sentimentality which begins, "God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life." Jesus did not begin that way! He said, "Young man you had better get straightened out first in your own mind who God is!"

In the concept of most people today there is no room for the idea that God is holy. Most people think of God, C.S. Lewis once wrote, as an aged, indulging grandfather-type-person. Much of modern evangelism has lost touch with the divine method. Jesus did not speak soothing positive clichés to this man—He stirred up the fear of God in his heart by preaching that God alone is holy! We do not bring any sinner before God with the right attitude at all until we bring him bowing in humility and praise for God's holiness and penitence for his own sinfulness. We approach God for His own sake first, not ours. If God's absolute holiness and omnipotence is not validated and confirmed in our own mind, first, we are lost! Our salvation depends not on our goodness, but on His! (cf. Dan. 9:17-19).

18:20-21 Regulations of God: Finally Jesus said, "If you would enter life, keep the commandments," (Mt. 19:17b). The commandments (law) of God reveal the character and nature of God. The second important thing this self-righteous young man needed preached to him was the law of God. How can he know where he stands in relation to God's demands on his life if he does not have the law of God preached to him. Jesus reminded him of the first nine commandments. The absence of God's law from modern preaching is as responsible as any other factor for the evangelistic impotence of our churches:

- a. The word "sin" makes no sense apart from God's holy law. How can we convince today's sinners to really recognize they are sinners since most of them are totally ignorant of God's law for all mankind? Jesus continued to press the law at the rich young ruler.

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

- b. The cross of Christ means nothing apart from the law. If Jesus did not die to atone for the penalty of the law, then His death is tragic and senseless. And that is exactly how many people see His death today because they are not made cognizant of the demands of God's law.

Jesus used God's law as a primary tool of evangelism. Many Christians today consider the law a relic of the past and of no use in evangelism. Satan has subtly deceived us into thinking law and love are contradictory. Precisely the opposite is true. Love cannot be expressed without the guidelines of divine law, and law cannot be kept spiritually except by the motive of love (cf. I Jn. 5:3). Law and love are not opposed to one another. The conflict arises between law and grace as a means of salvation. The law cannot be the means of salvation—salvation for sinful man is grace by faith. Men are not turning to Christ today because they have no sense of who He is and what He has done. They have no concept of sinning against God and therefore they do not think they need salvation. They do not know they are sinning because the law of God is not being preached. God is faithful. He keeps every word He utters. This was the burden of the Old Testament prophets. To turn Israel back to God so that He might redeem them and use them for His messianic plan of redemption, the prophets preached the law of Jehovah. A "remnant" recognized themselves as sinners and turned to the Lord in faith, repentance and covenant-keeping. A remnant was saved.

Jesus found the ruler's knowledge of the commandments to be superficial. He recognized the law's outward demands but not their spirituality. The law of God was spiritual. He intended it to be written on the spirits of men (on their hearts). But they perverted God's law by making a pretense of keeping the outward commandment while violating the spiritual principle of it in their hearts. Jesus did not come to destroy the law and the prophets (Mt. 5:17). He came to bring God's law to its spiritual fullness. It is in the Sermon on the Mount that Jesus puts His finger on the real spirit within God's law. Now Jesus puts His finger on the ruler's real sin. He says, "Go sell all. . . ." Jesus preaches the tenth commandment in all its incisive spirituality. He used God's commandment, "Thou shalt not covet" as a scalpel to lance the festering sore of greed in the rich ruler's heart. The young man's sin was invisible to the human eye. It was even invisible to him! It did not show on the surface of his life. Had Jesus merely said, "Keep the tenth commandment, 'Thou shalt not covet.' . . ." the rich man would probably have replied, "I do not desire anyone else's property or wealth, I am satisfied where I am and with what I have." That was the trouble, he was satisfied with his wealth and was not rich toward God (cf. Lk. 12:21). So Jesus translated the tenth commandment into its spiritual reality by demanding that he *abandon* his riches, give it to the poor, and

follow His way of "having not where to lay His head." The rich ruler loved his riches more than God's holy law. So all the time he had been "keeping commandments from his youth up" it was really hypocrisy. He kept only those commandments that did not demand complete renunciation of self and whole-hearted trust in God.

Totally out of character with worldly-mindedness, Jesus, rather than compromise the truth of God's holy law in the name of false love, allowed the ruler to depart! Had Jesus ignored the inviolable character of the perfect law to try to enlist this sinner, He would have lost him, because in compromising God's faithfulness Jesus would have destroyed love. True love for God is inseparably bound up in the keeping of His commandments (cf. Jn. 14:15, 21; 14:23; 15:10; I Jn. 2:24; 3:24; II Jn. 6; etc.). True love will never negotiate against the truth upon which it is established. Much of Christendom through the centuries and even today has tried to see how little it could demand in keeping God's commandments and still get converts. Many take the position that they do not want to offend, to divide, to lose fame or a thousand other things. Yet Jesus came to the world for the very purpose of judging, dividing, and casting a sword. The gospel is God's great sieve through which He sifts all mankind. Those who keep His Word have His Spirit, those who do not are of the devil. The kingdom of God is, after all, the *rule* of God in the hearts of men. The law of God is to be the arbiter (umpire) in our heart (cf. Col. 3:15).

18:22a Repentance: "Go, and sell all that you possess, . . ." said Jesus. Now Jesus is telling the rich young ruler what he must do to inherit eternal life—he must repent. He must change his mind about what he trusts most. He must turn from his "god of gold" and surrender to the mind of God as expressed in the tenth commandment. The "one thing" the young man lacked was the reversal of all his priorities. He must allow God's word to transform his whole viewpoint, revolutionize his fundamental philosophy of life. Telling people today, "Just accept Jesus as your personal Savior," will not save! People must repent! Christ cannot save anyone whose mind is still under the rule of carnality (worldliness). It is scripturally necessary, of course, to tell people to confess Christ and be immersed in water for the remission of sin. But it is not scripturally correct to tell them to do so without preaching repentance to them. Doubtlessly this ruler would have gladly accepted an invitation to become a follower of Jesus if Jesus had not demanded that he give up his wealth. He had come running to Jesus. But he is not willing to forsake mammon! His security was in mammon—not in Jesus. Churches are being filled with people willing to have Christ and "financial success" (mammon) today. They are never told they must renounce all they possess. They are never told they must repent of such double-mindedness. So their "converts" are as worldly after their "joining the church" as before. No one has the authority to *lower* the requirement for

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

discipleship from what Jesus required here, of this rich, young, ruler, or what He required in many other places (cf. Lk. 14:25-33; 9:57-62; Mt. 10:34-39, etc.). Christ has not revealed a revised gospel for the twentieth century!

18:22b Regeneration: By asking the ruler to sell all he possessed and give it to the poor, Jesus was asking him to abandon his fundamental philosophy of life. He was urging the man to sweep his heart clean of all allegiance to any other priority. But the heart cannot tolerate a vacuum. It will inevitably yield its allegiance to someone or something. When the heart is rid of unworthy affection, it must deliberately choose the worthiest affection. So Jesus invited the young man, "Come, follow me!" Jesus did not offer this rich man an easy discipleship. He offered Himself to be followed, imitated, learned from and obeyed. The ruler had called Jesus, "Master," now Jesus is urging him to accept the portion of a servant. There is too much easy discipleship today. So-called "contemporary Christian music" tends to promote a discipleship of subjectivism rather than one of active servanthood. Jesus' invitation here contradicts much modern evangelism. Much of that seems to imply that Jesus is a personal Savior to help people get out of burdens and difficult circumstances and give "good feelings." Not much is ever said about Jesus being Almighty Master to be obeyed. Not much is ever said about Jesus giving us His strength to bear heavy burdens and difficult circumstances. Jesus is sometimes pictured as standing ready and anxious for us to crook our finger and say to Him, "Come, follow me, and keep all trouble out of my life."

Jesus will not deceive this lad. Eternal life is had by bowing down to the Lordship of Christ in active, obedient service to Him. It is a matter of the gospel record that many more turned away from Jesus than became obedient disciples (cf. Jn. 6:66:, etc.)—because He insisted men renounce all they had. Only on those terms does Jesus offer eternal life. Eternal life is being *saved from sin*. Faith is following Christ away from sin toward obedience to God's law. This is a strange doctrine in some places today. Many talk about accepting His help—but few say anything about accepting His rule in every thought, motive and action of life. Following Jesus involves *sacrifice*. Jesus was absolutely honest with this young man. To preach to people any other way is either unconscious failure or deliberate deceit. Would-be disciples must be challenged concerning the discipline which Christ demands. There must be complete honesty about the sacrifice, persecution, humility and self-surrender involved. It is not surprising that today when so many go forward to try the "Jesus-high" they are never seen again. Often the "convert," after a few days or weeks of professing Christ wakes up to discover that everyday "troubles" have been compounded by the very fact that he now calls himself a Christian. He finds himself being treated like Jesus was treated—and that was not what he was led to believe. The psychological honeymoon has ended so quickly.

Integrity and honesty demand that we evangelize like Jesus did. The modern sinner deserves to be treated like the rich young ruler. He must be told that the Lord to whom we are calling him will expect him to "sell all" and follow Him. People must be impressed with the gravity of deciding to be a disciple of Christ. Most evangelistic programs or meetings give one the impression that we should never let a prospect do any *prolonged, serious thinking* about answering the call to Jesus. We prefer to "psyche" them up emotionally, keep the "sell all" requirement low profile, and get them down the aisle before they do have time to think about real discipleship. We are afraid to do anything that might hinder *immediate* success or victory. Jesus wasn't! There is no evidence that the ruler ever trusted Christ and followed Him by giving up all he had. But he was *honestly* confronted with the gospel and its implications for his life. He was not tricked, "psyched," high-pressured, manipulated or emotionalized into a statistic. When he went away, he really knew the full answer to his *initial* question—"What must I do to inherit eternal life." He must be regenerated.

A few ancient manuscripts add after Jesus' statement, "Come, follow me," the words, "taking up the cross." But the best manuscripts omit these words. The word Luke uses to describe the young man's countenance is *perilupos*, meaning "pained." Mark uses the word *stugnasas* which means "gloomy, hateful, threatening or lowering" (cf. Mt. 16:3). The young man was shocked, stunned and agitated. He was very rich and what Jesus had demanded of him *seemed* altogether unreasonable, unheard of, unprincipled and even insane! This ruler did not just hang his head and slink away—he went away upset!

18:24-30 Rewards: Jesus looked with love at the young man as he was walking away in a disturbed mood (and at His disciples) and said: "How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God!" Why? Because wealth means power and a false sense of security and this is more likely to create pride and self-sufficiency than it is to create poverty of spirit. Actually, it is *more* than hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God, it is practically *impossible*. Jesus went on to say, ". . . it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." The Greek words Luke used were *tramatos* which means "hole or eye" and *belones* which means "dart or needle." Jesus was not talking about a small gate in a city wall, He was talking literally about the eye of a sewing needle.

Matthew records that the disciples were "greatly astonished" at Jesus' statement. The Greek words used here are *exeplessonto sphodra* and mean literally, "violently stricken in mind." They were "floored!" What Jesus had said stunned them. It was inconceivable in contemporary Judaism that wealth should be a hindrance to entering the kingdom of God since this was considered to be a sign of God's favor! When God allowed Satan

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

to take Job's possessions and children, Job's friends could only conclude that Job was guilty of some terrible sin against God. Poverty, physical illness (Jn. 9:1ff.) and other forms of catastrophic misfortune were considered a sign of sinfulness by most Jews. So the disciples were exceedingly amazed—and so is the rest of mankind. The disciples asked, "Then who can be saved?" If freedom from the wish to be rich and to hold on to one's hard earned wealth is the only route to salvation, who can be saved? There is not a man that would not be rich if he could. Most men, at one time or another, have day-dreamed about being rich. And if the desire for riches keeps us from salvation (cf. I Tim. 6:6-10) who can be saved? The disciples are probably being honest and expressing the unspoken affirmation of their own hearts that if they could have had the rich, young ruler's wealth they would have gladly accepted it. They were chagrined because they knew Jesus was not pointing His statement only at those who were rich in fact, but also to everyone who would *prefer* riches above almost anything else—which includes most of the people in the world!

Jesus' first reply was, "The things impossible with men are possible with God." What men cannot do meritoriously through human motivation, God can do by His grace in their heart when they believe Him. It is impossible for a man to renounce all he possesses until he allows his whole mental process to be taken captive unto obedience to Christ (cf. II Cor. 10:3-5). And man's whole mentality will not be surrendered to the rule of Christ until he resigns himself to the grace of God by faith. The difficulty of saving a rich man is not with God, it is with the man who resists God's grace by faith and insists on trusting in his own wealth as his sufficiency.

Christ has told the ruler that if he wished to fill the real void in his life and be "perfect" (complete) (see Mt. 19:21), he should sell all he had, give it to the poor and follow Him. When he would do this he would have *treasure* in heaven. That last statement stimulated Peter's mind. he immediately declared, "Lo, we have left our homes and followed you, what then shall we have?" (see Mt. 19:27). Peter apparently felt that he, and his comrades, stood in a much superior relationship to Jesus than the rich, young ruler. Peter's question implied, "We have done what you told him—we are the *first* of your disciples. This young ruler has turned his back on You, Lord, and if he should come back at the last moment, remember, we were working for you first, and we have left all and followed you."

Peter anticipated earthly rewards, Jesus declared the rewards for sacrificial service in His Kingdom would be spiritual. The essence of God's kingdom is of the spirit (Rom. 14:17). Jesus promised that everyone who labors will be rewarded, but many who are first will be last and the last will be first. The student should read the parallel accounts of this discussion in Matthew 19:23—20:16 and Mark 10:23-31. Matthew's account notes that Jesus first said, "... in the new world . . . you who have followed me

will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." In other words, the disciples will have the privilege of letting the Jews into the kingdom of Christ by the preaching of the gospel and writing the New Covenant scriptures. Whatever these apostles shall one day preach will be the keys to the kingdom (cf. Mt. 16:18-20) and whatever they loose or bind on earth shall already have been loosed or bound in heaven (cf. also Mt. 18:18; Jn. 20:22-23). They will declare the terms of forgiveness, salvation and citizenship in God's kingdom. What they preach shall be the criteria (judgment). Then Jesus said, anyone who leaves worldly riches for Christ will receive all of God's world working toward his redemption, plus eternal life (cf. I Cor. 3:21-22). God will work everything for good to them that love him and are called according to His purposes (Rom. 8:28). Wherever a Christian goes in this world God will have available for him brothers, sisters, mothers and fathers in the spiritual family of God. Everywhere a Christian goes in this world God will use from His great storehouse of creation all that the disciple needs to serve Him. But what does a Christian need to serve God? Sometimes he needs chastening, deprivation and struggle. The believer does not always need bread and never needs indulgence. He does need faith, hope and steadfastness. God can supply that richly. Whatever is *needed*, God will supply. And what He supplies will always be *more* than whatever the believer has given up to serve Him.

We would be remiss if we did not insert here a brief comment on Matthew 20:1-16 because it is the parabolic conclusion to this subject of rewards. When Peter asked, "What then shall we have. . . ." Jesus answered with the Parable of the Laborers in the Vineyard (Mt. 20:1-16). This parable does not intend to teach that a man may foolishly waste his life and come to work for Jesus at the eleventh hour and expect a reward. Nor does it teach anything about socialism or communism or share-and-share-alike economic systems for nations or the world. It teaches one simple truth: In the kingdom of God a man's reward will be, not according to length of service, or notoriety of service, but according to his faithfulness to the opportunity which is given him. The owner of the vineyard rewarded according to his own judgment. The householder kept His promise—each person who chooses to labor for God will be graciously and generously rewarded. If the last are first and the first are last, it is none of the laborer's business. If those who went to work first had the right attitude, they would consider it a *reward* to be given opportunity to be first or longest out in the vineyard! God rewards on the basis of the spirit and attitude in which the work was done—not on volume. The last workers had not been at work before because no one had hired them—they had not the opportunities the first had. But when the householder sent them out they were faithful and true to their only opportunity. Their reward was what the owner

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

decided to give them—the same as that given to those faithful to their earlier opportunity. Neither long nor short service is pleasing to God if done for wrong motives. Remember the Prodigal and Elder Son of Luke 15. Men will be rewarded in God's kingdom not for *what volume* of work they accomplish but what they would have done if they had had the opportunity. Of course we all show what we would do by our attitudes and actions toward the little opportunities we do have! "He who is faithful in a very little is faithful also in much; and he who is dishonest in a very little is dishonest in much" (Lk. 16:10; cf. also Lk. 16:11-12). God does not reward according to human standards (volume)—He looks on the heart (motives).

SECTION 5

Power-Mania (18:31-34)

31 And taking the twelve, he said to them, "Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written of the Son of man by the prophets will be accomplished. ³²For he will be delivered to the Gentiles, and will be mocked and shamefully treated and spit upon, ³³they will scourge him and kill him, and on the third day he will rise." ³⁴But they understood none of these things; this saying was hid from them, and they did not grasp what was said.

18:31-33 Confrontation: The Lord could see where this whole discussion of leaving all to follow Him and rewards was focusing. In the minds of the disciples it was being turned into a fantasy of position and power. Especially the statement Jesus made about "judging the twelve tribes of Israel" and "sitting on twelve thrones," (Mt. 19:28). So Jesus predicted (for the third time, see Mt. 16:21-23; Mt. 17:22-23) plainly that he was going to Jerusalem and there would be *crucified* (see Mt. 20:17-19; Mk. 10:32-34) and on the third day raised from the dead. He knew He must repeat and repeat this concept of the Messiah's mission and the nature of His kingdom or these worldly-minded disciples would never survive the shock. They must be confronted honestly and plainly so that when it comes to pass they will remember Jesus did not mislead them.

Jesus' prophecy about His death and resurrection clearly demonstrates His supernatural knowledge. He knew ahead of time *where* He would die (Jerusalem). Had He been only a man He could never have been so specific. He knew ahead of His death *how* He would die (crucifixion, Mt. 20:19). Being a Jew and really having committed no crime against Rome, one would expect Jesus to meet death normally or, if executed by the Jews, by stoning. He knew prior to His death *who* would be involved (Jewish

and Gentile rulers, Mt. 20:18-19). All His enemies would have to do to prove Him a false prophet was to not fulfill His predictions—but they were fulfilled to the letter. Not only were Jesus' predictions of His death fulfilled but the prophecies of the Old Testament made centuries and millennia before were also fulfilled. The student should read in this connection Isaiah 52:13-15; 53:1-12; 50:4-9; 49:1-7; Daniel 9:24-27; Psalms 22:1-31. When Jesus said to the disciples, “. . . everything that is written of the Son of man by the prophets will be accomplished. . . .” He was trying to emphasize to them that the Old Testament prophecies concerning the Messiah were *not* to be interpreted according to the popular Jewish rabbinical traditions. The tragedy was the apostles understood none of what He said. There was a reason for this.

18:34 Caprice: It wasn't because they *could* not understand. Jesus made His prediction plainly enough. There was nothing symbolic or figurative in His language. The Greek word *sunekan* is translated “understood” and means literally, “bring or set together.” They could not bring together what Jesus said and their own earthly concepts of the Messiah. They *would* not get it all together! The Greek word *kekrummenon* is translated “hid” and is the word from which we get the English word “cryptic.” It means “concealed, hidden, secret.” The word in Greek is in the perfect tense which means this crucified-Messiah concept had been misunderstood in the past and was continuing to be misunderstood. And why had they misunderstood it? Because they deliberately refused to accept the concept. Peter rebuked Jesus for stating this concept the first time He made the prediction (Mt. 16:22; Mk. 8:33). The word “grasp” is the Greek word *eginoskon* and means “to be taking in knowledge, to come to know.” They did not understand Jesus because they were *not* taking in what He was saying. They deliberately refused to listen to what He was saying.

Why, now after the third plain prediction of His death, do they still refuse to accept it? The student must here turn to Matthew 20:20-28 and Mark 10:35-45. There the underlying reason for their refusal to grasp the true Messianic concept (even though it was predicted centuries before in the Prophets) is revealed. They were striving among themselves for political positions in what they thought was going to be an earthly kingdom. Two of them, James and John, sent their mother to request promotion to favored positions. Jesus sternly warned the disciples they were acting like heathen and it must not be so among them. Luke omits this incident but at the same time he is the only one who records the disciples arguing about the same thing in the Upper Room at the time of the Last Supper (cf. Lk. 22:24-30).

The fact that the Messiah was to be crucified and suffer a humiliating death was perhaps the *most crucial issue* Jesus faced in His incarnation (other than His claim to be God in the flesh). We notice His own disciples,

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

after more than three years of learning from Him, still conceived of His kingdom as an earthly one that would ultimately manifest itself in a human political structure. Furthermore, even after His death, the two disciples on the road to Emmaus had to be rebuked by Jesus and instructed again that their own Prophets had predicted the Messiah's humiliation. Paul wrote that the crucifixion of Christ was a stumbling-block to the Jews and foolishness to the Gentiles (I Cor. 1:23). The unregenerated mind of man will not believe that he can be saved by a crucified Savior, because human pride refuses to accept the idea of vicarious atonement. For that reason God raised Jesus from the dead and *verified* historically and empirically that Jesus' death was a vicarious atonement. The Jews never thought of their Messiah as one who would atone for their sins but one who would deliver them from their earthly bondage. They wanted political and economic deliverance, but they were really not interested in spiritual freedom (cf. Jn. 8:31-39). And after two thousand years of gospel history the majority of the world is still interested only in political and economic deliverance.

SECTION 6

Pitiless (18:35-43)

35 As he drew near to Jericho, a blind man was sitting by the roadside begging; ³⁶and hearing a multitude going by, he inquired what this meant. ³⁷They told him, "Jesus of Nazareth is passing by." ³⁸And he cried, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" ³⁹And those who were in front rebuked him, telling him to be silent; but he cried out all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" ⁴⁰And Jesus stopped, and commanded him to be brought to him; and when he came near, he asked him, ⁴¹"What do you want me to do for you?" He said, "Lord, let me receive my sight." ⁴²And Jesus said to him, "Receive your sight; your faith has made you well." ⁴³And immediately he received his sight and followed him, glorifying God; and all the people, when they saw it, gave praise to God.

18:35-39 Cruelty: Finally Jesus leaves the area known as Perea, crosses the Jordan river into Judea and comes to Jericho. Immediately the careful student of the gospel records notices *apparent* discrepancies. In the first place, Matthew and Mark say, "... as He was leaving Jericho (Mt. 20:29; Mk. 10:46) and Luke says, "... as He drew near to Jericho. . . ." (Luke 18:35).

- a. Solution #1: As Jesus entered, Bartimaeus cried out for help too late to be heard—he circled the town, joined by another blind man, appealed to Jesus as He left Jericho, and was healed.